

SAINT

VINCENT DE PAUL

CORRESPONDENCE

VOLUME I

Reproduction of a painting which had once belonged to Queen Anne of Austria and then to the Hôtel des Invalides. It is now in the possession of the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission, 95 rue de Sèvres, Paris. In the opinion of experts, this portrait was painted in the time of Saint Vincent de Paul by an artist who had the Saint before him.

SAINT

VINCENT DE PAUL

CORRESPONDENCE

CONFERENCES, DOCUMENTS

I

CORRESPONDENCE

VOLUME I (1607 - 1639)

NEWLY TRANSLATED, EDITED, AND ANNOTATED

FROM THE 1920 EDITION

OF

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

TO

VERY REVEREND JAMES W. RICHARDSON, C.M.

WHO AS SUPERIOR GENERAL

OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

AND

OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

INITIATED AND ENCOURAGED

THIS WORK

Edited by:

SR. JACQUELINE KILAR, D.C.

Translated by:

SR. HELEN MARIE LAW, D.C.

SR. JOHN MARIE POOLE, D.C.

REV. JAMES R. KING, C.M.

REV. FRANCIS GERMOVNIK, C.M. (Latin)
Annotated by:
REV. JOHN W. CARVEN, C.M.
NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. John A. Grindel, C.M.
Censor Deputatus
IMPRIMATUR
Rev. Msgr. John F. Donoghue
Vicar General for the Archdiocese of Washington
May 25, 1983
C 1984, Vincentian Conference, U.S.A.
Published in the United States by New City Press
206 Skillman Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11211
Printed in the United States of America
Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 83-063559
ISBN 0-911782-50-8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface to the English Translation	
Letter of Father Verdier	
Introduction to the French Edition	
Introduction to the English Edition	
1. To M. de Comet, July 24, 1607	
2. To M. de Comet, February 28, 1608	
3. To his Mother, February 17, 1610	
4. To Edmond Mauljean, June 20, 1616	
5. Edmond Mauljean to Saint Vincent, June 20, 1616	
6. To Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi [August or September 1617]	
7. Madame de Gondi to Saint Vincent [September 1617]	
8. To Madame de Gondi [September or October 1617]	
9. Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi to Saint Vincent, October 15, 1617	
10. To Charles du Fresne [October 1617]	
11. To Nicolas de Bailleul, July 25, 1625	
12. To Saint Louise de Marillac, October 30, 1626	
13. To Isabelle du Fay [October or November 1626]	
14. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent, June 5, 1627	
15. To Saint Louise [October 1627]	
16. To Saint Louise, October 8, 1627	
17. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]	
18. To Saint Louise [between 1626 and 1635]	
19. Saint Jane Frances de Chantal to Saint Vincent, November 1627	
20. A Priest to Saint Vincent, December 1627	
21. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent, January 13, 1628	
22. To Saint Louise, January 17, 1628	
23. To Saint Louise, February 9, 1628	
24. To Saint Louise [February 1628]	
25. Commander de Sillery to Saint Vincent (now 60a)	
26. To Pope Urban VIII [June 1628]	
27. To Saint Louise	
28. To Pope Urban VIII, August 1, 1628	
29. To Saint Louise [between 1626 and May 1629]	
30. To François du Coudray, September 15, 1628	
31. To Saint Louise [around 1629]	
32. To Saint Louise	
33. To Saint Louise [around 1629]	

34. To Saint Louise [around 1629]
35. To Saint Louise [around 1629]
36. To Saint Louise [around 1629]
37. To Saint Louise [around 1629]
38. To Saint Louise [April or May 1629]
39. To Saint Louise, May 6, 1629
- 39a. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, July 3, 1629
40. To Saint Louise, February 19, 1630
41. To Saint Louise [February 1630]
42. To Saint Louise [1630]
43. To Saint Louise [around 1630]
44. To Saint Louise [1630]
45. To Saint Louise [1630]
- 45a. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, March 13, 1630
- 45b. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, April 14 [1630]
46. To Saint Louise [April 1630]
47. To Saint Louise [May] 4 [1630]
- 47a. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [May 1630]
48. To Saint Louise [May 1630]
49. To Saint Louise [around 1630]
50. To Saint Louise [around 1630]
51. To Antoine Portail, June 27, 1630
52. To a Lady, July 1, 1630
53. To Saint Louise [around 1630]
54. To Monsieur de Saint-Martin, September 1, 1630
55. To Saint Louise [September 1630]
- 55a. To Saint Louise [October 1630]
- 55b. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, October 2, 1630
56. To Saint Louise, October 22, 1630
57. To Saint Louise, October 29, 1630
- 57a. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent [between Oct. and Dec. 1630]
58. To Saint Louise, December 7, 1630
59. To Saint Louise [1630 or 1631]
60. To Saint Louise [before 1634]
- 60a. Commander de Sillery to Saint Vincent [around 1631]
61. To Saint Louise [March 1631]
62. To Saint Louise, March 31, 1631
63. To Saint Louise [April 2, 1631]
64. To Saint Louise [April 1631]
65. To Saint Louise, April 11, 1631
66. To Saint Louise [April 1631]
67. To Saint Louise [April 1631]
68. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1632]
69. To Saint Louise [May 1631]
70. To Antoine Portail, June 21, 1631
71. To Saint Louise [Before 1632]
72. To François du Coudray, July 20, 1631
73. To François du Coudray, 1631
74. To Saint Louise [1631]
- 74a. To Saint Louise [1631]
75. To Saint Louise [September 2, 1631]
76. To the Pastor of Bergères, September 2, 1631
77. To Saint Louise, September 2, 1631
78. To François du Coudray, September 4, 1631
79. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent [September 1631]
80. To François du Coudray, September 12, 1631

81. To Saint Louise, September 13, 1631
82. To Isabelle du Fay [1631]
83. To Saint Louise, September 15, 1631
84. To Saint Louise [September 22 or 23, 1631]
85. To Saint Louise, October 12, 1631
86. To Saint Louise, October 17, 1631
87. To Monsieur Colletot
88. To Saint Louise, October 31, 1631
89. To Saint Louise (now 74a)
90. To Jean de la Salle, November 11, 1631
91. To Guillaume de Lestocq [1631]
92. To Saint Louise [1631]
93. To Saint Louise [before 1634]
94. To François du Coudray, December 23, 1631
- 94a. To Pope Urban VIII [January 1632]
95. To Saint Louise
96. To Saint Louise
97. To Saint Louise [around 1632]
98. To Saint Louise [around 1632]
99. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
100. To François du Coudray, March 2, 1632
101. To Saint Louise
102. To N. [1632]
- 102a. R. Dognon to Saint Vincent [1632]
103. To Saint Louise
104. To Saint Louise [before 1634]
105. To Saint Louise [May 1632]
106. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1636]
107. To Saint Louise [May 1632]
108. To Saint Louise [May or June 1632]
109. To Saint Louise [June 1632]
110. To Saint Louise, July 7, 1632
111. To Saint Louise, July 10, 1632
112. To François du Coudray, July 12, 1632
113. To Saint Louise [around 1632]
114. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
115. To Saint Louise [1632]
- 115a. To Saint Louise [between 1630 and 1638]
116. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1635]
117. To Saint Louise
118. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
119. To Saint Louise [before 1634]
120. To Saint Louise
121. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1636]
122. To Saint Louise [around 1632]
123. To Saint Louise
124. To François du Coudray, September 19, 1632
125. To Antoine Portail, November 28, 1632
126. To Saint Louise [around 1632]
127. To N. [around 1633]
128. To Saint Louise
129. To a Priest of the Mission [January 15, 1633]
130. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent, February 11 [1633]
131. To Saint Louise [between Jan. 1632 and Feb. 1633]
132. To Saint Louise, February 24 [1633]
133. To Michel Alix, March 1, 1633

134. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
135. Madame Goussault to Saint Vincent, April 16, 1633
136. To Saint Louise [April 1633]
137. To Saint Louise, May 1 [1633]
138. To Saint Louise [May 1633]
139. To Michel Alix, June 11, 1633
140. To Saint Louise [between 1633 and 1636]
141. To an Ecclesiastic [July 9, 1633]
142. To François du Coudray [July 1633]
143. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
144. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1639]
145. To a Priest of the Mission, 1633
146. To Alain de Solminihac, August 23, 1633
147. To Saint Louise [around September 2, 1633]
148. To Saint Louise
149. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1636]
150. To Michel Alix, September 16, 1633
151. To Saint Louise [August or September, around 1633]
152. To Saint Louise [September or October 1633]
153. To Saint Louise [around 1633]
154. To the Lieutenant de Gannes, December 19, 1633
155. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1636]
156. To François du Coudray, January 17, 1634
- 156a. To Saint Louise [January 1634]
- 156b. To Father Faure, January 1634
157. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
158. To Jacques Perdu, February 1634
159. To Saint Louise [between January and March 1634]
160. To Saint Louise [between January and March 1634]
161. To Saint Louise [1634, around March]
162. To Saint Louise [between January and March 1634]
163. To Saint Louise [March or April 1634]
- 163a. To Sister Hélène-Angélique Lhuillier [April 9, 1634]
164. To Saint Louise [before 1640]
165. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1636]
166. To Saint Louise (now 198a)
167. To Saint Louise [around 1634]
168. To Saint Louise (now 198b)
169. To Saint Louise (now 198c)
170. To Saint Louise (now 198c)
171. To Saint Louise (now 198d)
172. To Saint Louise (now 198e)
173. To Saint Louise (now 198f)
174. To Saint Louise (now 198g)
175. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1636]
176. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1636]
177. To François du Coudray, July 25, 1634
178. To Pope Urban VIII [between July and November 1634]
179. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent (now 206a)
180. To Saint Louise [around 1634]
181. To Isabelle du Fay [between 1626 and 1635]
182. To Saint Louise (now 156a)
183. To Madame Goussault [1634 or 1635]
184. To Saint Louise [after 1631]
185. To Saint Louise [1634 or 1635]
186. To Saint Louise [around 1634]

187. To Saint Louise, October 29, 1634
188. To François du Coudray, November 6, 1634
- 188a. To. M. de Montholon [December 1634]
189. To Jean de Fonteneil, December 7, 1634
190. To Monsieur Belin, December 16, 1634
191. To Saint Louise [before 1640]
192. Jean de la Salle and Jean-Joseph Brunet to Saint Vincent, 1634
193. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1639]
194. To Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, January 19, 1635
195. To N. [around 1635]
196. To Guy-François de Montholon [1635, after March 28]
197. To Antoine Portail, May 1, 1635
198. To Antoine Lucas, June 28, 1635
- 198a. To Saint Louise, 1635
- 198b. To Saint Louise, 1635
- 198c. To Saint Louise, July 21, 1635
- 198d. To Saint Louise, 1635
- 198e. To Saint Louise, 1635
- 198f. To Saint Louise, 1635
- 198g. To Saint Louise, 1635
199. To Saint Louise (now 207a)
200. To Saint Louise (now 207b)
201. To Saint Louise (now 207c)
202. To Antoine Portail, August 10, 1635
203. To Saint Louise [1635]
204. To Jean de Fonteneil, August 29, 1635
205. To Saint Louise
206. To Saint Louise [between 1632 and 1650]
- 206a. To Saint Louise, September 4, 1635
207. To Clément de Bonzi [September or October 1635]
- 207a. To Saint Louise [October 1635]
- 207b. To Saint Louise [October 1635]
- 207c. To Saint Louise [October 1635]
208. To Saint Louise [before 1640]
209. To Antoine Portail, October 16, 1635
210. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1636]
211. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent
212. To Saint Louise
213. To Saint Louise
214. To Saint Louise [March 16, 1636]
215. To Saint Louise [1636]
216. To Saint Louise [1636]
217. To Saint Louise [1636]
218. To Saint Louise [shortly before May 1636]
219. To Saint Louise [1636]
220. To a Priest of the Mission [1636]
221. To Saint Louise [1636]
222. To Saint Louise [between 1635 and 1638]
223. To Saint Louise [May 1636]
224. To Saint Louise, May 27, 1636
225. To Lambert aux Couteaux, June 13, 1636
226. Jean-Jacques Olier to Saint Vincent, June 24, 1636
227. To Saint Louise [1636]
228. To Saint Louise [1636]
229. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1639]
230. To Saint Louise [between 1634 and 1639]

231. To Saint Louise [August 1636]
232. To Antoine Portail, August 15, 1636
233. To Monsieur de Saint-Martin, August 16, 1636
234. To Saint Louise [August 1636]
235. To Robert de Sergis, September 1, 1636
236. To a Priest of the Mission [between Sept. and Nov. 1636]
237. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [before 1645]
238. To Saint Louise [before 1645]
239. To Antoine Portail, September 20, 1636
240. To Madame Goussault, September 20, 1636
241. To Saint Louise [1636]
242. To Saint Louise [September 1636]
243. To Robert de Sergis, September 1636
244. To Robert de Sergis, September 29, 1636
245. To Robert de Sergis, October 19, 1636
246. To Saint Louise
247. To Saint Louise, October 21, 1636
248. To Saint Louise, November 2, 1636
249. To Robert de Sergis, November 1636
250. To Saint Louise
251. To Saint Louise [1636]
252. To Saint Louise [1636]
253. To Saint Louise [1636]
- 253a. To Saint Louise [1636]
254. To Saint Louise [1636]
255. To Saint Louise [1636]
256. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [December 1636]
257. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent [December 1636]
258. To Saint Louise, December 30, 1636
259. To Jean de Fonteneil (now 290a)
260. To Saint Louise [around 1637]
- 260a. M. Colombet to Saint Vincent [1637]
- 260b. To Saint Louise
- 260c. Jean-Jacques Olier to Saint Vincent, February 10, 1637
261. To Sister Marie-Euphrosine Turpin, February 23, 1637
262. To Saint Louise, February 24 [1637]
263. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
264. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
265. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
266. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1642]
267. To Saint Louise, May 24, 1637
268. To Saint Louise [around May 24, 1637]
269. To Antoine Colée, 1637
270. To Madame Goussault [August 25, 1637]
271. Lascaris to Saint Vincent, September 7, 1637
272. To Charles de Montchal (now 344a)
273. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
274. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
275. To Saint Louise [November 1, 1637]
276. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
277. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
- 277a. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
278. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
279. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
280. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
281. The Abbé de Saint-Cyran to Saint Vincent, November 20, 1637

282. To Monsieur Belin
283. To Saint Louise [around November 1637]
284. To Mother de la Trinité, November 28, 1637
285. To Saint Louise [end of 1637]
286. To Saint Louise [December 1637]
287. To Bernard Codoing, December 27, 1637
288. To Saint Louise, January 1 [1638]
289. To Saint Louise [January 1638]
290. To Saint Louise [January 1638]
- 290a. To Jean de Fonteneil, January 8, 1638
291. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [January 17, 1638]
292. To Mother de la Trinité, January 22, 1638
293. To Lambert aux Couteaux, January 30, 1638
294. To Antoine Lucas, January 30, 1638
295. To Saint Louise [February 1638]
296. To Saint Louise [1638]
297. To Saint Louise [1638]
- 297a. To Saint Louise [1638]
298. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [1638]
299. To Robert de Sergis [around February 21, 1638]
300. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [February 1638]
301. To Saint Louise [February 1638]
302. To Saint Louise [February 1638]
303. To Saint Louise [February 1638]
304. To Saint Louise [February 1638]
305. To Saint Louise [February 18, 1638]
306. To Lambert aux Couteaux, February 20, 1638
307. To Antoine Lucas, February 21, 1638
308. To Mother de la Trinité, February 25, 1638
309. To Saint Louise [1638, around February]
310. To Saint Louise [1638, around February]
311. To Lambert aux Couteaux, March 3, 1638
312. To Saint Louise [March 1638]
313. To Saint Louise [March 1638]
314. To Saint Louise [March 1638]
315. To Saint Louise (now 277a)
316. To Lambert aux Couteaux, March 15, 1638
317. To Jean Bécu [February or March 1638]
318. To Léonard Boucher, March 17, 1638
319. To Saint Louise [March 1638]
320. To Lambert aux Couteaux, March 22, 1638
321. To the Duc d'Atri [around March 1638]
322. To Antoine Portail, April 28, 1638
- 322a. To François Dufestel, May 8, 1638
323. To Jean Bécu [May 20 or 21, 1638]
324. To Saint Louise [around May 1638]
325. To Saint Louise [May 24, 1638]
326. To Jean Bécu, June 2 [1638]
327. To Saint Louise [1638 or 1639]
328. To Nicolas Marceille [June 10, 1638]
329. To Jean Bécu, June 10, 1638
330. To Jean Dehorgny [June 1638]
331. To Jean de la Salle, June 14, 1638
332. To Denis de Cordes [1638]
333. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent, July 2 [1638]
334. To Jean de Fonteneil, July 20, 1638

335. To Saint Louise [1638 or 1639]
336. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [1638]
337. To Saint Louise [1638]
338. To Saint Louise [1638 or 1639]
339. To Robert de Sergis, August 14, 1638
340. Saint Louise to Saint Vincent [around 1638]
341. To Noël Brulart de Sillery [between 1634 and 1640]
342. To Jean Bécu, August 29, 1638
343. To Bernard Codoing, August 29, 1638
344. To Saint Louise, August 30, 1638
- 344a. To Charles de Montchal [September 1638]
345. To Saint Louise [September 1638]
346. To Madame Goussault [between 1636 and 1639]
347. To Saint Louise [September 1638]
348. To Saint Louise [September 1638]
349. To Saint Louise [1638]
350. To Saint Louise [September 1638]
351. To Saint Louise [October 1, 1638]
352. To Lambert aux Coudeaux, October 1, 1638
353. To Saint Louise [October 2, 1638]
354. To Saint Louise [October 1638]
355. To Saint Louise [around October 1638]
356. To Saint Louise [before 1640]
357. To Saint Louise
358. To Lambert aux Coudeaux, November 1, 1638
359. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
360. To Saint Louise [between 1633 and 1639]
361. To Saint Louise
362. To Madame Goussault [November 1638]
- 362a. To Saint Louise [around December 1638]
363. To Bernard Codoing, December 12, 1638
364. To Antoine Lucas, December 13, 1638
365. To Robert de Sergis, December 17, 1638
- 365a. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, December 25, 1638
366. To Pierre du Chesne [January 8, 1639]
367. To Pierre du Chesne, January 28, 1639
368. To Robert de Sergis, February 3, 1639
369. To Pierre du Chesne [around February 1639]
370. To Saint Louise
371. To Saint Louise [1639]
372. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
373. To Saint Louise [1639]
374. To the Community of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, April 29, 1639
- 374a. Guillaume Compaing to Saint Vincent [May 5, 1639]
375. To Saint Louise [between September 1638 and September 1639]
376. To Louis Lebreton, May 10, 1639
377. To Robert de Sergis, May 13, 1639
- 377a. To Pierre du Chesne, May 30, 1639
378. To Saint Louise [between 1635 and 1639]
379. To Saint Louise [between 1635 and 1639]
380. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1639]
381. To Saint Louise
382. To Saint Louise, July 4, 1639
383. To Saint Jane Frances, July 14, 1639
- 383a. To Saint Louise, July 18, 1639
384. To Léonard Boucher, July 20, 1639

- 385. To Saint Louise, July 28, 1639
- 386. To Saint Louise [1639]
- 387. To Saint Louise [1639]
- 388. To Saint Louise [1639]
- 388a. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent [end of July 1639]
- 389. Saint Jane Frances to Saint Vincent [1639]
- 390. To Saint Jane Frances, August 15, 1639
- 391. To Saint Louise [August or September 1639]
- 392. To Mother de la Trinité, August 28, 1639
- 392a. To N. [August 29, 1639]
- 393. To Saint Louise [1639]
- 394. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1648]
- 395. To Saint Louise [between 1636 and 1641]
- 396. To Nicolas Sanguin, September 13, 1639
- 397. To Saint Louise
- 398. To Saint Louise
- 399. To Saint Louise
- 400. To Saint Louise
- 401. To Mother de la Trinité, September 27, 1639
- 402. To Saint Louise
- 403. To Saint Louise [October 9 or 10, 1639]
- 404. To Louis Lebreton, October 12, 1639
- 405. To a Priest of the Mission [October 1639]
- 406. To Saint Louise [October 13, 1639]
- 407. To Benoît Bécu, October 28, 1639
- 408. To Louis Lebreton, November 15, 1639
- 409. To Saint Louise, November 24, 1639
- 410. To Saint Louise [November 30, 1639]
- 411. To Saint Louise [December] 12, 1639
- 412. To Nicolas Durot, December 1639
- 413. To Brother Jean Duhamel, December 15, 1639
- 414. To Saint Louise, December 17, 1639
- 414a. G. Pluyette to Saint Vincent, December 26, 1639
- 415. To Saint Louise, December 31, 1639
- 416. To Guy Lasnier de Vaux, December 31, 1639

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OF FATHER COSTE'S WORKS

Some three years before the death of Saint Vincent, on the 15th of August 1657, Brother Ducournau, who had been Saint Vincent's faithful and hardworking secretary for close on twenty years, wrote a short memorandum on the importance of preserving in writing what he calls "the holy discourses of Monsieur Vincent." Brother Ducournau was looking to the future and he set out not only arguments for but the rebuttals of the arguments against preserving what Saint Vincent had said.

"It is important, it would seem, for the Company in the future to possess an exact collection of the holy discourses of M. Vincent and to preserve them, for the following reasons:

- 1st. The best bequest of fathers is the good advice and instructions they leave their children.
- 2nd. In the world, men take great care to have an inventory made out, and possession taken, of a perishable heritage. . . .
- 3rd. . . . those who waste a splendid, entailed estate do an irreparable injury to their successors.

. . .

4th. If the works he has accomplished are works of God, as they seem to be, God must have bestowed His Spirit on them in order to accomplish and maintain them; consequently, the advice and instruction employed to that end should be regarded as divine, and collected as a

heavenly manna, whose various flavors attracted so many different sorts of persons of both sexes and of every rank in life, who have associated themselves in various ways, on behalf of so many different enterprises, and who have been supported by his guidance. . . ." (Chollier: Ms. account of Brother Ducournau, pp. 151 ff.)

Brother Ducournau must be vigorously clapping his hands--if applause is allowed in heaven--to manifest his approval and satisfaction at the work which has been done in publishing in the English language an official translation of the entire works of Saint Vincent. Congratulations are certainly in order to a host of people who over the years have asked for and encouraged the publication of these volumes. Our most generous tribute of praise and gratitude must be offered to those who have laboured to present us with this English translation of "the holy discourses of M. Vincent."

It is now some sixty years since Father Pierre Coste, C.M., critically edited the correspondence, conferences, and writings of Saint Vincent. It was Father Coste, too, who has written the three volume definitive biography of the Saint. Happily this biography has been translated into English by Father Joseph Leonard, C.M., who also succeeded in publishing a translation of the Conferences to the Daughters of Charity, as well as a volume of letters from the Saint's correspondence. To date, however, we in the English-speaking world have been without an official translation of the entirety of what Father Coste edited. This void, and it has been a keenly felt one, is now being filled. Hopefully within the next four years or so, all Saint Vincent's writings will be available to us in English. The work will go even beyond that of Father Coste, for the volumes which are presently being prepared will contain some material of Saint Vincent which has come to light during the past forty years and was unavailable to Father Coste--furthermore, the original footnotes of the French edition have been revised and supplemented.

The Editorial Board has made a wise decision in commencing the project of translation with Saint Vincent's correspondence. His correspondence fills eight volumes of Father Coste's French edition. In these volumes, dare I say it, one finds Saint Vincent at his best. Someone once observed that it is better to write for oneself and have no public, than to write for the public and have no self. Saint Vincent certainly did not write for the public. He wrote to individuals, addressing himself to their particular queries and needs. He wrote, as he counseled us to do, with God alone in view. For that reason, the letters of Saint Vincent are particularly valuable in revealing to us the depth of his insight into the human condition, the length of his patience, and the breadth of his love.

"Ignorance of the Scriptures means ignorance of Christ" observed Saint Jerome. It could be said that to be unacquainted with the writings of Saint Vincent is to miss knowing him deeply. The writings of Saint Vincent are like a deep mine from which we can quarry strong rocks of wisdom upon which we can build our own lives and the lives of the poor of Jesus Christ. Let me echo that voice which Saint Augustine mysteriously heard saying: "Take up and read. . . take up and read."

RICHARD MCCULLEN, C.M.

Superior General

Rome, 9 November 1983

LETTER FROM FATHER VERDIER

Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

To Pierre Coste, C.M.

Paris, February 17, 1920

Father and very dear Confrere,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You undertook and have just brought to a successful conclusion a fine and carefully done work which is destined to make Saint Vincent de Paul better known through the publications of his letters.

The first printed collection, going back to 1880, is nearly out of print; in addition, it has many gaps. Yours, which is more complete, will contain several hundred letters, unpublished or only partially known, which had escaped the research of your predecessor. You have added, and the innovation is fitting, letters received by the Saint.

Having recalled that immediately after his death the number of his letters was estimated at about 30,000, and that in the eighteenth century Collet had been able to consult almost 7,000, the editor of 1880 adds, not without some sadness: "Today we have only 2,500 of them; the others, alas! are lost forever or buried in private archives. However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way."

You were unwilling to make this resignation your own; and if it is true that fortune favors the daring, it is no less true that Providence rewards the persevering. You are an encouraging example of this fact. You searched diligently, for a long time and everywhere, even as far as America, and made invaluable discoveries; invaluable because of the intrinsic worth of many of them. These discoveries allowed you to complete letters of which we possessed only a part, to date others more accurately, and to correct the names of certain recipients which were doubtful until now or at times incorrect.

You knew how to seek and to find; you knew how to read so as to restore to us the text of Saint Vincent in its perfect integrity. It is truly the Saint still speaking and still repeating to us what he wished to say to his correspondents in the way and with the forms and expressions with which he wished to say it.

It gives me great pleasure to thank you for this work. The better great men are known, the more they are appreciated; and if they are truly great men, they are loved even more. Saint Vincent has a conspicuous place among these truly great men: The Church recognizes him and proclaims him one of her heroes; and his country, too, counts him among those of her children who bring her the most honor.

The reading of his letters, in which he paints his own portrait, will make him better known and, consequently, better loved. By knowing him better and loving him more, your readers, or rather his, will feel themselves grow better, not to mention the special pleasure that will be experienced by those lovers of things of the spirit, connoisseurs of the history and customs of the epoch in which the Saint lived.

Not only will the children of Saint Vincent de Paul's spiritual family, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, be in a position to enjoy this interest in edification and erudition; the great associations which lay claim to his name, the Ladies of Charity, the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, and still others, less known but no less attached to his name and his spirit, will likewise be able to relish it.

Finally, the literary public itself will have every facility for becoming more intimately acquainted with this great man and this great Saint. Your work, in fact, while it brings about a happy contradiction to the preceding editor's discouraged regrets concerning the number of letters, also satisfies his desire to make this treasure public. "Such a work," he says speaking of his collection, "if it were made available to the public, could not fail to arouse the interest of its readers to whom it would offer a considerable number of documents as precious as they are edifying and almost all unpublished."

This wish is now fulfilled and well fulfilled, thanks to your publication.

All that remains is for me to wish your work the widest distribution, a wish that I make wholeheartedly as I await with entire confidence its realization.

Believe me always, Father and very dear Confrere, most devotedly yours in Our Lord.

F. VERDIER, C.M.

Superior General

INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH EDITION

Saint Vincent de Paul was a man of action. He also wrote a great deal. A man of action is, perforce, a man of relationships, and the more numerous the relationships are, the more abundant is the correspondence necessary to maintain them.

It is estimated that more than thirty thousand letters were penned by the Saint or his secretaries. According to Collet,¹ there were still six or seven thousand of them in 1748. After more than three centuries, this treasure has been considerably impoverished. We would not be able to publish even eighteen hundred of them today if we were to adhere to letters for which we have the complete text.

Of all Vincent de Paul's correspondents, none was in more regular contact with him than Louise de Marillac. This collection contains about 400 letters from the Saint to his devout collaborator. The most favored after her is Firmin Get, Superior of the house in Marseilles, to whom 150 letters were written. Jean Martin, Superior in Turin, received about 130; Edmond Jolly, Superior in Rome, almost 120; Charles Ozenne, Superior in Warsaw, about 100; and Etienne Blatiron, Superior in Genoa, almost 80. Then come in order of number Bernard Codoing, Brother Jean Parre, Antoine Portail, Louis Rivet, Jacques Pesnelle, Marc Coglée, all members of the Congregation of the Mission. For several years the Saint made it a rule to write every week to the Superiors of the houses in Marseilles, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Warsaw, and others;² he was faithful to this even when he had nothing to say³ Therefore, in many cases, the dates of the letters we still have allow us to guess, almost with certainty, the dates of those that are lost.

Except when illness prevented him from doing so, Vincent de Paul never stopped writing in his own hand to Louise de Marillac. Until 1645 he took care of all his correspondence himself. That year, overwhelmed with work, he took as his secretary his compatriot, Brother Bertrand Ducournau,⁴ who was educated, wrote well, loved the work, and joined boundless dedication to unerring judgment. The following year Brother Louis Robineau⁵ was appointed second secretary. The extant letters are almost all in the handwriting of Saint Vincent or of these two Brothers. The transcription of Circular Letters was entrusted to temporary secretaries.

The Saint sometimes says that he is dictating his letters.⁶ Was he in the habit of doing this, and did the word "dictate" have in his mind the absolute meaning we give it today? One cannot help but notice a considerable difference between the style of the letters written by his own hand and those simply bearing his signature. The former are more concise, more virile, more lively; they have more the stamp of the superior who holds authority and is conscious of his responsibility. We perceive more clearly in these letters the language of a man who speaks in his own name, and they are more interesting to read.

Once his letter was finished, Saint Vincent would reread it, make the corrections he thought necessary, sign it, and add whatever he had forgotten in a postscript. Then he folded it and applied the seal that can be seen at the beginning of this volume. The seal pictured the Savior evangelizing the poor. Around it, the words Superior Generalis Congreg. Missionis indicated on the outside the source of the letter.

His many occupations left the Saint little time for his correspondence, so we find him making use even of free moments spent outside his house.⁷ He himself says in one of his letters that he was writing it out in the street.⁸ He often took time from his rest, and sometimes, overcome by fatigue, he would fall asleep while he was writing; the handwriting of several letters clearly shows the influence of sleep.⁹

Before 1639, the date always follows the signature except when there is no room at the bottom of the page;¹⁰ from 1640 on, it is always put at the top.¹¹ Letters to Louise de Marillac are dated only when she is traveling or when the Saint himself is away from Paris. When the date is missing, it is often replaced by the day of the week.

The letters to the Missionaries and to the Sisters all begin with this greeting: "The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!", a quite sincere expression of the most intimate desire of his heart. Certain feast days suggested a different form at times: "May the Holy Passion of Our Savior urge us to do and to bear everything for His love!"¹² or: "May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed on your heart forever!"¹³

Saint Vincent appears to us in his letters as his biographers describe him: simple; good; humble; wise; practical; not losing sight of the most minute details of a business matter; his eyes always raised to God, his rule and his guide; grateful for benefits received; and full of respect for people holding high positions.

He goes straight to the point except when he has a reproach to make, for then he begins by humiliating himself.

When he quotes scripture, most often from memory, we must not look for completely faithful reproductions of the sacred text.

He knew how to give his sentences an original twist, for example: "M. Alméras no longer has a fever, nor have I any news to give you."¹⁴ Or he sets aside the serious tone to say a pleasant word: "I am indeed consoled," he writes to the Superior in Turin, "that Brother Desmortiers has made such progress in the language that he is able to say: Signor, si."¹⁵ After telling about the shipwreck of a vessel carrying some Missionaries who were being sent to Madagascar, the Saint adds that, having gotten into a small boat with provisions for three or four days, they arrived at Saint-Jean-de-Luz after two long weeks "in good health and with a good appetite."¹⁶

Although Saint Vincent was not much given to distractions, we find a few in his correspondence. One of his letters to Pierre Escart, Priest of the Mission, ends with the words, "who am, in His love, Madame, your most humble servant."¹⁷ This title of Madame he absentmindedly gives to Mademoiselle Le Gras on two occasions.¹⁸ Two letters were left unfinished without the Saint's noticing it.¹⁹ Here and there we find words repeated, left out,²⁰ or obviously incorrect.²¹ We have had to rectify several inaccurate dates in the originals.²² With regard to these distractions, which can easily be counted they are so rare, we must take the secretaries into account.

The letters of Saint Vincent merit publication as historical documents to provide information on the life of this great man who unquestionably holds first place in the history of charity, and must be ranked foremost among reformers of the French clergy. They also merit it because of their literary value, which places their author among the fine prose writers of the French language in the seventeenth century.

We still possess the originals of a good number of his letters, the majority divided into five collections or files.

Files of the Mission. -- The Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission possesses 305 originals,²³ 36 rough drafts, 10 facsimiles, and 42 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was much richer before the Revolution. The looting of Saint-Lazare in 1789, the dissolution of the Congregation in 1792, and gifts given too frequently have contributed to its impoverishment. All these letters, with the exception of seventeen, were published in 1880 along with the other letters of the Saint by the Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin.

Files of the Daughters of Charity. -- The collection preserved at the Motherhouse of the Daughters of Charity is made up almost entirely of letters to Louise de Marillac and to the first Sisters of the Company. It comprises 275 originals, of which 22 eluded Father Pémartin's research.

Files of Turin. -- The Turin files were created at the time of the Revolution. The letters composing them were brought from Paris to the house of the Priests of the Mission in Turin by Carlo-Domenico Siccardi, Assistant of the Congregation, who had been entrusted with depositing them in a safe place. There are 346 of them: 324 originals, 11 rough drafts, and 11 copies from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Twenty-four are unpublished. We find in this collection almost all the letters to Jean Martin.

Files of Cracow. -- On December 5, 1904, the originals of 167 letters addressed to the first Missionaries of Poland were brought to Father Józef Kiedrowski, Visitor of the Province of Poland and Superior of the house in Cracow. There were 150 of them from Saint Vincent, 1 from the Queen of Poland, 2 from René Alméras, 2 from Edmond Jolly, 2 from Jean Dehorgny, 2 from Thomas Berthe, etc. It is thought that these documents belonged to the Warsaw house before the dispersion of 1864, and that a Priest of the Mission had placed them in safekeeping with a Catholic family.²⁴ Father Pémartin was familiar with all but five of these letters.

Files of the Hains family. -- At the time of the dispersion of religious Congregations at the end of the eighteenth century, Jean-Baptiste Moissonnier, Superior of the house in Marseilles, took with him the letters of Saint Vincent preserved in the archives of that house. After his death (January 17, 1813), these letters went to M. Nodet, his heir, father-in-law of M. Hains, a merchant in Marseilles, who had 57 of them in 1886. The latter's daughter, a Daughter of Charity in Neuilly-sur-Seine, still had 42 of them until recently. She has just parted with them

generously in order to give them to the Superior General of the Priests of the Mission. In the beginning, the files contained more than 150 letters. The ones that are left are almost all addressed to Firmin Get. Four of them are missing in the collection published in 1880.

The originals placed on sale by the Charavay firm of Paris would form an important collection by themselves alone if they were gathered together, because there are about ninety of them. We were able to copy some of them on the premises before they were sold, or trace them to collectors. The majority of these letters are known to us only through copies, through the work of Father Pémartin, or through the concise information given in catalogues.

The Sainte-Geneviève Library would have furnished us with ten originals if an unscrupulous hand had not gone off with them. There are at least copies of them left,²⁵ all transcribed--except for the letter to the Abbot of Grandmont--by Father Prévot, who wrote on the back of folio 2: "These letters from Blessed Vincent, written for the most part to the archivist of the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève, are in a folio volume entitled on the back: *Lettres de prélats depuis l'an 1653 jusqu'en 1660*. The volume is bound with green sheepskin and contains some letters prior to 1653." The volume is still extant, but without the letters in question. Four of the originals have since been put up for sale by M. Charavay.

The old collections of Saint Vincent's letters have been of great use to us. We find in them a number of letters for which we no longer have the originals. Let us review the principal ones.

At the time of the process of beatification of Saint Vincent, several sessions were dedicated, as is customary, to the examination of his writings. The tribunal had 344 letters reviewed and kept 32, probably the most important, in order to add them to the dossier of the process. These 32 originals, all in the Saint's own handwriting, belonged to the house of Saint-Lazare. Experts were called in to ascertain their authenticity. A sworn copyist transcribed them into the volume of the official written records of the sessions. The copy was compared to the original and the slight deviations that were discovered were noted in the margin. Therefore, these are authentic copies, of the same value as the originals. It is still possible today to see the perfect conformity of those letters whose originals have not been lost. Among these letters, 5 are unpublished; 20 were known to us only by fragments, which have usually been altered; and the other 7 give us a more authentic text than that published in 1880.

The Archives of the Mission possess two old registers of copies, which we shall call, in order to distinguish them, Register 1 and Register 2. Register 1 is bound with boards and measures 340 by 220 millimeters. These Italian words written on the first page tell us the number of letters it contained when it was complete: *Copie di lettere n° cento settantotto-178-scritte da San Vincenzo di Paoli portate da Parigi l'anno 1792*. The disappearance of the last page or pages has reduced the number to 174. The 175th letter begins at the end of the seventy-second page and was continued on the seventy-third, which we no longer have.

A portrait of Saint Vincent, beneath which are written the words: *Sanctus Vincentius a Paulo, Congregationis Missionis et Puellarum Charitatis fundator*, was added at the beginning of the collection. The manuscript itself could well belong to the seventeenth century. The writing, though not beautiful, is legible. The letters are given in their entirety. The designations: "signed, not signed, holograph, handwritten rough draft," indicate that the copyist had before him the original documents themselves or copies of them. No letters to the Priests of the Mission are found in this collection. Four are addressed to the Queen of France, 3 to the Queen of Poland, 2 to the Pope, 2 to Mazarin, 1 to the Nuncio, 9 to cardinals, 23 to bishops, 7 to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, 1 to Turenne, 1 to Louise de Marillac, 5 to Daughters of Charity, 11 to Mademoiselle du Fay, 11 to Visitation nuns, 2 to Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, 2 to Louis de Chandener, etc. As far as can be judged from the 13 letters of the Register whose originals have come down to us, we can rely completely on the accuracy of the text. All but one of the letters in this collection appeared in 1880.

In the manuscript life of René Almérás, Saint Vincent's successor, we read: "It is impossible to express the care he took to follow step by step the mind of this first superior. Not satisfied with having brought to light his life, in which the qualities of his direction are described, he felt it his duty to search further among his letters where he has, as it were, engraved his spirit, his maxims, and his character on an infinity of subjects while speaking to all sorts of people. To this end, he had excerpts taken from them and had them bound in thirteen or fourteen quires. . . . And in order that those who would succeed him in the direction of the Company might also

profit from these same letters and more easily draw from them the instructions they would need, a few months before his death²⁶ he had them arranged according to subject matter and transcribed accurately into large bound books as a precious treasure for the Company."

These excerpts were classified under fifteen headings:

1. Institution, perfection, government and works of the Congregation of the Mission in general
2. Orders and advices given to visitors and superiors
3. Admonitions, words of encouragement, and congratulations to individuals
4. Missions in Christian countries and among unbelievers
5. Seminaries and other functions of the Institute
6. Practice of certain virtues
7. Deceased members of the Company
8. Letters of consolation to lay people who were undergoing a trial
9. Gratitude to friends and benefactors
10. Advice given and good works suggested even to distinguished people of rank
11. Various business affairs
12. Struggle against Jansenism
13. Assistance of the poor
14. Direction of the Daughters of Charity
15. Direction of the Visitation nuns

Volume I is the only one we have. It covers merely the first three parts of this vast program. We shall call it Register 2. It is 370 millimeters high and 270 millimeters wide. It contains 350 pages and gives us 549 fragments, or rather 548, because one of them is a duplication. More than 100 of these fragments are from letters whose entire text we have elsewhere. With the exception of about 20, all are excerpts from letters addressed to members of the Congregation of the Mission. The handwriting is beautiful, regular, and can be read quite easily. The copyist never writes the word *Monsieur* at the beginning of the letters, nor the initial greeting customary with the Saint. He did not feel obliged to copy the original in a servile way. Ordinarily he arranges the first sentence of his excerpts in such a way as to remove any dependence on the part he omits. He modernizes the vocabulary and does away with lengthy sentences. However, his modifications are not of great consequence and, on the whole, his text is indeed that of the original. So that some idea of this may be grasped, here, from letter 91,²⁷ is the passage he altered the most:

Text of Register 2. -- He did me the honor of telling me that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to this last point, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I shall tell you, *Monsieur*, that I accept this most willingly, although having calculated the expense on the present cost of living, it will cost us more, and although the board payments even for the students are eighty écus.

Real text. -- The above-mentioned Prior did me the honor of telling me yesterday evening that he had consulted his religious about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to the last difficulty, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept this most willingly, although I have calculated the expense exactly from what it has cost us at present and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying ninety écus.

However insignificant these changes may be, it is to be regretted that the copyist made them. His excuse is that he was living in the seventeenth century which did not have, like the twentieth, a concern for meticulous accuracy. The majority of his contemporaries proved less scrupulous than he. We are borrowing eight unpublished fragments from Register 2.

Manuscript 1292 of the Municipal Library of Avignon is described as follows in the catalogue: "Eighteenth century, paper, 94 pages, 262 by 190 millimeters, bound in chamois leather." The title is: *Lettres choisies du Vénérable Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Supérieur Général de la . . . Congrégation de la Mission*. These letters, or rather these excerpts from letters, 99 in all, to which are added as a supplement 10 other fragments, are arranged in 8 groups according to the instruction they contain:

1. Trust in God and abandonment to Providence
2. Perseverance in one's vocation

3. Regularity and perfection
4. Care of health and charity towards the neighbor
5. Care of the sick, mutual support and union
6. Courage to overcome one's own inclinations for the glory of God
7. Trust in God and mistrust of self
8. Prayer, gratitude

Almost all the fragments of the Avignon manuscript are in Register 2 and are found there with the same variants. Of the three fragments that are the exception, two are known from other sources. Therefore, we shall borrow from this manuscript only one excerpt, which has already been published in the 1880 collection.²⁸

The Avignon manuscript represents a collection of manuscripts in fairly general use in the houses of the Priests of the Mission before 1792. We still have two other examples of it left.

One of them is manuscript 20 of the Chamber of Deputies: eighteenth century, paper, 143 pages, 200 by 145 millimeters, bound in sheepskin. It has the same title, the same divisions, the same grouping of the letters, reduced here to 75. In addition, we find in it a copy of the alleged death sentence passed against Our Lord by Pilate and a supplement of 23 fragments, all relating to the Company of the Daughters of Charity, which are found only in this manuscript. Of these fragments, 5 have remained unpublished.

The other manuscript is at the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is bound in boards, belongs to the second half of the eighteenth century, and contains 74 fragments on 122 pages. It measures 217 by 150 millimeters. It stops at the sixth part, of which it gives only one letter, or rather, letter fragment. In short, it is an incomplete copy of the Avignon manuscript and has nothing special to offer.

Manuscript 869 of the Lyons Library bears the title *Livre contenant l'abrégé de la vie des prêtres, clercs et frères de la Congrégation de la Mission qui ont vécu et qui sont morts dans la pratique des vertus convenables à leur vocation*. In this collection, wherein we find the full-length accounts about René Alméras, Edmond Jolly, and Jean-Baptiste Anselme, Priests of the Mission, a place was assigned to the correspondence of Saint Vincent. The *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent* go from folio 168 to folio 196. They contain the eulogy of recently deceased Missionaries. Some of these fragments have not yet been published. They can also be found in the Library of the Calvet Museum in Avignon, in the Delandine manuscript 774, which reproduces the entire contents of the Lyons manuscript and several additional documents. Both manuscripts are from the eighteenth century. The one in Lyons is bound in parchment and consists of 286 pages measuring 260 by 90 millimeters.

The departmental archives of Vaucluse possess a quarto register of 37 pages, classified D 274, which contains 42 excerpts from letters of Saint Vincent, letters addressed for the most part to superiors in Rome. This manuscript contains nothing that we do not know from other sources.

The Marseilles manuscript, as we call it because of its title: *Extraits des lettres de saint Vincent de Paul déposées dans les archives de la Mission de France à Marseille*, belongs to the Motherhouse of the Priests of the Mission. It is a simple notebook of 17 pages on which have been transcribed in roughly chronological order, probably shortly after the publication of Father Pémartin's work, 64 generally short fragments of letters addressed mainly to Firmin Get. It was impossible for us to locate the document that the copyist had in hand. The conformity of the verified text with excerpts of letters for which we possess the original guarantees its overall accuracy. Twenty of these fragments will be published here for the first time.

The Daughters of Charity of the parish of Saint-Paul in Paris possessed until 1814 a folio collection of eighty-eight pages written in the second half of the seventeenth century. It was entitled: *Extraits de Lettres de feu Monsieur Vincent et feu Mademoiselle Le Gras*. The letters of the Saint are represented by more than one hundred fragments, those of his spiritual daughter by only seven. The handwriting is not always the same; on page seven, we recognize that of Julienne Loret, one of the Foundress' principal collaborators. The excerpts are separated quite often by a small blank space or by a mere indentation. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other, and it could be that at one time or another, for lack of sufficient information, we have attached to one and the same letter extracts from different letters, or vice versa. In 1814 the manuscript was given to Dominique-François Hanon, Vicar General of the

Congregation of the Mission. It has since gone to enrich the archives of the Sisters' Motherhouse. We shall borrow from it about forty excerpts.

In addition to the manuscript collections, there are printed ones and the old works that made extensive use of the Saint's correspondence. It is fitting to rank in first place the *Vie du Vénérable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*²⁹ by Louis Abelly. A great number of Saint Vincent's letters are quoted or merely referred to by this first of his biographers. A few more than two hundred of them are mentioned, among which about one hundred appear in Father Pémartin's collection. Like most writers of his time, Abelly did not scruple touching up the texts he quoted under pretext of improving their style or making them clearer. Because the thought was respected, it was considered quite natural to remove the imperfections of an expression. Unfortunately, poor taste often rendered the expression more defective instead of improving it, and the thought, said to be untouched, suffered at times from these changes.

Abelly replaces words, inserts brief commentaries, and modifies sentence constructions. Beneath his pen "reputation" becomes "repute";³⁰ "good men," "respectable men";³¹ "you have a thousand reasons," "you have every reason";³² "merry fellows," "those who would be too free";³³ and "devout," "flourishing in godliness."³⁴

Abelly likes to emphasize the pious tone of the Saint's expressions. Thus he writes: "these holy days" instead of "these days";³⁵ "the most Blessed Sacrament" instead of "the Blessed Sacrament."³⁶

Saint Vincent's conciseness sometimes seems to him an obstacle to clarity; Abelly remedies this by lengthening the sentence. Here are a few examples:

Real text. -- "Oh surely, that is an illusion!"³⁷

Abelly. -- "Oh! surely, if you were to think that way, you would be greatly mistaken and it would be sheer illusion."³⁸

Real text. -- "They will go to judgment day with their heads held high."³⁹

Abelly. -- "But with what holy confidence they will appear on judgment day after having performed so many holy works of charity!"⁴⁰

Real text. -- "Have pity on us."⁴¹

Abelly. -- "Therefore, have pity on us and come take us by the hand to draw us out of the evil state in which we are."⁴²

Often enough the language of Vincent de Paul is more clever, more lively, more French than that attributed to him by his biographer. The Saint writes to Louise de Marillac: "Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight since you have borne such a fruit!"⁴³ We do not understand why Abelly substituted for those words the following: "Oh! how you have appeared today in God's sight like a beautiful tree, since, through His grace, you have borne such fruit!"⁴⁴ Saint Vincent continues: "May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love!" Is that not better than: "I entreat Him, through His infinite goodness, to make of you forever a veritable tree of life which will produce fruits of true charity!" We read in a letter to François du Coudray: "Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits?"⁴⁵ Abelly preferred: "Is each one in good health and really content?"⁴⁶

Some textual changes result from mistakes in reading. It is doubtless because he was not able to decipher Saint Vincent's handwriting that the first biographer read *songez* [dream] for *soyez* [be].⁴⁷

Among the thirty fragments, approximately, whose texts we have been able to check, there is not one given to us completely intact. Several are even almost unrecognizable⁴⁸ because they have undergone so many modifications.

In his *Vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, Pierre Collet also makes frequent use of the Saint's writings. He cites or makes reference to more than 250 letters. His quotations, less frequent and generally less extensive than those of Abelly, are almost all found in the first biographer, often enough with the same alterations.⁴⁹ When he has recourse directly to the original, it is not for the purpose of quoting it verbatim. Nevertheless, he is perhaps less free with the text than Abelly.

In 1834, Gossin, a lawyer at the royal court of Paris, published from the originals, in a book entitled *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits*,⁵⁰ seventy-six letters of the Saint--the majority addressed to Louise de Marillac--and one petition to the Parlement. He retains the original spelling, places the dated letters in chronological order, and gives the names of those who own

the manuscripts he used. Although quite incomplete, this work would be excellent if the author had been better able to read Saint Vincent's handwriting. The proper names in particular are completely changed. Who would recognize Goussault, Laurent, Souscarrières, de Herse, Mussot, Romilly, Fortia, de Brou, Pascal, Pillé, and d'Authier in the names Toustain, Lunveni, Souharries, Bierse, Mussut, Clomilly, Foren, Bron, Fasral, Filé and Autin? Who would not be surprised to read in the Saint's correspondence sentences such as this: Faites. . . bien entendre. . . à votre tour que je suis en témoin de Notre-Seigneur [Make it quite clear in your turn that I am like a witness of Our Lord]?⁵¹ Replace *tour* with *coeur*, *témoin* with *l'amour*, and you will have what the Saint wrote [Make it quite clear to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord. . .]. However numerous these reading errors may be, it is almost always easy for anyone who is familiar with Saint Vincent's style and history to reconstruct the true text. Gossin has done a fine and useful piece of work. Our collection is indebted to him for several letters which we have not found anywhere else.

Scarcely had he been elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission than Father Jean-Baptiste Etienne realized that it was his duty to place at the disposition of the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity the conferences and writings of Saint Vincent, so that, better instructed by this reading of their Holy Founder's teachings, they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his. In 1844 he had facsimiles made of a quarto collection of 585 pages: *Collection des conférences de saint Vincent, de plusieurs de ses lettres et de quelques conférences de M. Alméras*. All of these letters except one were selected from the Saint's correspondence with his Missionaries. There are seventy-one of them, arranged in no particular order. More often than not, they are only excerpts.

The following year, 126 letters, more or less complete, appeared in a work published in Paris under the title: *Conférences spirituelles tenues pour les Filles de la Charité par saint Vincent de Paul*.⁵²

This publication was followed ten years later by the *Recueil des diverses Exhortations et Lettres de saint Vincent aux Missionnaires*, which contains facsimiles of nearly seven hundred letters or letter fragments. Here again the editor was not guided by any historical concern: no notes, no chronological order, a text quite frequently altered and therefore flawed, at times composite letters which appear unified but in reality are composed of sentences taken from different letters. A collection of this kind serves its purpose, but it could not be sufficient. The letters of Saint Vincent are not only food for piety; they are also historical documents. Scholars were praying for a comprehensive compilation of complete letters, faithfully reproduced and classified in the only order suitable to history--chronological order.

A compatriot of the Saint, Father Jean-Baptiste Pémartin, Secretary General of the Congregation of the Mission, wished to undertake this work himself in spite of the numerous demands of his office. He collected 2039 letters⁵³ which fill four octavo volumes printed in Paris in 1880 by Pillet et Dumoulin.

The *Lettres de saint Vincent de Paul* enjoyed a well-deserved success among this great Saint's two religious families for whom the work was exclusively intended. It became known and desired by others, and it was in response to the many requests addressed to him that Father Pémartin chose 860 letters from among those he had just published and made them available to the public in 1882.⁵⁴

The 1880 work presupposes considerable research and indicates significant progress over previous collections. Nonetheless, it exhibits many lacunae and a great many inaccuracies.

The discovery of new documents makes it possible today to complete or correct letters taken from less complete or less reliable sources. The dates attributed by Father Pémartin to the undated letters of Saint Vincent are more often than not incorrect. In our time, it is required, and rightly so, that the dates, words and sentences added by the editor to incomplete texts taken from documents damaged by moths, humidity, or a tear be placed in brackets. In the 1880 collection nothing distinguishes them.

The annotation is not plentiful enough. The reader would like to know whether the text followed by the editor is an original, a draft, or a copy; and, when it is an original, whether the writing is the Saint's or that of his secretaries. It would be desirable to tell him, by indicating crossed-out words or by giving different drafts when any can be found, through what successive stages the Saint's thought or expression has passed. A word of explanation

concerning the events or the individuals mentioned in the letters would help him to be better acquainted with the milieu in which Saint Vincent de Paul lived and, at times, to better understand the meaning of his sentence.

The 1880 collection would have profited by being conceived according to a more comprehensive plan. There are letters of Saint Vincent whose text we do not know, but Abelly, Collet, or others give us a summary of their contents; why not mention them? Why not accompany the letters he wrote by those he received? The latter shed light on the former.

Finally, research patiently pursued has brought about fruitful discoveries. Father Pémartin wrote in his preface: "However incomplete this collection may be when compared to what has perished, no means of enriching it have been neglected, and there is very little chance of adding to it hereafter in any appreciable way." A rash statement, for it is already possible to add several hundred unpublished letters to his collection.

A supplement to Saint Vincent's letters published in 1888 contains more than one hundred new ones.⁵⁵ A few unpublished letters, most often copied from the originals, appeared around 1889 in a facsimile collection composed exclusively of letters from the Saint to Louise de Marillac, about 318 in number.⁵⁶ Excerpts from letters, all taken from Father Pémartin's work and relating to the Foundress or the Sisters' works, are added as an appendix. Sister de Geoffre, a Daughter of Charity to whom this work was entrusted, worked at it intelligently and with a will, and it is but just to say that she accomplished it successfully.

After forty years, it seems the time has come to take up again the work of Father Pémartin in order to give it broader scope, more order, greater accuracy, and to adjust it to the requirements of modern criticism.

Keeping the spelling of the documents would have presented, it seems to us, more drawbacks than advantages. We have preferred to modernize it so as to facilitate the reading of the work for the public and to avoid the variety of spellings that exist between the letters written by Saint Vincent and by his secretaries, and between the originals and copies of them. About half the letters which form this collection are taken from copyists from the end of the seventeenth century or later. Why should we retain their spelling which is neither that of the original nor our own? For reasons of uniformity and clarity, the most recent editors of Bossuet's correspondence were led to lay aside the great orator's spelling; we shall imitate them.

The letters of Saint Vincent will be followed by his conferences, and the conferences by the principal documents relating to his life and his institutions. The work we are undertaking is considerable. We hope that it will be of assistance: first of all, to scholars who will find in these pages a great deal of new information; to the Saint's future biographers whom it will spare long and often futile research; and finally, to our readers, for Saint Vincent is one of those men whom we esteem and love more when we know them more intimately. Now, when we esteem him and love him, do we not already feel drawn to imitate him?

PIERRE COSTE, C.M.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

In mid-December of 1973, Father James W. Richardson, C.M., the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, met with the Provincial Superiors or Visitors of the Congregation's Provinces in the United States and requested a new and complete translation into English of all the extant works of Saint Vincent, which, in effect, meant the translation into modern American English of the fourteen-volume work of Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul, Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents* and a collection of 144 letters and two conference outlines unknown to Coste and published by André Dodin, C.M., in *Mission et Charité*, 19-20. Selected letters of Saint Vincent and his conferences to both the Daughters of Charity and the Priests of the Mission had been made available in English through the labors of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M.,¹ but the English-speaking world still awaited access to the entire wealth of material found in Coste's work.

In requesting this translation, Father Richardson was following a long-standing tradition of concern on the part of Vincentian Superiors to place the writings of their Holy Founder at the disposition of all the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity so that "they might be filled more perfectly with his spirit and conform their behavior more closely to his." It is hoped that

the translation of this work, "rich in teaching, sparkling with humor, and without a single banal line--a unique thing in a collection of this kind"²--will now afford the English-speaking segment of the Double Family³ a broader and deeper understanding of the genius of Saint Vincent de Paul and will also be a means of introducing him to others who remain unaware of his spirituality and manifold works of charity.

The ultimate implementation of the Translation Project, as the undertaking became known, was entrusted to Father Cecil Parres, C.M., with Father Joseph I. Dirvin, C.M., designated as Editor-in-Chief. The provinces of the Daughters of Charity were immediately invited to participate in the work and Sister Eleanor McNabb, D.C., joined Fathers Parres and Dirvin to form the first Publishing Board. This group ably laid the groundwork and oversaw the first steps of the infant project, from the organization of the technical details to the gathering of funds. In 1975, Father James R. King, C.M., was appointed Executive Assistant to Father Dirvin and has, since that time, contributed a variety of expertise to the work.

From 1974 to 1980, the translation, as projected in its initial stages, underwent several changes both with regard to the scope of the endeavor and the method of accomplishing it. The initiators of the work envisaged only a simple rendering into English of Coste's work and that of Dodin. They intended an entirely fresh edition translated from the original with no dependence on any previous publication. Volunteer translators recruited from the Double Family were to produce an exact translation of the original with a special review board checking the translation for accuracy. Editorial teams would then couch the text in modern American English while striving to preserve the style and flavor of the original correspondent. The Editorial Board directing the project would make the final review and determination of the manuscript for publication.

In 1976, after two years of organizing, recruiting volunteer translators and editors, and establishing a sufficient financial footing, the Editorial Board decided to publish first of all the work of Dodin, *Mission et Charité*. Several reasons prompted this decision: 1.) the material had not been previously translated; 2.) the volume was short and could be done more quickly than the others; 3.) the amount assigned to any one translator would be small; 4.) it was hoped that participants in the project might feel a sense of achievement in the early stages of the work; and 5.) it was hoped that the appearance of this first volume would encourage interest in the project among members of the Double Family of Saint Vincent. Therefore, in the Fall of 1976, about forty translators throughout the United States received as their first assignment several letters from *Mission et Charité* and the work began in earnest. The publication date set for this section was 1977.

Meanwhile, comments, suggestions, and events were paving the way for major changes in the original plan. The advisability of translating the more than fifty-year old Coste edition without updating the scholarship was called into question. Writings found even more recently than those published in *Mission et Charité* had come to light as well as more complete or more correct versions of letters already appearing in Coste. It was suggested that the letters appearing in Dodin's work be placed chronologically within the existing volumes of Coste and not be isolated in a separate volume. At the same time, Sister Helen Marie Law, D.C.,⁴ had been invited to join the Project. By July of 1976, Sister had already translated on her own the majority of Coste's first eight volumes and the question arose of how best to use her work.

Each of these elements was discussed and carefully considered. As early as May 1976, steps were taken to obtain editors capable of updating the scholarship of the Coste edition. In October 1977, a Priest of the Mission, Father John W. Carven, agreed to serve in this capacity and in May 1978 he was specifically assigned to the work.

At a meeting on March 26, 1977, the Editorial Board agreed, as part of the general editing process, to follow the recommendation concerning the insertion of Dodin's material within the chronology of Coste's volumes. However, the members still felt that there were advantages to publishing an inexpensive but attractive translation of the Dodin volume. It was not until October of the same year that the focus shifted to publishing several of Coste's volumes, primarily because of the great cost reduction, and no further mention was made of printing *Mission et Charité* as an isolated volume.

Although the original conception of the Project envisioned a totally new translation done by recruited volunteers, the Editorial Board decided in 1977 to use Sister Helen Marie Law's³ work as the basic translation for Coste's volumes. Her work was judged highly accurate, although

certainly susceptible to editing. Use would also be made, especially to clarify difficult passages, of the translation of Father Joseph Leonard, C.M. The Board then decided to enlist the services of a full-time French language scholar to review and, where necessary, to emend Sister's entire work. In 1978, a Daughter of Charity, Sister John Marie Poole, was assigned to carry out this service, part-time at first and then full time.

By October 1977, the concept of the simple translation had expanded to the creation of a totally new edition based on a thorough revision of Sister Helen Marie Law's translation. The work would represent as complete a canon as possible of Saint Vincent's writings and, for that purpose, a serious effort would be made to seek out unpublished documents from any source available. The material found in *Mission et Charité* and the *Annales*, as well as any new items discovered would be inserted chronologically within the volumes of Coste. And, finally, a history scholar would update all the information contained in the footnotes and final index. Two further decisions in 1980 provided each volume with a biographical index which incorporated terms and places, thereby making each volume self-contained.

Optimism seemed in order as the Project proceeded through 1978 and into 1979 with one person working full time on the translation and another, on a part-time basis, reviewing the footnotes. However, the euphoria was short-lived: as 1979 moved into 1980, neither member of the work force was able to devote full-time attention to the Project. This lack of consistent application to the task, the consequent slowdown of the work, and the enormity of the undertaking as envisioned in 1977 brought about a revision of the Project goals. On May 13, 1980, the Vincentian Provincials altered the 1977 decision and decided to follow through with a full English translation of only the letters, that is, of the first eight volumes of Coste including the new material found in Dodin and other sources and with updated annotation. Upon completion of the letters, a further determination would be made concerning the six remaining volumes.

In 1980, Father Carven and Sister John Marie Poole, who had been working on the translation since 1978, were both assigned full time to the Project. Once again the work progressed and the prospects for publication appeared hopeful. During the next four years, the Project passed through various high and low periods. An unforeseen change of personnel slowed down the work considerably, as did the necessity of fully developing and refining the detailed aspects of the editing process, which at this point in time had never gone beyond the first check for accuracy.

Now, at last, in 1984, we are able to offer the first volume of this new edition of Saint Vincent's letters to the English-speaking world. To the 416 letters which appeared in Coste's original volume I, we have added twenty-six letters, three of which have never before been published.⁵ Twenty-four letters from *Mission et Charité* have been inserted: nineteen are completely new to the volume⁶ and the other five provide more complete and/or more correct versions of letters already in Coste.⁷ Three letters, also new to volume I, have been drawn from Coste's supplements in volumes VIII⁸ and XIII,⁹ which also offered more complete and correct versions of three other letters.¹⁰ One letter was discovered in the *Annales*¹¹ and another¹² in an article concerning the adoption of an Apostolic Visitor in the Visitation Community. Research to date has uncovered ten more unpublished letters and approximately seven documents which will be inserted chronologically in the appropriate volumes in addition to the remaining 117 items in *Mission et Charité* and the other twenty-six letters published by Coste in his supplements. It is hoped that still more of Saint Vincent's writings will be found as work on the Project progresses so that the present edition will truly represent the most complete collection of the Saint's work ever published.

Besides the letters newly inserted in volume I, seventeen letters have been relocated within the volume,¹³ either because of corrections given by Coste himself in his volumes VIII and XIII or due to discoveries permitting more accurate dating. In such cases, the original number of the letter has been left with the title of the letter and an indication has been given as to its new placement. The citation found at the new location gives the rationale for the change that has been made.

In placing new letters within the volume or changing the placement of letters we have relied on Coste's corrections given in volumes VIII and XIII, the listings found in the *Annales*,¹⁴ the dates on recently discovered letters or, in the absence of a date, on internal evidence. To

facilitate research in Coste's work, we have chosen to keep the letter numbers of the original volumes and to indicate material newly added or relocated within each volume by adding a, b, c, etc., to the number of the preceding item. We have also decided to adhere to the span of years assigned by Coste for each volume.

In some cases, the finding of an original has enabled us to join fragments formerly considered separate letters. Such combined letters have been assigned a single number followed by a letter to differentiate the whole from the segments as published in the original Coste volume. Where variations of a single letter exists, only the most correct version has been included in the volume. Likewise, although Coste chose to publish letters originally written in Latin both in that language and in French, the present edition bears only the English translation of the original Latin.

Three different types of letters are presented in these volumes: letters from Saint Vincent, letters to Saint Vincent and, at times, mere summaries of letters where the existence of a letter is known but no text is available. The letters written by Saint Vincent appear in regular type, while those addressed to him are printed in italics. Smaller type has been used to differentiate the summaries.

As Coste states in his introduction, almost all the letters we now possess are either in Saint Vincent's handwriting or in that of one of his secretaries. The term original autograph found in the citation of a letter indicates that the manuscript was written entirely in the Saint's hand. If the citation uses the term signed letter, the manuscript was written by a secretary and signed by the Saint. For some letters only a facsimile, a handwritten copy, a photocopy, or a photograph is known. Such indications are given in the citation of the letters for which this information is available.

The citations usually state as well the actual location of the manuscript or copy used for the present edition. Great care has been taken to verify these locations where possible. Letters drawn from other publications and those belonging to special collections, private or museum, have not been checked due to the near impossibility of such a task. However, an attempt has been made to verify all letters belonging to private houses of the Daughters of Charity, the Priests of the Mission, other Religious houses, churches, and various religious institutions. In volume I, the whereabouts of fifty-nine letters have been checked and the citations corrected where necessary. As a rule, no explanation has been given concerning these changes--the present location has merely been inserted. In the process of checking these locations and in the search for unpublished letters, we have at times been fortunate enough to locate the originals of letters for which only copies were known formerly. In these instances as well no mention has been made of the correction--the citation simply states that the manuscript is an original.

We have updated as well the department names given in the footnotes. Several departments have had name changes since the time of Coste, while two others have been subdivided.¹⁵

Although the Project has undergone many delays, each has contributed in some way to the overall quality of the work. The appearance, in 1983, of the revised edition of Saint Louise de Marillac's writings¹⁶ has permitted us to check her letters to Saint Vincent and her spiritual writings for any corrections which may have come to light. We have also adjusted all the footnote references to the appropriate indication as given in the new edition.

In any work of translation the question of style invariably arises, so it was not strange that we should be faced with the problem. Should we smooth out clumsy or elliptical phrasing in the interest of producing a more "readable" translation or should we preserve the roughness and stylistic crudities of the original in order to reflect the flavor and spontaneous quality of Saint Vincent's expression, supplying explanations where needed to make the sense clear? As our response to this question, we have attempted to make our translation as "readable" as possible while adhering closely to the style of each correspondent. For that purpose we have made an effort to give as literal a meaning as we could to the expressions used, while still adapting them to modern terminology. We have tried to reproduce even the grammatical constructions used by each correspondent unless the true meaning of the sentence would suffer thereby. Very long sentences have been shortened and short phrases joined together to render thoughts more readily intelligible, though still preserving the sense of the original. The vocabulary and expression has deliberately been kept simple. Saint Vincent's love for and practice of simplicity

are no secret to anyone familiar with his life; therefore, it was judged fitting to follow his own simplicity in the choice of words and style unless he himself opted for more elegant forms.

To retain the French atmosphere of the work we have left certain terms and expressions in the original French. General terms of greeting such as *Monsieur*, *Madame*, etc., have not been translated, nor have we attempted an English version for expressions such as *O mon Dieu!*, *O Jésus!* Landholding titles which often form part of a proper name--*Comte*, *Duc*, *Marquis*--have also been left in French. Other titles have been translated by the closest English equivalent possible. Proper names are given in the original language unless there is a familiar English form. This holds true for both people and places. Therefore, *Sainte Jeanne-Françoise Frémiot de Chantal* has been rendered as *Saint Jane Frances Frémiot de Chantal*, whereas *Pierre Séguier* remains in French. For places, *Brittany* is used instead of *Bretagne*, while *Granada*, *Villeneuve*, and similar names remain in the original language. Proper foreign names within the text of the manuscripts have been left as written by the correspondents. However, the footnotes and index present the name in its original language form--*Alessandro Bichi* for *Alexandre Bichi*; *Giovanni Francesco Guidi di Bagno* for *Jean-François Bagni*.

An attempt has been made to standardize name variations appearing in the original manuscripts: *Gondi* is always used in this edition although the form *Gondy* is often seen in the manuscripts. We have, however, left the variations *Pollalion* and *Poulaillon*. Although the correct spelling is the former, *Saint Vincent* always wrote the latter.³¹

We have also standardized the various forms of the phrase used by *Saint Vincent* after his signature: unworthy priest of the Congregation of the Mission. Throughout this edition the abbreviation *i.s.C.M.* (*indignus sacerdos Congregationis Missionis*) has been used.

The word *fille*, meaning girl, daughter, young woman, appears in many of the manuscripts. In the seventeenth century, this word also denoted a woman religious or nun. We have tried to adjust the meaning of *fille* to the context of the various letters and have sometimes rendered the word as *Sister* rather than *Daughter* when referring to a member of *Saint Louise's* nascent community.

Monetary terms--*livre*, *écu*, etc.--have not been translated for it would be difficult to assign them an equivalent value in modern currency. Several other words and phrases have likewise been left in French--*Parlement*, *Chambre des Comptes*, *collège*--since English has no corresponding institution. These terms have been explained in footnotes. For other words of foreign origin used in English and found in English dictionaries, no explanation has been given, for example, *faubourg*.

Saint Vincent often makes use of scriptural references which, however, are not always direct quotes. Where he has done so, the translation has been adjusted to flow with the meaning of the sentence. The scriptural quotations given in the footnotes are usually taken from the *New American Bible*, unless a passage cannot be found in that edition or a more suitable rendering of the phrase is found elsewhere. In such instances, the *Douay-Rheims Bible* has been used. In the case of the psalms, both versions have been cited because of the variations.

Coste almost always refers to *Vincent de Paul* as *Saint Vincent* or the *Saint*. In the present edition we have added this title to the names of *Louise de Marillac* and any other individual who has been canonized since *Coste's* time.

Generally speaking, in the titles of the letters, *Coste* gave the location of the addressee only when he was sure of it and when the locality was outside the then city of Paris. We have continued this practice and have attempted to make it more consistent. We have also followed *Coste's* custom of placing within brackets dates that are uncertain or conjectural. Brackets have also been used to indicate words either missing from the manuscript or inserted by the editors.

The capitalization forms of the original manuscripts have been adjusted to American usage as has the punctuation. Number forms--words versus figures--follow common American practice as well.

In addition to our goal of producing a smooth English translation which is faithful insofar as possible to the meaning and style of the original French, we have also purposed to present a work which is interesting and informative with regard to *Saint Vincent*, his correspondents, and his times. Both the scholar who may wish to use this work as a research tool and the ordinary reader who may be unfamiliar with the *Double Family* and the religio-political history of the period have been kept in mind. A great effort has been made to update, correct, and amplify

Coste's footnote material. Irrelevant notes have been eliminated and new annotation added whenever this has been deemed necessary or helpful. In the case of new matter, no indication has been given to distinguish Coste's footnotes from the annotation added by our editor.

A biographical sketch of each personage has been supplied throughout the work the first time that he or she appears in a volume. To facilitate reference to this data and also to the explanations of terms and places given throughout the text an index has been added to each book. The index indicates the number of the letter to which the reader should refer for the information sought. A general index will also be provided as an appendix to the entire work.

All references in the indices and the footnotes have been given by citing the volume and the number of the item rather than the page. Since Coste's volume span and his numbering of items has been retained, this practice should facilitate research in both his edition and the present translation.

In order to enjoy these volumes more thoroughly, the reader would do well to keep in mind that, as now, so then, one correspondent did not spell out to the other details that were already known and understood by both. Reading these letters at a distance of some three hundred years will often arouse a curiosity which in many cases must remain unsatisfied. The allusions made will not always be clear, nor can they be. However, a familiarity beforehand with the life of Saint Vincent will greatly aid one's knowledge and understanding of the situations mentioned and the people involved. The three-volume definitive biography written by Coste¹⁷ provides extensive information, but many shorter versions of the Saint's life can be found. Placed against such a background, these writings take on still more a life of their own and make the Saint vividly present once again. The twinkle in his eyes and the smile or tenderness in his voice seep through the words and we meet the delightful, charming man known to his contemporaries. The severe, ascetic Saint takes on a new personality and somehow becomes more human.

This man of myriad occupations and enormous correspondence writes to Saint Louise and understandably so: "Last night I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago."¹⁸ And to one of his Missionaries, Robert de Sergis, he says: "I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote."¹⁹

Women of our day will find delight in hearing him tell Saint Louise: "Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money;" and then ask, surely with a little bit of mischievousness: "Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?"²⁰

The warmth and tenderness of his expression often take us by surprise. Saint Louise, his Missionaries, the friends who both supported him and enjoyed his spiritual guidance were often the recipients of his affectionate words. "You know how much my heart treasures your own. . .,"²¹ he writes to one of his Missionaries. And, to Saint Louise, both tenderly and teasingly he remarks: "I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras, you put me in first place."²²

Saint Vincent writes as though he enjoys the task, giving unusual twists to his phrases and adapting his usual closing in an astonishing variety of forms: "I have never been more busy or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord."²³

The lyrical beauty of some passages changes his prose into exquisite poetry and we question our vision of a rough Gascon peasant: "Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally as well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose."²⁴

Let us not fail to seek the man beyond these words, the man of compassion, warmth, humor, savoir faire, authority, and, most of all, the mystic whose sanctity was carved amid the bustle and involvement of very human situations. He will give us hope that we, too, can find holiness in an ordinary, busy life. May this personal acquaintance with the real Vincent de Paul lead us to encounter the dynamic force behind his life, Jesus Christ, Who, for him, was all things.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

CORRESPONDENCE

1. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX

Monsieur,

One might have thought two years ago, judging by the appearance of the favorable progress of my affairs that, contrary to my deserts, fortune was endeavoring only to make me more envied than imitated;¹ but alas! it was only to make of me an example of her vicissitudes and inconstancy, changing her favor into disfavor and her good luck into misfortune.

You may have heard, Monsieur, since you are well acquainted with my affairs, how I found, on my return from Bordeaux,² a will drawn up in my favor by a good old woman from Toulouse. Her property consisted of some furniture and some land that the bipartite court of Castres³ had awarded to her in place of three or four hundred écus⁴ owed to her by a wicked rogue. In order to obtain part of it, I set out for the place to sell the goods, as was recommended by my best friends and by my need for money to meet the debts I had contracted and the great expense I foresaw as proper for me to make in the pursuit of the affair that my temerity does not allow me to mention.⁵

On my arrival, I found out that the fox had left the locality because the good woman had a warrant out for his arrest for the same debt. I was informed that he was doing very well in Marseilles and had considerable means. Whereupon my attorney decided (as indeed was also dictated by the nature of the affair) that I should proceed to Marseilles. He thought that, once I had him arrested, I would be able to get two or three hundred écus from him. Since I had no money at all to carry out this plan, I sold the horse I had hired in Toulouse. I intended to pay for it on my return, which misfortune delayed so long that I am in great disgrace for having left my affairs in such disorder. I would never have done so had the Lord given me as much success in my undertaking as appearances led me to expect.

I set out, therefore, on this advice, caught my man in Marseilles, had him arrested, and agreed to three hundred écus, which he gave me in cash.⁶ Just as I was about to leave by land, I was persuaded by a gentleman with whom I had lodged to go with him by boat as far as Narbonne since the weather was so favorable. I did this in order to get there sooner and to save money, or, to be more exact, so as never to get there and to lose everything.

The wind was as favorable as was necessary to take us to Narbonne that same day, which meant covering fifty leagues,⁷ if God had not allowed three Turkish brigantines⁸ to bear down upon us. They were sailing along the coast of the Gulf of Lion in order to seize the ships coming from Beaucaire where there was a fair considered to be one of the finest in Christendom.⁹ They attacked us so violently that two or three of our men were killed and all the rest wounded, including myself. I received an arrow wound that will serve me as a clock for the rest of my life.¹⁰ We were forced to surrender to those criminals worse than tigers whose first bursts of rage caused them to hack our pilot into a hundred thousand pieces because they had lost one of their leaders in addition to four or five of their galley slaves whom our men had killed.

Once that was done, they chained us, after crudely dressing our wounds, and continued their course, committing a thousand robberies. However, they allowed those who surrendered without fighting to go free after they had robbed them. And finally, at the end of seven or eight days, laden with booty, they set sail

for Barbary, lair and den of thieves, though the Grand Turk¹¹ does not admit it. On arriving there, they put us up for sale with a report of our capture, which they said had been made on a Spanish ship because, without that lie, we would have been released by the consul whom the King maintains there to assure free trade for the French.¹²

Their procedure for selling us was thus: after stripping us naked, they gave each of us a pair of pants, a linen jacket, and a small cap, and walked us up and down through the city of Tunis where they had purposely come to sell us. When they had had us make five or six rounds through the city with a chain around our neck, they took us back to the boat so that the merchants could come and see who could eat well and who could not, so as to show that our wounds were not mortal. That being done, they brought us back to the square where the merchants came to examine us just as one does when buying a horse or an ox. They made us open our mouths to look over our teeth; felt our ribs; probed our wounds; and made us walk,

trot, and run; then carry loads and wrestle to judge each one's strength; and a thousand other kinds of brutalities.¹³

I was sold to a fisherman who was soon obliged to get rid of me because I found nothing so repugnant as the sea; then by the fisherman to an old man, a Spagirite doctor,¹⁴ a master at drawing out quintessences, a most benevolent and amenable man. From what he told me, he had worked for fifty years in his quest for the philosophers' stone. He had searched for the stone in vain, but was quite successful with another kind of transmutation of metals. In proof of this, I often saw him melt together equal parts of gold and silver, place them in thin sheets, and then put on a layer of some powders, then another layer of the sheets, and then another layer of the powders. He would put them in a crucible or a goldsmith's melting vessel, keep it on the fire for twenty-four hours, and then open it to find that the silver had become gold. More often still, he would congeal or fix mercury into fine silver and sell it in order to give alms to the poor. My job was to maintain the fire in ten or twelve furnaces; doing so, thank God, was as much a pleasure as it was an affliction for me. He loved me dearly, and took great delight in speaking to me about alchemy and even more about his law, putting forth all his efforts to win me over to it, promising me copious wealth and all his knowledge.

God always kept alive in me the conviction that I would be freed because of my unceasing prayers to Him and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, through whose sole intercession I firmly believe I was delivered. The hope and firm belief, therefore, that I had of seeing you again, Monsieur, made me persistent in asking him to teach me how to cure gravel, for which I used to see him working miracles every day. This he did; indeed, he had me prepare and administer the ingredients. Oh! how many times I have wished since then that I had been a slave before the death of your late brother and commaecenas¹⁵ in doing good for me,¹⁶ and that I had had the secret I am sending you.¹⁷ I beg you to accept it with as much pleasure as my belief is firm that, if I had known what I am sending you, death would not already have triumphed over him (at least by that means), although it is said that man's days are numbered before God. That is true, but it is not because God had calculated his days to be a certain number, but the number was calculated before God because it came about that way; or, to speak more clearly, he did not die when he did because God had anticipated it that way or had calculated the number of his days to be so many, but he had anticipated it that way and the number of his days was known to be so many, because he died when he did.

I was, therefore, with this old man from the month of September 1605¹⁸ until the following August when he was seized and taken away to the Grand Sultan¹⁹ to work for him, but in vain; he died of grief on the way. He left me to one of his nephews, a real anthropomorphist,²⁰ who sold me again soon after his uncle's death, because he heard that M. de Brèves,²¹ the Kings' Ambassador in Turkey, was coming with valid and explicit letters patent from the Grand Turk to reclaim the Christian slaves.

A renegade²² from Nice in Savoy, hostile by nature, bought me and took me to his temat;²³ that is what they call the land that one holds as a sharecropper of the Grand Lord, because the people own nothing; everything belongs to the Sultan. This man's temat was in the mountains, where the country is extremely hot and forsaken. One of the three wives that he had (she was like a Greek-Christian, but schismatic) possessed a fine mind and became very fond of me; and nearer the end, another of them, a native Turk, who served God's immense mercy as an instrument in recalling her husband from apostasy and restoring him to the bosom of the Church, brought about my deliverance from slavery. As she was interested in knowing our way of life, she used to come to see me every day in the fields where I was digging. At the end, she ordered me to sing praises to my God. The memory of the *Quomodo cantabimus in terra aliena* of the children of Israel, captives in Babylon, made me begin, with tears in my eyes, the psalm²⁴ *Super flumina Babylonis*, and then the *Salve, Regina* and several other hymns. The pleasure she received from these was as great as her admiration of them. She did not fail to tell her husband in the evening that he had been wrong to give up his religion, which she considered exceedingly good because of what I had told her about our God and some praises I had sung to Him in her presence. She said that these latter gave her such divine pleasure that she did not believe the paradise of her fathers, which she was awaiting, was as glorious or accompanied by so much joy as the pleasure she felt while I was praising my God. She concluded that there was something marvelous about it.

This other Caiphias or Balaam's ass, by her words, caused her husband to tell me the very next day that our escaping to France depended only upon an opportunity,²⁵ but that he would remedy matters so well within a short time that God would be praised by it. A few days became ten months, during which he kept alive in me these vain but finally realized hopes. At the end of that time, we escaped in a little skiff and made our way, on June 28, to Aigues-Mortes²⁶ and soon after to Avignon, where the Vice-Legate²⁷ received the renegade publicly, with tears in his eyes and his voice broken by sobs, in the church of Saint-Pierre, to the honor of God and the edification of the congregation. The above-mentioned prelate has kept us both with him in order to take us to Rome. He is going there just as soon as his successor to the three-year term of office²⁸--which he completed on the feast of Saint John--has arrived.²⁹ He has promised the penitent that he would have him admitted into the austere convent of the Fate ben fratelli,³⁰ to which he has vowed himself,³¹ and see that I was provided with some good benefice. He does me the honor of loving me very much and treating me with affection because of a few alchemy secrets that I have taught him. He values these more, he says, than if io li avesse datto un monte di oro,³² because he has worked on them his whole lifetime and desires no other satisfaction. This same bishop, since he knows that I am a churchman, has ordered me to send for my letters of ordination, assuring me that he will help me and provide me with a very good benefice. I was at a loss to find a trustworthy man to do this, when a friend of mine from the household of this same bishop recommended to me Monsieur Canterelle, the bearer of this letter, who was going to Toulouse. I asked him to take the trouble of riding as far as Dax to deliver this letter to you and to obtain the above-mentioned papers and the ones I received in Toulouse as a Bachelor of Theology.³³ I entreat you to give them to him. I am sending you for that purpose a receipt for them. The said Monsieur Canterelle is of the household and has been expressly ordered by the Bishop to carry out his commission faithfully and to send the papers to me in Rome, if indeed we have set out.

I brought from Turkey two stones that nature has faceted like diamonds. I am sending one of them to you. May your pleasure in accepting it equal my feeling of unworthiness in offering it to you.

It is impossible, Monsieur, for you and my relatives not to have been slandered by my creditors on my account. I would already have partly satisfied them with one hundred or one hundred twenty écus given me by our penitent, had I not been advised by my best friends to keep them until my return from Rome so as to avoid the mishaps that might be mine for want of money (although I eat at the Bishop's table and enjoy his favor), but I think that all this disgrace will turn to good.

I am writing to Monsieur D'Arnaudin³⁴ and to my mother. I beg you to have my letters sent to them by a man whom Monsieur Canterelle will pay. If, by chance, my mother has withdrawn the letters, they are filed as a measure of precaution with Monsieur Rabel.³⁵ I have nothing else to say except that, entreating you to continue your holy affection for me, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL³⁶

Avignon, July 24, 1607

Addressed: Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax.

2. - TO MONSIEUR DE COMET, IN DAX.

Monsieur,

I have written to you twice by the mail service from Spain which goes to Paris and Bayonne. I addressed my letters to Monsieur de la Lande¹ in order to have them forwarded to the King's procurator who I recall is a relative. I did not know *cui altari vovere vota mea*² in order to have news of you, when God, Who, *etiamsi differat, non aufert tamen spei effectus*,³ caused me to meet this venerable Father who was just about to leave. Through him, I hope to enjoy the benefit of which I have been deprived by the perfidiousness of those to whom one entrusts letters.

This benefit is nothing else, Monsieur, than a renewed assurance of your good health and that of your whole family whom I pray the Lord to gladden with the abundance of His grace. I thanked you in my preceding letters for the paternal care you so kindly take of me and my

affairs. I asked God, as I am still doing and shall do all my life, to please grant me the means of repaying you by my service, which you secured at the price of all the good that a father can do for his own son.

I am very sorry that I can write to you only⁴ very briefly about the state of my affairs because of the hasty departure of the ill-mannered sailors with whom the venerable Father is leaving. From what he told me, he is not going to Dax, but rather to Béarn. He told me that Father Antoine Pontanus, who has always been a good friend of mine, is preaching there. I am addressing my letters to him as to someone from whom I may expect a favor. I am asking him to be so kind as to forward this letter to you and to send back to me, if he has an opportunity--as Father told me he would have--the answer that I hope you will be pleased to write me.

In a word, then, this is the state of my affairs. I am in this city of Rome, where I am continuing my studies, maintained by the former Vice-Legate of Avignon.⁵ He honors me with his affection and his desire for my advancement, because I have shown him some unusually marvelous things I learned while I was the slave of that old Turk to whom, as I wrote you, I had been sold. Among these marvels is the beginning--not the total perfection--of the mirror of Archimedes; an artificial spring that makes a death's head talk, which the scoundrel used to use to deceive the people by telling them that his god Mohammed communicated his will to him by means of that head. I learned from him a thousand other wonderful geometrical things of which the said Bishop is so jealous that he does not even want me to stop and talk to anyone for fear that I might teach them to him. He wants to have for himself alone the reputation of knowing these things which he enjoys showing now and then to His Holiness⁶ and the cardinals. This affection and benevolence of his ensure for me, as he has also promised me, the means of an honorable retirement by obtaining for me, with that end in view, a suitable benefice in France. That is why I greatly need a copy of my letters of ordination, signed and sealed by the Bishop of Dax,⁷ together with a letter of recommendation from the said Bishop. He could compile it by means of a brief inquiry among some of our friends as to the fact that I have always been considered a good-living man, together with all the other little formalities required for this purpose. The above-mentioned Bishop is urging me every day to get this letter of reference. That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly entreat you to be so good as to do for me once again the kindness of picking up another certification of my letters, and of helping me to obtain the character reference from the said Bishop of Dax in the form stated above, sending it to me by way of the above-mentioned Father Pontanus. I would have sent you some money for this purpose were it not for my fear that the money might cause the letter to be lost. That is why I am asking you to arrange with my mother⁸ to furnish what is necessary. I think that three or four écus will be needed. I have already given two as a suitable offering to this religious who has promised me that he would hand them over to the above-mentioned Father Antoine⁹ so that he might forward them for that purpose. If that will do, please accept them; if not, I promise that I shall send you what has been supplied in the course of four or five months by a letter of exchange, together with what I owe in Toulouse. I am determined to discharge my debts since God has been pleased to give me legitimate means. I am writing to Monsieur Dussin, my uncle,¹⁰ asking him kindly to assist me in this affair.

I received, from the person who went to visit you for me, the Bachelor's certificate which you so kindly sent me, together with a copy of my papers. The latter were judged invalid because they had not been authorized by the signature and seal of the said Bishop of Dax.

There is nothing new that I can write to you about except for the conversion of three Tartar families who came to this city to become Christians--His Holiness received them with tears in his eyes--and the conversion to Catholicism of a bishop who was an ambassador for the schismatic Greeks.

Haste obliges me to conclude this letter--badly blotted right here--with my humble prayer that you will excuse my excessive importunity and believe that I shall hasten my return as much as I can, so that I may come and acquit myself of the service I owe you. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

DEPAUL

Rome, February 28, 1608

Addressed: Monsieur de Comet, advocate at the Presidial Court of Dax, in Dax

3. - TO HIS MOTHER, IN POUY¹

February 17, 1610

Mother,

The assurance that Monsieur de Saint-Martin² has given me with regard to your good health has gladdened me, as much as the prolonged sojourn which I must necessarily make in this city³ in order to regain my chances for advancement (which my disasters took from me) grieves me, because I cannot come to render you the services I owe you. But I have such trust in God's grace, that He will bless my efforts and will soon give me the means of an honorable retirement⁴ so that I may spend the rest of my days near you.⁵ I spoke of the state of my affairs to Monsieur de Saint-Martin who told me that he wished to continue the benevolence and affection which Monsieur de Comet so kindly manifested for us. I asked him to tell you all about it.

I should very much like to know how things are at home, and whether all my brothers and sisters⁶ and our other relatives and friends are well, and especially whether my brother Gayon is married and to whom. Also, how is everything with my sister Marie, at Paillole?⁷ Is she still alive and sharing the house with her brother-in-law Bertrand? As for my other sister, I imagine she cannot but be well-off, so long as God is pleased to give her a companion. I should also like my brother to have one of my nephews study.⁸ My misfortunes and the little service that I have as yet been able to render at home may make him unwilling to do so, but let him reflect that the present misfortune presupposes good luck in the future.

That is all, Mother, that I can tell you at present, except that I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and sisters and to all our other relatives and friends. I pray to God unceasingly for your health and for the prosperity of the family, as one who is and who shall be for you, Mother, a most humble, most obedient, and helpful son and servant.

DEPAUL

I entreat you to offer my humble respects to all my brothers and sisters and to all our relatives and friends, especially to Bétan.

4.- TO EDMOND MAULJEAN, VICAR GENERAL OF SENS¹

June 20, 1616

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We sometimes meet good people who wish to make a general confession, and because we very often encounter reserved cases² and find it difficult to send them away, I thought of entreating you most humbly to grant me permission to absolve them from the said reserved cases. I assure you that I shall in no way abuse this, and that I shall be all my life, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

5. - EDMOND MAULJEAN TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I have such great assurance of your competence, prudence, capability, and other merits that I most willingly grant you what you ask. May God give you the grace to acquit yourself worthily of it, as I trust you shall.

In token of the above, I have signed this note for you on the twentieth day of June, 1616.

Mauljean

6. - TO PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI,¹ IN PROVENCE

[August or September 1617]²

Saint Vincent writes from Châtillon-les-Dombes³ that, not having the requisite qualities to be a tutor in a family of such high nobility as that of the De Gondis, he has secretly left Paris, strongly determined to devote himself to parish ministry in the place where he is.

7. -MADAME DE GONDI TO SAINT VINCENT¹

[September 1617]²

Monsieur,

I was not mistaken when I feared losing your assistance, as I mentioned to you so many times, since I have indeed lost it. My anguish over this would be unbearable without a very special grace from God which I do not deserve. If it were only for a time, I would not be so upset; but when I think of all the occasions on which I shall need to be assisted by direction and counsel, either in death or in life, my grief begins anew. Consider then whether my mind and body can bear this grief for long. I am not able to seek nor receive assistance elsewhere, because you are well aware that I am not free to reveal the needs of my soul to many people.

Monsieur de Bérulle³ promised me that he would write to you, and I am calling upon God and the Holy Virgin to give you back to our home for the salvation of our whole family and of many others towards whom you will be able to exercise your charity. I entreat you once again to practice it towards us for the love you bear Our Lord, to Whose goodness I entrust myself on this occasion, although with a great fear of not being able to persevere.

If you refuse me after that, I shall hold you responsible before God for whatever happens to me, and for all the good that I shall fail to do for want of being helped. You are putting me in danger of being very frequently deprived of the sacraments in various places because of the great difficulties which may befall me there and the few people who are capable of assisting me. You know very well that the General has the same desire as I, which God alone is giving him by His mercy. Do not resist the good that you can do by assisting in his salvation, since he is destined one day to assist in that of many others. I know that, since my life serves only to offend God, it is not dangerous to place it in peril, but my soul should be assisted at death. Remember the apprehension in which you saw me during my last illness in a village; I risk falling into a worse state. The mere fear of that would do me so much harm that, were it not for my former excellent health, I think it might possibly cause my death.

8. - TO MADAME DE GONDI

[September or October 1617]¹

Vincent de Paul consoles and encourages Mme de Gondi, while exhorting her to be submissive to the good pleasure of God.²

9. - PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI TO SAINT VINCENT

October 15, 1617

Two days ago I received the letter you wrote me from Lyons, in which I learned of the decision you have made to take a little trip to Paris at the end of November, which makes me extremely happy. I hope that I might see you there at that time, and that you will grant to my prayers and to the advice of all your good friends the favor which I desire of you.

I shall say no more to you about this, since you have seen the letter that I wrote to my wife. I merely entreat you to bear in mind that God seems to wish the father and his children to be upright people by means of you.

10. - TO CHARLES DU FRESNE¹

SECRETARY OF PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI

[October 1617]²

Saint Vincent informs his friend that he hopes to take a trip to Paris in two months. There, according to the enlightenment that God gives him, he will make a final decision concerning his return to Châtillon-les-Dombes or to the De Gondi family.³

11. - TO NICOLAS DE BAILLEUL, PROVOST OF TRADESMEN¹

July 25, 1625

Vincent de Paul, head of the Collège des Bons-Enfants,² near the Porte Saint-Victor,³ humbly makes this petition, stating that the buildings of the above-mentioned collège are in a state of great ruin because of their antiquity. To avoid their complete collapse, some work must be done quickly on the chapel and the collège building where a great number of extensive repairs are needed.⁴ In view of this, Monsieur, in order to be more sure of the repairs necessary for the said collège, would you please give orders for it to be visited and gone over by two sworn master masons or other such men whom you might choose to appoint. They will draw up their report with regard to carrying out these repairs and ordering what is proper, and you will be acting with justice.⁵

Addressed: The Provost of Paris or the Civil Lieutenant, guardian of University privileges.

12. - TO SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC¹

October 30, 1626

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter here in Loisy-en-Brie,² twenty-eight leagues from Paris, where we are giving a mission.³ I did not notify you of my departure because it was a little sooner than I had expected and I was reluctant to upset you by letting you know about it. Well now! Our Lord will use this little mortification to advantage if He wishes, and He Himself will act as your director. Yes, He will surely do so, and in such a way that He will lead you to see that it is He Himself. Be then His dear daughter--quite humble, submissive, and full of confidence--and always wait patiently for the manifestation of His holy and adorable Will.

In this place where we are, one-third of the inhabitants are heretics. Please pray for us; we need it, especially myself.

I am not answering all your letters because I am no longer in a situation where I can do what you request.

13. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY¹

[October or November 1626]²

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter arrived after I had left Paris and was forwarded to me here in Loisy-en-Brie, where we are trying to work among a great number of people of the religion.³ We need prayers in order to strengthen the Catholics who remain; we hope for nothing from the others, because they do not find themselves in circumstances in which they can avail themselves of our preaching.

Moreover, I gave you no notice of my departure. Will you not forgive me for that? But tell me please, how did your heart take it? Did it not give mine a severe scolding? Well now, I hope they will get along well together within the one which encompasses them, which is Our Lord's.

I am not giving you an answer concerning your proposal about returning to Paris, because I imagine that you have already done so. With regard to the matter you wish to share with me, as you so kindly told me in your letter, please let it wait for my return. If the decision is urgent, do what Our Lord Himself advises you; if not, please wait for my return, as I said.

Mon Dieu! how different your director's daughters are: one full of respect for the defense of the Church, and the other fully confident that she is right about the Poissy⁴ affair! Have courage! Our Lord is honored equally by both of them from what I see of your community, to whose Mother⁵ I send my regards.

Meanwhile, remain quite cheerful, Mademoiselle, I beg of you. To this end, honor the holy tranquillity of Our Lord's soul, and trust fully that He will direct your dear heart by the holy love of His own. In this love, I am your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

14. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I hope you will forgive the liberty I am taking of expressing to you my spirit's impatience, as much with regard to the long time you have been away in the past as concerning my apprehension about the future, and about not knowing the place to which you are going after the one where you are now. It is true, Father, that thinking about the reason which takes you away brings some mitigation to my suffering, but, in my idleness, that does not keep the days from sometimes seeming like months. I wish, however, to await God's time with tranquillity, and to recognize that my unworthiness is delaying it.

I have been well aware that Mademoiselle du Fay, over and above her wont, is a little anxious at heart. We spent Pentecost together. After the service, she would have liked to have the liberty to speak freely to me, but we remained in the expectation and desire of doing God's Will. The work which you gave me is completed. If the members of Jesus need it and if it is your pleasure, Father, that I send it, I shall not fail to do so. I did not want to do that without your order.

At last, most honored Father, after a little anxiety, my son is at the collège and, thanks be to God, he is very happy and in good health. If this continues, I am greatly in favor of it.¹

Father, allow me to trouble you once again about a young woman, twenty-eight [years] of age, whom they wish to bring from Burgundy in order to entrust her to me. She is intelligent and virtuous, from what they tell me. However, before her, the good blind girl from Les Vertus² told me that her companion, who is twenty-two [years] old, might perhaps come to our house. She has been under the direction of the Fathers of the Oratory for four years and is a genuine country girl. I am not sure that she wants to come; nevertheless, she has given me evidence of some desire to do so. I most humbly entreat you, Father, to let me know what I should do about this. The person who is going to Burgundy is supposed to leave on Monday and, since I was expecting you to return this week, I promised her an answer.

For a month now, our good God has allowed my soul more feeling for Him than usual; but I still have my imperfections. When I no longer hinder the effect of the prayers which I hope you are saying for me, I think that I shall grow better.

These past few days, I have really wished that you would remember to offer me to God and to ask Him for the grace of accomplishing entirely His holy Will in me, notwithstanding the opposition of my wretchedness. Therefore, Father, I present you this plea in all humility and ask your pardon for bothering you so much, for I am, by the goodness of God, Monsieur, your most grateful servant and unworthy daughter.

L. DE MARILLAC

June 5, 1627

15. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1627]¹

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for notifying me of good Mademoiselle du Fay's donation. Please keep it until you need it, unless she thinks it should be set aside and reserved for going to win over poor souls to God in the regions of Poitou and the Cévennes. If that is not her intention and she wishes it to be used for the poor of this area, be so kind as to forward it to me and send three shirts to Mademoiselle Lamy² in Gentilly³ for the Charity⁴ of that place.

I am writing to you at about midnight and am a little tired. Forgive my heart if it is not a little more expansive in this letter. Be faithful to your faithful lover who is Our Lord. Also be very simple and humble. And I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother. . . .

16. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Verneuil,¹ October 8, 1627

Mademoiselle,

Since, therefore, your good lady wishes that her present material donation not hinder a spiritual one in the future, and that we distribute what she gave you² right now, I beg you to send us by M. du Coudray,³ the bearer, the sum of fifty livres. Kindly assure her for me that Our Lord

Himself will return good measure to her, and that I have begun to make practical use of four of them since I have been here to bring about the foundation of the Charity which is being set up here. We find great temporal needs joined to spiritual ones, because of the large number of Huguenots there are--rich people--using a few comforts given to the poor to corrupt them, thus doing unspeakable harm. Please send us also four shirts, and convey our most humble respects to your good lady. Kindly assure your own heart that, provided it honors the holy tranquillity of that of Our Lord in His love, it will be pleasing to Him. I am, in this same love. . . .⁴

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, rue Saint-Victor, at the house in which M. Tiron Saint-Priest⁵ used to live.

17. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you a thousand million times for the splendid gift you sent us, Mademoiselle. I beg God to be your sole reward and to make me worthy of meriting the same through the services I am obliged to render you.

I returned last night from our mission in good health and I very much hope that you are feeling well, too. As soon as I have taken care of a few little matters that are on my mind, I shall come to thank you for the many, many fruits of your generosity. I beg you to continue it for me, Mademoiselle, and to believe that my heart receives an inexpressible consolation in the confidence that it is one with yours and that of Our Lord, and that they form but one love in that of the same Lord and His holy Mother.

18. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that you are feeling better! You will be most welcome to communicate tomorrow at Monsieur de la Salle's¹ Mass. I am obliged to say mine in the morning because of a priests' meeting taking place here tomorrow morning which will last until noon.² I am not so much afraid of the chapel now as in the summer. If Mademoiselle Guérin³ wishes to come, she will be most welcome--before I leave. I shall let you know about that.

As for the money from Mademoiselle du Fay's Charity, I gladly approve the use you wish to make of it, and I am also pleased with the decision those good young women⁴ have made to put everything in common. I shall not fail tomorrow at Mass, miserable sinner that I am, to offer them to Our Lord, in Whose love I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

19. - SAINT JANE FRANCES DE CHANTAL¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

November 1627

So there you are, my very dear Father, occupied with your work in the province of Lyons and, consequently, here we are, deprived of seeing you for a long time. But in what God does, there is no fault to be found; rather, He is to be blessed for everything, as I am doing, my very dear Father, for the freedom you give me to continue my trust in you and to bother you. I shall do so quite simply.

I have, therefore, made four days of retreat, and no more, because of several business matters that came up unexpectedly. I saw the need I have to work at humility and tolerance of my neighbor, virtues that I had taken last year and that Our Lord has given me the grace to practice a little. But He is the One Who did everything and Who will do so again, if He chooses, since He gives me so many opportunities.

As for my state, it seems to me that I am simply awaiting what God will be pleased to do with me. I have no desires nor plans. Nothing is keeping me from allowing God to act. I do not yet see it, but it seems to me that this is what is in the depths of my soul. I have neither opinion nor feeling with regard to the future, but, at present, I am doing what I think it is necessary to do, without thinking any further.

Often, everything is stirred up in the inferior part, causing me to suffer a great deal. And there I am, knowing that with patience I shall possess my soul. Moreover, I have many difficulties on account of my office, because my spirit greatly detests action, and when I force myself to act in a case of necessity, my body and spirit are left disconsolate. My imagination, on the other hand, gives me a lot of trouble during all my exercises, and with rather great annoyance. Our Lord is also permitting me to have a number of difficulties exteriorly, so that nothing in this life is pleasing to me except the Will of God alone which wishes me to be here. May God be merciful to me, which I beg you to earnestly ask of Him. I shall not fail to pray to Him, as I am doing with all my heart, that He will strengthen you for the responsibility He has given you.

20. - A PRIEST¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

December 1627

I am back from a long journey through four provinces. I have already told you the good reputation being spread, through the provinces where I have been, by the implantation of your holy Company which is working for the instruction and improvement of the rural poor. Truly, I do not believe that there is anything in the Church of God more edifying nor more worthy of those who bear the mark and order of Jesus Christ. We must beg God to infuse His spirit of perseverance into a project which is so advantageous for the good of souls, to which so few of those who are dedicated to the service of God apply themselves as they ought.

21. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

About three weeks ago, while I was at Mademoiselle du Fay's house, I found an opportunity to write to you, but I am afraid that my letters have been lost. The main topic was some advice that I was asking you with regard to my son. But now, Monsieur, I am no longer in the same position; for, whether God does not wish him to make a decision right now about becoming a priest, or whether the world is standing in the way, his fervor is much diminished. Seeing such a great change of mind in him, I spoke freely about it to the Mother Superior.¹ She advised me to place him merely as a boarder with those good clergymen,² for reasons which I tell you if God gives me the grace of seeing your return, of which I have great need.

I have certainly never felt your absence more keenly, because of the needs I have had since you left. In this I must admit my weakness, assuring you, Father, that if God gives me the grace to recall the past, I shall have no reason to boast. I ask strength from the help of your prayers, for the love of God, and I thank you most humbly for the trouble you took to write me and for the expressions of the honor of your remembrance. I do not deserve it, and God is very good to put up with me. Now, my dearest Father, offer my will to the Divine Mercy, for I wish to be converted and to call myself truly, Monsieur, your most humble servant and unworthy daughter in Our Lord.

L. DE MARILLAC

January 13, 1628

Mademoiselle du Fay is still ill in body and has been in bed almost continually for two weeks; without a fever, however. She is most eager for your return.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

22. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know how I had imagined these past few days that you were ill, and so I kept on thinking of you in that condition. But, may God be blessed that your letter assured me of the contrary!

What shall I say to you now about your son, except that, just as we were not to put too much trust in the affection he used to have for the community,¹ we must also not be troubled about the different feeling he has now. Leave him alone then, and surrender him completely to what

Our Lord wills or does not will. It rests with Him alone to direct these tender souls. He is also more interested in this than you, because he belongs more to Him than to you. When I have the pleasure of seeing you, or more time than at present to write to you, I shall tell you the thought that came to me one day and which I shared with Madame de Chantal concerning this matter. It consoled her and, by the mercy of God, freed her from a sorrow similar to that which you may be suffering.² Until we next see each other then. And if your other difficulty troubles you, write to me about it and I shall answer you.

Meanwhile, get ready to do an act of charity for two poor girls whom we have decided should leave here. We shall send them to you from here in a week's time and ask you to direct them to some good woman who can find them work as servants, unless you know some upright lady who may need them.

We shall still have work here for about six weeks; after that I shall give you and Mademoiselle du Fay all my attention. I greet her with the fullness of my heart and pray God that I may find you in good health. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL
Joigny,³ January 17, 1628

23. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I sent one of the girls about whom I spoke to you¹ to our good Mademoiselle du Fay because she has confidence in her; the other one stayed in Joigny and has gone into service. Perhaps the said lady will think it proper for her to stay with you for a few days while she is waiting. If so, I have no doubt that you will agree and that you will recognize the confidence with which I act towards you.

I am not saying anything to you concerning the matter about which you wrote to me, because I hope to see you towards the end of this month and talk about it face to face.

What might you say, my dear daughter, about the task that fell to me during our mission on one of Monsieur de Vincy's² estates? Indeed, while hearing the confessions of these good people, I seem to see before me their good Mademoiselle,³ whom they love so much. As I was not expecting to be able to write to you, I asked her, in the letter that I wrote to her, to ask you to send us a dozen shirts of all kinds. Please do so, therefore, Mademoiselle, and be quite cheerful in the disposition of willing everything that God wills.⁴ And because it is His good pleasure that we remain always in the holy joy of His love, let us remain in it and attach ourselves to it inseparably in this world, so that we may be one day but one in Him, in Whose love I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL
Villicien,⁵ February 9, 1628

24. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1628]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These few lines will be to thank you for having taken that good young woman into your home, for the twelve shirts that you sent me, and to tell you [that I am going]² to go away, and will be back in a week, God willing, and then we shall talk about everything. However, I am telling your heart in advance that I praise God because it has freed itself from the excessive attachment it had to the little one,³ and because you have made it correspond to reason. There is no danger [now], unless you act [according to] its inclination and have him enter the clerical state.⁴ God grant that this be for His glory and the salvation of souls and may He give you a share in the holy tranquillity of His spirit. I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL
Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Paris

25. - COMMANDER DE SILLERY TO SAINT VINCENT

(Now 60a)

26. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

[June 1628]

To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne,¹ Antoine Portail,² François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean Bécu,³ Antoine Lucas,⁴ Joseph Brunet,⁵ and Jean Dehorgny⁶ from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d'Or, knight of the two orders,⁷ Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Galleys, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the same Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good religious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the countryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this same assistance so abundant in the cities and, therefore, these people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation even to their old age. Thus they often die miserably in the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought that some remedy for such an urgent evil could be found in the benefit of the missions which were then given in the towns and villages of their estates by the petitioner Vincent de Paul and other approved ecclesiastics known for their doctrine and moral integrity, with the authority of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, when they heard of and personally witnessed the profit and the increase to the glory of almighty God which resulted from them, on account of the fact that many towns and entire villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life, amending their lives and practicing greater virtue, and that even some heretics were converted and received into the holy Roman Church, the above-mentioned noble couple decided to perpetuate this holy work of the missions. They did this in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five, when they gave, by way of an alms, the sum of forty-five thousand francs for the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having first left all the benefices and offices which they held in the cities and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the future, had decided to live together in community and willed to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, appointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself and brought together the above-mentioned priests.⁸ In order to devote themselves more easily and effectively to the salvation of the poor country people, these priests left the benefices which some of them were enjoying and others the offices which detained them in the cities. They came together and formed a society in which they live under the title and by the name of Priests of the Mission or Missionaries. They live under the direction and correction of this Vincent de Paul, devoting themselves entirely to the salvation of people dwelling in the country. For this purpose they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, both publicly and privately, the catechism and the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits and quarrels to an end, appease enmities and hatreds, and

establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works, not only in the villages and towns belonging to the noble founders--places which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries--but they have also labored successfully in many other parts and dioceses of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdiocese of Sens and in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Most Reverend Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor and the incredible edification of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work can contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any others who wish to join their Society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments⁹ of this Congregation called of the Mission, who might wish to live together devoutly in the Society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose will be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the country people.

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for this work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish the aforesaid Congregation of this kind in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only.¹⁰ And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner,¹¹ with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercise and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper, and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See, and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even Superiors General of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength.

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said

Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift, or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent, or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordinary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be encouraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be pleased to grant them all the facilities ordinarily granted to religious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on mission to pagan lands, namely:

The apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions, establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always, however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

The power to absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those contained in the Bull In Coena Domini;

Also the permission for the said Missionaries to read books by heretics, to absolve from heresy, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who make general confessions to the same Missionaries or other priests chosen by them for the missions;

To hold the Forty Hours' devotion in places where they consider it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to Confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred simony;

To bless church vestments.

L. CALLON, F. DU COUDRAY, A. PORTAIL, J. DE LA SALLE, J. BECU, A. LUCAS, J. BRUNET, J. DEHORGNY, VINCENT DEPAUL¹²

27.- TO SAINT LOUISE

Well yes, dear lady, I do consent. Why not, since Our Lord has given you this holy thought? Go to Communion tomorrow, then, and prepare yourself for the salutary review you have in mind; after that, you will begin the retreat you have arranged. I could not tell you how ardently my heart desires to see yours in order to know how this has come about in it, but I am quite willing to mortify myself for the love of God, in which love alone I desire yours to be immersed.

Now then, I imagine that the words of today's Gospel¹ touched you deeply; they are so impelling to the heart that loves with a perfect love. Oh! what a tree you have appeared to be today in God's sight, since you have borne such a fruit! May you be forever a beautiful tree of life bringing forth fruits of love, and I, in that same love, your servant.

V. D.

28. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

To our most Holy Father the Pope,

Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission founded in Paris, Master Louis Callon, Doctor of the Sorbonne, Antoine Portail, François du Coudray, Jean de la Salle, Jean Bécu, Antoine Lucas, Joseph Brunet, and Jean Dehorgny from the dioceses of Dax, Rouen, Arles, Amiens, Paris, Clermont, and Noyon humbly submit this petition presenting for consideration the following facts:

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, Marquis des Iles d'Or, knight of the two orders, Councillor of the King, captain of fifty men-at-arms, Lieutenant General for the King of France in the seas of the Levant, Intendant General of the Royal Galleys, recently received into the Congregation of the Oratory of Jesus in the said city of Paris, and the late Dame François-Marguerite de Silly, his wife and Baronne de Montmirail, Trosnay, and other places, together with the above-mentioned Vincent de Paul, at that time their chaplain and confessor of the said Dame, had given serious thought for some years to the fact that while the inhabitants of the cities are sufficiently provided with every spiritual assistance by distinguished doctors and good religious living everywhere in these cities, the people of the countryside, oppressed by ignorance and poverty, are deprived of this same assistance so abundant in the cities, and, therefore, these people remain ignorant of the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation even to their old age. Thus, they often die miserably in the sins of their youth because they are ashamed to confess them to their pastors or curates, whom they know and with whom they are familiar. In view of this, the above-mentioned couple thought that some remedy for such an enormous evil could be found if the missions given at that time in the towns and villages of their estates by the said Vincent and other ecclesiastics known for their integrity and doctrine should be continued, with the good pleasure and permission of the Most Reverend local Bishops.

The success of these missions was so great that, having heard of and personally witnessed the fruit and the increase to the glory of almighty God resulting from the fact that many towns and entire villages gladly made general confessions of their whole life, amending their lives and practicing greater virtue afterwards, and that even some heretics were converted, the above-mentioned nobles Emmanuel and Françoise, wishing to perpetuate this holy work of the missions, gave as an alms forty-five thousand francs in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-five for the support and nourishment of a few priests who, having left the positions and ecclesiastical offices which they had held in the cities, and having given up even the hope of acquiring them in the future, willed to live together in community and devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the poor country people under the direction of the said petitioner Vincent de Paul.

Once this foundation had been approved and confirmed by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, this Vincent de Paul, appointed Superior by the same Archbishop, associated to himself and joined together the above-mentioned priests who, in order that they might be able to devote themselves more easily and effectively to the spiritual welfare of those living in the country, first renounced the benefices which some of them were enjoying and other offices which detained them in the cities. They came together in a society of priests called of the Mission or of the Missionaries. They live under the direction of this Vincent de Paul and devote themselves entirely to the salvation of people living in the country. For this purpose, they go from town to town, passing from village to village, preaching sermons and exhortations to the people. They teach everyone, catechizing them both publicly and privately, about the mysteries of faith necessary for salvation, of which most of the people are completely ignorant. They prepare them for general confessions of their whole life and hear them. They convert heretics, bring lawsuits to an end, appease hatreds, reconcile quarrels and enmities, and establish the Confraternity of Charity where it is necessary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the sick poor. With the help of God, they are now carrying out all these pious works successfully not only in villages and towns belonging to the above-mentioned founders--places which they must visit every five years and perform the aforesaid ministries--but also in many other parts of this Kingdom of France, as in the Archdioceses of Paris and Sens, in the dioceses of Châlons, in Champagne, of Troyes, Soissons, Beauvais, Amiens, and Chartres, always to the great satisfaction of the Archbishops and Bishops of these places, bringing about the salvation of the poor people and the unbelievable satisfaction of all. They always undertake all these holy works at the expense of the said Congregation, which does not receive or expect any temporal payment or compensation for its work.

For these reasons, Most Holy Father, and because the perpetuity of this holy work appears to contribute so much to the salvation and conversion of the people, may it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm this Congregation. And, insofar as necessary, may you be pleased to establish it anew, to extend your blessing upon it, and to appoint the above-mentioned Vincent founder and Superior General of these priests, and also of any others who wish to join their

Society, as well as of those who are necessary for the domestic employments¹ of this Congregation called of the Mission, who might wish to live together devoutly in the Society and offer and give service to the Most High in a spirit of humility and in the pursuit of a holy life. Their first and foremost purpose shall be to strive for their own perfection and to devote themselves entirely to the salvation of the country people. They shall go from village to village, preaching, catechizing, and exhorting them to unburden their consciences of the sins of their entire life, hearing general confessions of penitents, instructing children for the worthy reception of their first Holy Communion, and setting up the Confraternity of Charity for the relief of the sick poor, all this free of charge, receiving no gifts either directly or indirectly.²

May Your Holiness deign to grant to this same Vincent, whom the Archbishop of Paris has already chosen for the work and whom the founders earnestly desired, the permission, power, and full and entire authority to establish this Congregation in the city of Paris, as well as in all other cities, towns, estates, and places to which the local Bishops might call him, and there only. And finally, in view of securing the good order and direction of the persons and the spiritual and temporal goods of this same Congregation or the congregations which will be established in this same manner,³ with regard to the reception and admission, number, age, and qualifications of those to be received and admitted into the Congregation, their instruction and discipline, the exercises and the manner and form of divine offices, prayers, meditations, and other suffrages to be recited, and other matters useful and necessary for these congregations, authorization is also asked to make, issue, and impose on these congregations any statutes, ordinances, and other regulations which are licit and proper and in no way contrary to the sacred canons, apostolic constitutions, and decrees of the Council of Trent, subsequently to be approved and confirmed by the Holy Apostolic See and to be obeyed and observed by the Superior of these congregations, the priests, officials, ministers, and coadjutor brothers, with the addition of penalties. And once they have been made, issued, and imposed, whenever it shall be seen by the nature and change of circumstances and times that such is required, authorization is asked to correct, limit, change, and alter them, and even to make and impose entirely new norms to be obeyed and observed. By the same authority, may he be commissioned and appointed to do and to transact all and each one of the other things which the founders and other Superiors, even General Superiors of similar Congregations or of any approved Orders may usually do or transact, either by law or custom, by privilege, or in any other way.

May it please Your Holiness to approve and confirm by the same authority and for always that all other congregations erected canonically in imitation of the above-mentioned by the Congregation of Paris and by the said Superior General, in whatever place that might be, shall henceforth depend on them in all things, after they have been erected by the said authority.

May it also please Your Holiness to exempt the Superior, priests, and all the members of this Congregation from the jurisdiction of their Ordinaries, and to make them dependent upon the Holy Apostolic See, in such a way, however, that these individuals shall be obliged, in what concerns the missions, to obey the Most Reverend Bishops and Ordinaries of their residence, and to go wherever and to whomever they send them, without any excuse or pretext, except in case of illness or excessive fatigue resulting from previous work and necessitating some rest in order to recover their strength. However, the choice of the priests to be sent shall be left to the Superior of the house; and to the Superior General shall be reserved the power of appointing and removing superiors and officials of the said Congregation and also of the other congregations to be erected in the future, of dismissing from the congregations those who are unsuitable, likewise of transferring the said priests and others from one house to another, and of recalling them, wherever or in whichever house they may be, if the mandate of Your Holiness for some mission, or some necessity may require it.⁴

Finally, may these congregations henceforth, after they have been established and erected in the way stated above, be permitted to accept for their endowment and for the support of the said Vincent, of any other Superior General, and of the priests who are living in them at any given time, and for the discharge of the burdens incumbent upon them, all things in general and in particular, goods, fruits, income, and legacies, both those already given to the said congregations, as well as those to be given in the future either by the said founders Seigneur de Gondi and Dame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, or by any other of the faithful as bequest, gift,

or grant of any kind. Thus, may the said Vincent or any other Superior General, or the priests of the congregations living at any given time, in the name of the said congregations, be permitted, either by themselves or through one or several other members, to appropriate freely and keep permanently the corporal, real, and actual possession of all these things. May they also demand, collect, and claim their fruits, yield, income, rights, revenues, and proceeds of any kind, and use them for the benefit of the said congregations, applying them even in perpetuity to them, without being obliged to ask permission of the local Ordinary or of anyone else.

And in order to increase the devotion of the faithful, to procure the salvation of souls, and in order that the faithful might be encouraged to take part in the exercises given by the members of this Institute, the said petitioners implore Your Holiness to be pleased to grant them all the faculties ordinarily granted to religious and to secular priests whom Your Holiness sends on mission to pagan lands, namely:

The apostolic faculty to preach, catechize, hear confessions, establish the Confraternity of Charity in every place, always, however, with the approval of the Most Reverend Bishop;

To absolve from all ecclesiastical censures and to dispense from occult irregularities, to commute vows, and to absolve from all cases reserved to Your Holiness, even those contained in the Bull In Coena Domini;

To debate with heretics, to absolve converts from heresy, to read their books, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who make a general confession, not only to the Missionaries but also to the priests chosen by them for the missions in case of necessity;

To hold the Forty Hours' devotion in places where they consider it useful, and to grant a plenary indulgence to all who go to Confession and Communion during that time;

To celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on portable altars; to celebrate Mass even before dawn and after noon;

To reduce and remit the restitutions due for having incurred simony;

To bless church vestments.

J. DE LA SALLE, J. BECU, DU COUDRAY, A. PORTAIL, CALLON, J. DEHORGNY, J. BRUNET, A. LUCAS, VINCENT DEPAUL

Given in Paris, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, on the first day of August, in the year of Our Lord one thousand six hundred twenty-eight.

29. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1626 and May 1629]¹

You are wrong, my dear daughter, in thinking that I was of the opinion that you should not accept the young lady's suggestion, because I have not given it a thought. And I have not given it a thought, because I am sure that you wish and do not wish what God wishes and does not wish, and that you are disposed to want and not want only what we tell you that God seems to want and not want. Therefore, confess your fault with regard to that thought and never let it enter your mind in the future.

Try to live content among your reasons for discontent and always honor the inactivity and unknown condition of the Son of God. That is your center and what He asks of you for the present and for the future, forever. If His Divine Majesty does not let you know, in a way that cannot be mistaken, that He wants something else of you, do not think about nor let your mind become engrossed in that other matter. Leave it to me; I shall think about it enough for both of us.

But let us go on to little brother Michel. That certainly concerns me, my dear daughter. I sympathize with his sufferings and those which you also have because of your love for him. Oh, well! everything is for the best.

What shall I tell you now about the one whom your heart loves so dearly in Our Lord? He is a little better, I think, but still suffering somewhat from his slight chills. Moreover, people are suggesting to him and urging him to go to Forges² and to leave tomorrow. The doctor recommends it, unless an opportunity to go by carriage--which is being offered--comes about another way. Assuredly, my dear daughter, and this weighs upon me more than I could tell you, so much has to be done for a poor carcass. But if I do not do it, our men³ will complain about me. They are strongly urging me to do this, because they have been told that the mineral waters

did me some good in past years when I had similar illnesses. I finally decided to offer no resistance just as I think our blessed Father⁴ would do. If I leave, therefore, I am telling you adieu, my dear daughter, and I commend myself to your good prayers. I enjoin you to remain in the state mentioned above. Please do not tell this to anyone, because I do not know if the affair will turn out well. My heart could not hide it from yours, anymore than from our Mother's at Sainte-Marie⁵ and Mademoiselle du Fay's.

Well now, I have said enough to my daughter. I must conclude by telling her that my heart will have a very fond remembrance of hers in that of Our Lord and solely for that of Our Lord, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother I am her most humble servant.

30. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We arrived in this city three days ago, in good health, thank God. Yesterday, the examination of the ordinands¹ began, and it will continue today, which is Friday, and tomorrow, so that next Sunday we can begin the retreat, the initial idea for which God gave to the Bishop of Beauvais.² The schedule calls for the said ordinands to live and lodge together at the collège,³ where Monsieur Duchesne the younger⁴ is to go live with them and see that they observe the rule which has been prescribed for them with regard to the order of the day. The Bishop of Beauvais will open the retreat Sunday morning. Monsieur Messier⁵ and Monsieur Duchesne⁶ and I⁷ are to take turns speaking, according to the subject that has been judged suitable. Monsieur Duchesne the younger and another Bachelor, the pastor here, are to teach the ceremonies required for each order. May it please Our Lord to give His holy blessing to this good work, which seems to be useful to His Church! And I entreat you to recommend it to Our Lord.

But how is the Company doing? Is everyone in good health? Is each one in good spirits? Are the little rules well observed? Is debate being studied and practiced? Do you abide by the prescribed schedule? I beg you, Monsieur, to work on that and to master the abridged Bécane.⁸ Words cannot express the usefulness of that little book.

Since I left, God has been pleased to make use of this wretch to convert three people; but I must admit that meekness, humility, and patience in dealing with these poor misguided people was the essence of this good work. The first two individuals scarcely cost me anything, because they were predisposed; but I had to spend two days with the third. I wished to tell you this to my confusion, so that the Company might see that, if God has been pleased to make use of its most ignorant and wretched member, He will make much more effective use of each one in the Company.

The Bishop of Beauvais has not set the day in the month of October on which we are supposed to begin the mission in this diocese. He wants me to be at this first one, but I shall try to take the time during the interval to come and see you, in order to hear the rendering of the domestic accounts of the Company since the last one that was given, so that it might serve as a preparation for the next mission.

How is Monsieur Lucas⁹ doing in his work? Does he like that duty? Does he return to eat and sleep at the collège?¹⁰ Does he not assist at our conferences on feast days?¹¹

Please greet our entire Company, as a group and individually, and tell Monsieur Lucas to please assure the Bishop of Bazas¹² of my most humble service. And you, please take care of your health and let me know if Monsieur de Saint-Martin¹³ came to the collège and if he is going to see Monsieur de Bazas with Monsieur Lucas.

I almost forgot to tell you that I think you would do well to feel out the tailor who works at the house as to whether he has any thought of giving himself to the house.¹⁴ That was his intention in the past, but his near-sightedness and the objection he had about sometimes doing the cooking held him back and me, as well.

Adieu, my dear little Father.¹⁵ I am, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Beauvais, September 15, 1628

Addressed: Monsieur du Coudray, priest, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants, adjoining the Porte de Saint-Victor, in Paris.

31. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

Mademoiselle,

I wish you good evening and hope that you are no longer weeping over the happiness of your little Michel, nor worrying about what will become of our sister. . . .

Mon Dieu, my daughter, what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it!--Yes, you will tell me, but it is on account of God that I am worried.--It is no longer because of God that you are worried if you are troubled because of serving Him.

32. - TO SAINT LOUISE¹

Oh! what great hidden treasures there are in holy Providence and how marvelously Our Lord is honored by those who follow it and do not try to get ahead of it.² I recently heard one of the great men of the kingdom say that he had learned this truth through his own experience. He had never undertaken anything on his own except four things. Instead of their working out well for him, they had turned out to his detriment. Is it not true that you wish, as is quite reasonable, that your servant not undertake anything without you and your order? And if that is reasonable from one man to another, how much more so from the Creator to the creature!

33. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

. . . Therefore, patience until then, my dear daughter, I beg you. I assure you that I thought about you again this morning for a rather long time, and that I am and shall be all my life, in the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, your servant.

34. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

Mon Dieu, my dear daughter, how your letter and the thoughts [you] sent to me console me! Indeed, I must confess to you that the feeling has spread through every part of my soul, and with all the more pleasure, since they let me see that you are in the state God wants of you. Well now, continue, my dear daughter, to remain in this good disposition and allow God to act. But, indeed, my consolation has been negated by the condition about which you wrote me and which you had hidden from me concerning your illness. Well now, may Our Lord be blessed for everything! Take good care of your health for love of Him.

Forgive me for having detained your man so long. I was held up by a great number of visits. Moreover, I am feeling better, thank God. I still have a slight fever, but it is steadily lessening, while the desire I have for you to be quite holy is ever increasing.

Adieu, my daughter. God grant you a good evening!

35. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

I praise God, Mademoiselle, that you have been so resigned to the holy Will of God. I beg Him that you and I may always have one and the same will with Him and in Him since such is a foretaste of Paradise. Moreover, I thank you for your good medicine. I promise you that I shall make use of it tomorrow with God's help, and willingly. I beg you, in the name of God, to get well and to omit nothing necessary for that purpose. Furthermore, be at rest with regard to your interior. It is, nonetheless, as it should be, though you do not think so now.

Adieu, my dear daughter. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your, etc.

36. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

. . . the secret of your heart, which I truly wish may belong entirely to Our Lord. I beg the Blessed Virgin to take it from you so as to carry it off to heaven to place it in her own and in that of her dear Son. But do not think that all is lost because of the little rebellions you experience interiorly. It has just rained very hard and it is thundering dreadfully. Is the weather less beautiful for that? Let the tears of sadness drown your heart and let the demons thunder and growl as much as they please. Be assured, my dear daughter, that you are no less dear to Our Lord for all that. Therefore, live contentedly in His love and be assured that I shall be mindful of you tomorrow at the sacrifice which, unworthy as I am, I shall offer to the supreme Sacrificer. If I were not in such a hurry. . . .

37. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1629]¹

If it were not so late as it is, I would come and see you to find out from you the details of the matter you wrote to me about. However, that will be for tomorrow with God's help. Honor, meanwhile, the Blessed Virgin's sorrow when she saw her Son suffering. Honor as well the eternal Father's acceptance at the sight of His only Son's sufferings. I hope that He will make you see and understand how much you are obligated to His Divine Majesty for His having honored you by associating your sufferings with His, and how much flesh and blood take you away from the perfection of the true love which the eternal Father and the Blessed Virgin had for their Son. Think about that, my dear daughter, and be consoled.

I wish you a good day. May you be quite strong and may you believe that I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

38. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[April or May 1629]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Father de Gondi² sent me word to come by coach to see him in Montmirail.³ That will perhaps prevent me from having the honor of seeing you, because I am leaving tomorrow morning. Do you feel like coming, Mademoiselle? If so, you would have to leave next Wednesday on the coach to Châlons, in Champagne.⁴ It is stabled at the Cardinal, opposite Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs.⁵ And we shall have the happiness of seeing you in Montmirail.

Please let me know what is the matter at our good demoiselle's⁶ Charity.

If I come early this evening, I shall have the happiness of a word with you; if not, I am in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

39. - TO SAINT LOUISE¹

Mademoiselle,

I am sending you the letters and the report that you need for your journey. Go, therefore, Mademoiselle, go in the name of Our Lord. I pray that His Divine Goodness may accompany you, be your consolation along the way, your shade against the heat of the sun, your shelter in rain and cold, your soft bed in your weariness, your strength in your toil, and, finally, that He may bring you back in perfect health and filled with good works.²

Go to Communion the day of your departure to honor the charity of Our Lord, the journeys that He undertook for this same and by this same charity, and the difficulties, contradictions, weariness, and labors that He endured in them. May He be pleased to bless your journey, giving you His spirit and the grace to act in this same spirit, and to bear your troubles in the way He bore His.

As for what you ask, whether you are to stay longer than we agreed, I think that it will be sufficient to spend one or two days in each place the first time, subject to your going back next summer if Our Lord lets you see that you can render Him some further service. Although I say two days, take more, if need be, and do us the kindness of writing to us.

With regard to Mademoiselle Guérin's Charity, please get the name of her parish. If we go to Chartres, we shall try to go and help her with the Charity since we do not know anyone in that area who is accustomed to this work.

Adieu, Mademoiselle. Remember us in your prayers and, above all, take care of your health, which I beseech God to preserve for you, being in His love. . . .

Montmirail, May 6, 1629

39a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I went to your home in order to have the happiness of seeing you and talking to you about the board of my nephew, Mathieu Pluyette, a scholarship recipient of your collège.¹ However, the holy task in which you are employed deprived me of that happiness of being able to meet you. I have taken the liberty of sending you this note by my man, who is well known at the Collège du Cardinal,² to ask you to let me have what is due the boy who is at the Collège de Senlis. Two quarters would be due on the feast of Saint John,³ if you have not given something to Denis out of that which is due at Christmas. We shall try to arrange for you to see him on the feast of Saint Remi⁴ with regard to his staying in Paris or obtaining your consent to remain in Senlis, which will be acceptable, as I see it. I am sending you the receipt directly, without specifying the sum. For the remainder, on the feast of Saint Remi, I shall receive one from the boy. Until then, I shall remain always, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, July 3, 1629

40. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN SAINT-CLOUD¹

Paris, February 19, 1630

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God that you have the health for the sixty people for whose salvation you are working, but I beg you to let me know right away whether your lung is being irritated by your talking so much, or your head by so much confusion and noise.

As for your son, I shall see him, but put your mind at rest, I beg you. You can trust that he is under the special protection of Our Lord and His holy Mother because of all the gifts and offerings you have made for him. He is also a friend of God's people and, therefore, no harm can befall him. But what shall we say about this excessive affection? I certainly think, Mademoiselle, that you have to try before God to rid yourself of it. All it does is weigh upon your spirit and deprive you of the peace Our Lord wishes in your heart and the detachment from love of everything that is not Himself. Do so, therefore, I beg you, and you will give honor to God Who is responsible for the sovereign and absolute care of your son, and Who wishes you to be concerned only in a dependent and tranquil way.

We have been back for three or four days, in good health, and our Company left today for Chelles.² I hope to go there in two days.

I sent you a young woman from Maisons³ for a while. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to do her the favor I asked of you because of the one she will be able to do for you, and you will be cooperating in the salvation of two souls at the same time. Let me know if she has come to see you and when you think you will be finished in Saint-Cloud. Let me know also whether that good young woman⁴ from Suresnes,⁵ who visited you before and who spends her time teaching girls, has come to see you as she promised me last Sunday when she was here.

While waiting to hear from you, I beg Our Lord to strengthen you more and more, Mademoiselle, and I am in His love. . . .

41. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God a thousand times and bless Him with all my heart for having restored you to health. I beg Him to keep you well and bring you home safely.² Therefore, Mademoiselle, come back towards the end of the week and even sooner if the opportunity presents itself, not by water but in a well-closed coach. Mademoiselle du Fay told me that she had not been able to find a carriage. I sent her your letter, but I have not spoken to your son for a certain reason which I shall tell you.

Bon Dieu, Mademoiselle, how good it is to be God's child, since He loves those who have the happiness of possessing this quality in His sight even more tenderly than you love your child-- although you have more affection for him than almost any mother I know! Oh well, we shall talk about it on your return. Meanwhile, be fully confident that she to whom Our Lord has given so much love for other people's children will merit Our Lord's special affection for her own child. Please live peacefully in this assurance, even, I say, in the joy of a heart that desires to conform itself completely to that of Our Lord.

Our Little Company is in Chelles and I am still here. There is a Jesuit who is working wonders in your parish.³ Mademoiselle de Villars is writing to you. I commend myself to your prayers and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

42. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

With regard to your Confraternity of Charity,² I cannot tell you how much it consoles me. I beg God to bless your labor and to perpetuate this holy work. You must take care not to let the curate keep the money because of the many difficulties that might arise. I shall tell you about them some other time. Let me tell you in advance that experience has shown that, of all the methods, the surest ones that can be practiced in the Charity are those which you had in mind. If you now relieve each one at the Charity of the obligation of getting the meat cooked, you will never again be able to restore this practice. If you have it cooked elsewhere and someone undertakes to do it out of charity right now, it will become a burden to her in a short time. If you hire someone to do it, it will cost a lot. Then, with time, the ladies of the Charity will say that the woman who prepares the food should carry the pot to the sick, and in this way your Charity will be reduced to failure. Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money.

Well now, is that not a consolation to you, Mademoiselle? After that, will you say that you are of no use to the world?

43. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]¹

. . . and know, with regard to your son, that M. du Ch.² has told me wonderful things about him. I shall tell you about them when I return. I shall also thank you for what you told me about the young woman whom I discussed with you and for having thought of her. I beg you earnestly to exert yourself on her behalf.

I am delighted with the employment of those good young women³ and I commend your desire to give them a painting, but not your giving way to concern over the matter. You belong to Our Lord and His holy Mother. Cling to them and to the state in which they have placed you until they make it clear that they wish something else of you, for whom I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

[Please offer my hum]ble regards to Mademoiselle du Fay and M. Bliar.

44. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]¹

So you are a small number of workers for so much work. Oh, well! Our Lord will work with you. The suggestion that each one of you take a day to feed the sick at your own expense seems fine to me. That is how it is done elsewhere until the day the confraternity is established.

45. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for the trouble you took to write to me about the situation of the Charity. When God is pleased to let me see you, you can tell me about the community's welfare.

It will indeed be proper for you to make use of those offerings for the needs of those poor people. I think you are good managers since you are only spending about half an écu.

If you get permission to establish the Charity from the record-office of the Bishop of Paris, you will have to pay something, but if it is Monsieur Guyard² who grants it, it will be nothing. You can have it stamped with the small seal which will only cost five sous.³

Well now, there are more than five women. I beg God to send you some others. As for the means, Our Lord will provide.

With regard to your difficulty, I think it would be well for you to speak to Mademoiselle du Fay, but as for the other things he is asking of you, please get advice as to what reply you should make. And do me the favor of thanking Mademoiselle du Fay for her jelly. Tell her that I am feeling better and that I beg her to ask God that I may make good use of this improved health. As for that poor young woman, what is it that she wants?

Take care of your health.

I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

45a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I knew that you had not written down in your ledger the amount that you gave for the board of my nephew, Mathieu Pluyette, your young scholarship holder. I would have liked very much to be able to see you about this matter but, for fear of not finding you, I have written this note to tell you that he was granted the scholarship a year ago at the beginning of Lent. An agreement was made with the cousin who gave up the place that he would receive nothing the following Easter. However, we have not been able to speak to you about that quarter, for you have as yet given my nephew the money for only three quarters: that of the feast of Saint John, the one for Saint Remi, and the other one for Christmas, as you can see from the receipts. What is left is due to the principal of Senlis, for in my day, because of the property in Le Mesnil, we used to receive nine or ten livres more at Christmas than we did at the other times.

So that someone does not come to see you under false pretenses, the bearer of this message is supposed to be the brother of the principal of Senlis who lives with a goldsmith. He will let me know what settlement you have made with regard to this matter.

I would have liked very much to see you, but Lent prevents me. I shall do so, with God's help, after Easter. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your humble servant.

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, March 13, 1630

45b. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I have not yet answered M. du Coudray, who had written to me on March 22 in your name to find out when my nephew had been accepted as a scholarship holder. I told you that it was a year ago after Christmas. He has the consent of his cousin, Denis, that he would receive nothing for the quarter. I already sent you the same information, namely, what he had given for Mathieu, because he had a receipt for it. As for the Le Mesnil estate, I think that if you have noticed the income of the scholarship holders, you are aware that they receive more than twenty-six livres at the quarters. I know that in my time there was more income. I was astonished when I found out from his letter that the Le Mesnil estate did not belong to the scholarship holders because that is in the contract concerning the property left to the scholarship holders.

I was thinking of going to Paris for the synod and of having the pleasure of seeing you. However, since it is not being held and I am afraid I would not find you at home because of your holy occupations, I have written this note for my nephew, the goldsmith. He will see that I receive your response. While awaiting it, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, April 14 [1630]¹

46. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX¹

[April 1630]²

It is very difficult, Mademoiselle, to do any good without conflict. And because we must relieve other people's distress as far as it is in our power, I think that you would be performing an action agreeable to God by visiting the Pastor³ and apologizing for having spoken without his knowledge to the sisters of the Charity⁴ and the girls. Tell him that you thought you could act in Villepreux just as you did in Saint-Cloud and elsewhere, and that this will teach you your duty another time. If he is not pleased with this, leave it at that. My advice is that you do this. Our Lord will perhaps draw more glory from your submission than from all the good you could do. One beautiful diamond is worth more than a mountain of stones, and one virtuous act of acquiescence and submission is better than an abundance of good works done for others.⁵

47. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX

Paris, Saturday the 4th [May 1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that I received the news of your recovery before that of your illness! I beg Him to strengthen you completely and in such a way that, one day, it may be said that the following words of Holy Scripture apply to you: *Mulierem fortem quis inveniet?*² You understand this Latin, so I shall not explain it to you.

You say that the time the children are in school is not sufficient for them to be able to draw any profit³ from it and that they have two other days off. I see no difficulty in your extending the time a little and, for the reasons you advance, in your keeping them busy those two days; nor in your trying to get the children who are not used to it to come to school. But I think it would be well for you to obtain the approval of good Monsieur Belin⁴ and to inform those who talk about it that you are acting in that way because your stay will be so short. Tell them also that it is not a school, but a devotional practice lasting a few days.

As for little Michel, be at peace. Just two or three days ago I saw him going to his lesson and he was fine.

I sent your letter to Mademoiselle du Fay and encouraged Mademoiselle du Fresne⁵ to go to Villepreux, which she wants to do more than anything in the world. But her illness will most certainly not permit her that pleasure which she ardently desires. I recommend her to your prayers. As for you, take good care of your health. Do not take too much upon yourself, which I am afraid, however, you are doing by not wanting to take the respite of those two days or keep to the schedule customary in the schools.

That is why, with this apprehension, contrary to what I said to you above, I beg you to be satisfied with the usual hours. This line of action will, to my mind, be more to the liking of

Monsieur Belin. If you see a serious disadvantage in this, please write to me about it again, after you have begun,⁶ and I shall get a note from Father de Gondi for his farmer, so that he will carry out his order as quickly as possible.

Let us end here; they are hurrying me a little. I shall conclude, therefore, by asking God's help for you, strength of body, and holy tranquillity of spirit. I ask this of Him with as much pleasure as I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

My regards to your hostess.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Villepreux

47a. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Saturday at noon [May 1630]

There has been no procurator at the Charity¹ for a year. However, a good man has always written down the receipts and expenditures and is now willing to accept this responsibility by election.

The sisters of the Charity have somewhat lost enthusiasm for their work. They have often given up visiting the sick on their day because the treasurer is so willing that she has the cooking done for those whose turn it is, and also because she and the superior have at times been satisfied with giving the sick some money. They have also given some to a few needy people. They have often been careless about having meat and have placated the sick with eggs or something else that was to their liking.

The above-mentioned sisters, at least most of them, neglect Holy Communion for months. They need to be stirred up by some kind of exhortation when the procurator is going to be elected.

The superior was satisfied with keeping the money box at her house and had given both keys to the treasurer. They are troubled about receiving the sick, and say that they do not need a Charity which admits only those who have nothing at all, because there are very few or none at all of that sort. A lot of people have property but it is so tied up that they would die of hunger before they could sell it and help themselves.

48. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLEPREUX

[May 1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that you are feeling better and are acquiring a taste for working at the salvation of souls! But I am really afraid that you are doing too much, and so that you may see that I have good reason, please look at what Monsieur Belin tells me about it. Be careful about this, I beg of you, Mademoiselle. Our Lord wants us to serve Him with common sense, and the opposite is called indiscreet zeal.

As for the sisters of the Charity, I think it is expedient that you assemble all of them, read the rules together, and try to put everything back into practice according to those rules, which are different from the others because that was the second establishment.² But please tell them the practice in other places and try to persuade them to do likewise, especially with regard to the perpetuity of the sisters' membership,³ going to confession and Communion on the day a member dies, going themselves to visit the sick as often as they can, and receiving the sacraments more often. And finally, with regard to the meat, advise the sister acting as butcher,⁴ who is the superior, to distribute the meat justly.

My illness, which I see has distressed you, is quite minor and, had they not made me take a dose of medicine today, I would have gone out. Thank you for being concerned.

We have no water at all. I am sending to Monsieur Deure⁵ for some. Monsieur du Fresne and his sister are leaving Friday for Villepreux. God knows if consideration for you has not hastened the trip a little.

Little Michel is fine; Brother Robert⁶ went to see him for me. He told him that he is quite cheerful and contented. Be the same, Mademoiselle, I beg of you, since God wishes you to be so.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday at noon.

Our regards to your Marthe.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Villepreux

49. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]¹

Blessed be God that you are freed from the first attachment. We shall talk about the other one when next we meet; I mean about the one for your confessor.² Meanwhile, do what he advises you and everything that your fervor suggests, except the discipline, unless it be three times a week. Read the book concerning the love of God, in particular the one that deals with God's Will and indifference.³ As for all those thirty-three acts to the holy humanity⁴ and the others, do not be distressed when you fail to do them. God is love and wants us to go to Him through love. Therefore, do not hold yourself bound to all those good resolutions.

I beg you to excuse me for not having been able to write to you until this evening, and to pray to God for us.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Madame,⁵ your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

I approve of the practice in honor of Mary, provided that you carry it out in a peaceful way.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

50. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]¹

I think that it will be sufficient to put on your/our picture² the same words as on the original.³ Therefore, please put those on it, Mademoiselle, and I shall preserve in my heart the ones you write to me concerning your generous resolution to honor the adorable hidden life of Our Lord, just as Our Lord has given you the desire of so doing since your youth.⁴ O my dear,⁵ how that thought savors of the inspiration of God and how far removed it is from flesh and blood! Now then, that is the disposition needed by a beloved daughter of God. Cling to it, Mademoiselle, and courageously resist any feeling you get that is contrary to it. Rest assured that by this means you will be in the state God requires of you in order to have you advance to another for His greater glory, if He so sees fit; if not, you will still be sure that you are constantly doing in this God's holy Will. That is the goal towards which we tend and towards which the saints have tended. Without it, no one can be happy.

I beg your pardon for having detained your messenger so long because of the large number of distractions I had; I who wish you to be one of the most perfect images⁶ made in the likeness of God. . . .⁷ I have, in His love, I think, one and the same heart with you. I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

51. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN CROISSY¹

Thursday, June 27, 1630

Blessed be God, Monsieur, that you have begun preaching in the pulpit and may it please His Divine Goodness to give His blessing to what you will teach in His name! You have begun late; so did Saint Charles.² I wish you a share in his spirit, and I hope God will give you some new grace on this occasion. I beg Him with all my heart that it may be the one you wrote to me about at the end of your letter, that of being an example to the Company, in which we lack holy modesty, meekness and respect in our conversations. Attention to the presence of God is the means of acquiring them. I need them more than anyone else. Please ask them of God for me.

52. - TO A LADY

July 1, 1630

Madame,

The grace of our Lord be with you forever!

Since I answered your letter yesterday, it has occurred to me that I made no response to the advice you did me the honor of requesting: whether you should receive among the sisters of the Charity, in place of the late Madame Brunel, a relative of hers. Now, I shall tell you, Madame, that since the deceased had named and introduced her before dying, and since she has the qualities requisite for doing this good work, I feel that you would do well to accept her, even if the deceased lady had not named her. But I really think you should remind the sisters to remember to appoint someone to replace them when God chooses to dispose of them, because that is the only way to perpetuate this holy confraternity.

I beg you, Madame, to insist on this and to impress it well upon them; to greet those good sisters of the Charity and your procurator for me; and to assure your husband that I am, and that all my life I shall be for him and for you, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

53. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1630]¹

Relieve your mind of all that is troubling you; God will take care of it. You cannot become involved in this, without saddening (so to speak) the heart of God, because He sees that you are not honoring Him enough by holy confidence. Put your trust in Him, I beg you, and your heart's desire will be fulfilled.² Once again I repeat, cast aside all those mistrustful thoughts which you sometimes allow to invade your mind. And why would your soul not be full of confidence, since you are, by His mercy, the dear daughter of Our Lord?

54. - TO MONSIEUR DE SAINT-MARTIN¹

September 1, 1630

Saint Vincent entreats M. de Saint-Martin to procure clothes for his brother and nephews and to have repaired one side of their house which was in danger of falling into ruin. He goes on to write about a nephew who had recently left Paris,² and who had received ten écus before leaving the capital. But this money came from an alms, and was not destined for the missions. Then he adds:

I beg you, Monsieur, if any other relative of mine gets the idea of coming to see me, please dissuade him. Since I have no means of assisting them, they will be going to a lot of trouble for nothing.

55. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It is not without good reason that you are going to visit a person of such high rank as the one² who is asking for you and who perhaps needs your advice to make a decision on something very important. Go then, Mademoiselle, in the name of Our Lord and with His blessing. If the opportunity arises to do something for the children of that place,³ do it with prudence; a great deal of it is necessary in that diocese. Nevertheless, by acting discreetly, the authority of the lady of that place will be yours in that of Our Lord.

As for Communion, I think you will do well to be content with what has been your custom. With regard to your son, he will be most welcome once the ordinands have left, about ten or eleven days from now, because we have neither a bed nor a room in which to put him. So please tell him to come at that time.

Monsieur Dehorgny will be coming to speak to you about the young man they want to send here. I ask your pardon, if owing to difficulties here, I do not have the honor of seeing you before your departure.

I beg you to let me know if your Charity⁴ is well off and if you need any money. Please believe that, thanks be to God, I am well and am your servant.

VINCENT

You must not go so near the Charities of the Beauvais diocese without paying them a visit at your convenience. Perhaps Mademoiselle d'Attichy⁵ would be willing to visit the nearest one.
Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

55a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1630]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These lines will serve to ask you to send us news of yourself and to give you some about us and about Germaine.²

As for me, things are as usual; and with regard to Germaine, M. du Coudray tells me that he has begun to speak about her to the Pastor,³ to M. Belin,⁴ and to the schoolmaster,⁵ and that none of them is adverse to the proposal he has made to them.⁶ We shall see what will come of it.

I thought that we might give a mission in Saint-Cloud⁷ for these feast days,⁸ but we would not be able to do so without great inconvenience. That is why we are postponing it until Saint Martin's day.⁹

Meanwhile, tell us, please, what is on your mind? Mine has been very much occupied this morning with you and with the thoughts Our Lord is giving you.

I am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

55b. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I am sending you a copy of the financial status of my nephew Mathieu, verified by a notary, as you wished. I think you are of the opinion that he should remain a little longer at Senlis for his basics; you have taken the trouble to question him about that, for which I thank you. He gives evidence of good will. I pray God that he may be able to further the holy desire of the founder and render himself capable of one day serving the people. He will do this in a more holy manner, when he has had the honor of your good company, of which I shall not deprive myself when I come to Paris, since you indicate that it will be agreeable to you. While awaiting this, I shall remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, October 2, 1630

56. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your last letter this past Saturday, just as I was leaving for Maubuisson,¹ and I asked Monsieur de la Salle to answer you. Now, this letter will be to assure you once again that your son is fine, as Monsieur Bourdoise² has assured me. I am also writing to tell you how consoled I am that your health is improved, and that I hope you will soon be completely cured. But how, when you have to talk so much, in air so thin and with the cold you have! Undoubtedly, if you recover your health completely, we shall really have to say that God has cured you. I hope that today or tomorrow I shall receive more detailed news about the matter. Mademoiselle du Fay has just sent her servant for news of you and I really want to promise myself that we shall have something good to tell her.

Last Saturday I told her what you wrote about her and she was quite comforted. Is your heart not comforted also, Mademoiselle, to see that it has been found worthy before God to suffer while serving Him? You certainly owe Him special thanks and should do your utmost to ask Him for the grace to make good use of it.

You want to know whether you are to speak to the assembled members of the Charity. I would indeed like that very much, they would profit from it, but I do not know whether it is opportune or advisable. Speak to Mademoiselle Champlin about it and do what Our Lord inspires you to do.

I am in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 22, 1630

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montmirail³

57. - TO SAINT LOUISE

October 29, 1630

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that you are cured and that the thin air is doing you no harm! That being the case, please continue until you have results somewhat similar to those you have had elsewhere. But if you feel a relapse coming on, please prevent it and come back. I leave all that up to you while I go off on a little two-week trip to Beauvais

Please recommend to the Prior¹ what you wrote to me concerning the election of officers.

57a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Between October and December 1630]¹

Monsieur,

I had been in Paris some time ago, hoping to see you there and to speak to you about my nephew Mathieu Pluyette, holder of a scholarship from your collège, who is continuing his basic studies at the Collège de Senlis. As I had mentioned to you, I would have liked very much for you to have taken the trouble to write a few lines giving notice that he would be remaining there for some time. I am afraid that his staying here is not considered proper. I believe that it is not against the founders's intention.

I have sent you a note by my man who is holding the first payment, so that he might give you a receipt for the second quarter which fell due on the feast of Saint Remi. I had given something to cousin Etienne Pluyette in the belief that he would not receive anything at Eastertime, but I think that he did receive something and that you are holding the rest. I am sending you a blank receipt for what he. . . , and when I can do so, I shall see you. Until then, I remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

G. Pluyette

58. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN BEAUVAIS¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that you have arrived in good health!. Oh! take great care to preserve it for the love of Our Lord and His poor members and be careful not to do too much. It is a ruse of the devil, by which he deceives good people, to induce them to do more than they are able, so that they end up not being able to do anything. The spirit of God urges one gently to do the good that can reasonably be done, so that it may be done perseveringly and for a long time. Act, therefore, in this way, Mademoiselle, and you will be acting according to the spirit of God.

Now, let us respond to all that you wrote me. It seems to me really advisable that the treasurer² be relieved of delivering the wine, and that this duty be given to someone else; because, were the inn to do it, you would have to pay an eighth. Some good widow from Basse-Oeuvre³ or from Saint-Sauveur could easily do it. I think then that this is necessary so that the treasurer may have the time to attend to the management of the work and to the reception and discharge

of the sick, for it is not at all appropriate for the nurse to do that, nor should she be paid six sous a day. Eh, bon Dieu! she would carry off most of the liquid assets of the Charity.

Would to God that good Madame de la Croix could follow your advice! It would be worth as much to her as a good religious order would be. As for the drugs, you have done well to deliver them, but your treasurer should not have bought them; she does not realize where that may lead. It would be well to remedy the matter through the Vicar General⁴ and the intervention of Monsieur du Rotoir. When the Bishop of Beauvais returns, it would be well to tell him the main facts, if you see that such is agreeable to him. Sometimes he wants this. But, as for getting his blessing, it seems unnecessary to me, because he does not stand on ceremony and likes to be dealt with frankly, and yet respectfully.

As for your lodging, if you have chosen Monsieur Ricard's⁵ house, you could not have done better; he is one of the best and most upright men I know; and his wife, whom I know only by reputation, is very devout. Indeed! I know how happy they will both be about it! I certainly hope that you are staying there.

As for M. du Rotoir's misgiving, he is right, and I think it advisable to insert into the rules that the sisters of the Basse-Oeuvre district will take care of the poor who die at Basse-Oeuvre and at Saint-Gilles. But as for the other districts, I think it is quite enough for the ladies of a parish to attend the funerals of their parish only: the sisters of the Saint-Sauveur district, of Saint-Etienne, and of Saint-Martin have too many sick and dying to be able to attend all of their funerals and the other parishes are suburbs, each forming a district.

With regard to the collections, you should tell them before you leave that they should spend as many days as necessary in making them.⁶ I would really like to know the amount of each collection made. But you must remember, with regard to what I said about the funerals, that the Bishop must express his wishes in these matters.

As for myself, I promise to write to Villepreux for the election of the lady to hold office and to speak to Father de Gondi about getting wood for Montmirail. In addition, I promise to let you know how your son is doing on the next trip, since I was not able to do so on this one for want of foresight.

In the meantime, be at peace. When you are honored and esteemed, unite your spirit to the mockeries, contempt, and ill treatment that the Son of God suffered. Surely, Mademoiselle, a truly humble spirit humbles itself as much amid honors as amid insults, acting like the honeybee which makes its honey equally well from the dew that falls on the wormwood as from that which falls on the rose.

I hope that you will make use of them in that way and that you will obtain forgiveness for me from the good Mother Superior of the Ursulines for leaving without receiving her instructions. Please assure the ladies holding office and Monsieur du Rotoir that I remain for them and for you, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I am not ready to leave for our long trip; some matters of importance are detaining us here; and Monsieur Lucas⁷ who has been seriously ill at the mission in Berry⁸ is coming back here.

Paris, December 7, 1630

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, at the house of Monsieur du Rotoir, in Beauvais.⁹

59. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1630 or 1631]¹

I have just received the enclosed from good Germaine. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to answer her for both of us. But I beg you even more humbly to excuse me for having neither come to see you nor invited you to come here. The constant work I have prevents me from doing so.

We have just set up the Charity at Saint-Benoît; but I do not know what spirit is afoot, causing each parish in Paris to want something special of its own and not to want to have any contact with the others. It is almost an insult to them to say "in other places they do it like this." Or else they want to make a hodge-podge, taking one thing from Saint-Sauveur, another from Saint-Nicolas,² our parish, and yet something else from Saint-Eustache.³

You will be talked about at the Saint-Benoît meeting. Mademoiselle Tranchot is relating wonders about you. Do you think it would be a good idea for you to take the trouble to visit the good woman in order to stabil[ize]⁴ her spirit so that she can strengthen the others? If you have

visited her before, you could easily do so under any pretext you might find, for she will not fail to talk to you about it, nor shall I fail to be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I am leaving for Montreuil⁵ tomorrow and will return the same day, I hope. Remember us in your prayers. I wish you good evening.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

60. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]¹

If Germaine of Villepreux is accustomed to going to Holy Communion, I do not see any reason why you cannot do the same. Do so then, Mademoiselle.² If you cannot take the discipline and if you have a belt of little silver rosettes which Mademoiselle du Fay had me get some time ago, use it instead of the discipline and the hairshirt, because they heat the body too much.³

60a. - COMMANDER DE SILLERY¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

[Around 1631]²

Reverend and very dear Father,

I have no doubt that, knowing as you do the heart of your poor son, you wished, by your very kind and cordial letter, to fill it with such sweetness from your overflowing goodness that, although it is second to none in cordiality, you oblige it, nevertheless, to surrender its weapons to you and acknowledge you, as it does most willingly in this and in everything, as its master and superior. Indeed, a person would really have to be quite ungracious and very uncouth not to be overcome with love for a charity so lovingly exercised by such a worthy and noble father towards a son who only causes him trouble. But nothing can be done about it. I humbly and willingly accept the shame of all the insufficiencies and weaknesses that you put up with in me, after having asked your pardon with all reverence and submission.

I assure you, my very dear Father, that I desire in good earnest, with the grace of Our Lord, to mend my ways. Certainly, my only Father, I think that I have never felt moved in this regard to the point where I am now. Oh! if only we can and do come to the point of working efficaciously on the honest amendment of so many miseries with which Your Reverence knows I am filled and surrounded on all sides, I am sure that you will thereby receive inexpressible consolations. And even though this benefit might not come about so promptly nor so notably as your piety might desire, I beseech you, my good Father, per viscera misericordiae Dei nostri in quibus visitavit nos oriens ex alto,³ not to let your goodness grow weary and never to consent to abandon this poor son. You know well that he would be under too poor a guidance were he to remain under his own.

61. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your son's letter seems very discreet to me; I think someone helped him. But if he did write it on his own, there is reason to hope that he will become a man of good judgment. I think it will be well for you to defer his return to coincide with yours and for you to go ahead with your trip. Give him a two weeks' delay then and tell him that you will send for him as soon as you come back.² Tell him also that you have decided to place him as a boarder with the Jesuits so that he can study.³ On your return, it will be well to talk to those priests and to reserve a place for him before he comes back, so that he can be sent from the community⁴ to the Jesuits in his cassock, without staying at your house. It will be quite expensive; but then, we must believe that one who delights in holy poverty to a sovereign degree cannot be impoverished.

As for my journey, I am not even thinking of it; the long one has been interrupted or, more precisely, postponed, and at present I do not foresee any shorter ones. So be at rest in that

regard and go with the blessing of God, which I beg Our Lord to grant you. Honor the tranquillity of His soul and that of His holy Mother and be very cheerful on your trip, since you have good reason to be so in the work in which Our Lord is employing you.

Please tell the pastor⁵ that, if he wishes you to instruct the girls for the few days that you will be in Montreuil, you will gladly do so. He has gone ahead of you to look for lodgings; in the meantime, stay at the inn. If he urges you to go somewhere else, do it, in nomine Domini. The inn in which you will be most comfortable is that of the widow.

Good-bye, Mademoiselle. Remember me in your prayers, who am your most humble servant.
V. DEPAUL

62. - TO SAINT SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

I beg you to let me know how you are and how much you are counting on being in Montreuil. Remember especially to pray to God for me, because yesterday, finding myself between the opportunity of carrying out a promise I had made and an act of charity towards a person who can do us either good or harm, I set aside the act of charity in order to keep my promise and have really upset that person. This does not worry me so much as the fact that I followed my inclination in acting as I did, who am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

V. DEPAUL

Paris, the last day of March, 1631

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

63. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was quite consoled to receive news of your health and your work and I beg God to bless them both more and more. May He be your consolation when I sadden you, as I did last week, and during the interior trials with which it shall please God to afflict you.

I am satisfied with everything you told me about the Charity. Please propose to the sisters whatever you find appropriate in that regard, and draw it up, as much according to what you have written me as to what you will consider best, and I shall send you the formal rule between now and Sunday.¹

As for your son, be at peace.² When you come back, we shall talk about it, and I shall do what is necessary. I shall be in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Feast of Saint Francis of Paula [April 2, 1631]³

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

64. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

[April 1631]¹

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, for the blessing and good health He is giving you! I shall send you, by the Pastor² or by someone else, the rules for the Charity which I have adapted to the needs of Montreuil. Look them over and, if anything should be deleted or added, please let me know.

Taking up the collection will be difficult in the village.³ God has taken care of that by the alms given in church and there is good reason to expect the same⁴ for the future. The people are given to mockery in that area and the women might give up everything. That task⁵ may be done by the curate, according to the rules; I have spoken to the Pastor about it. Since he cannot go there himself, he is sending you Monsieur Bécu.⁶

As for your removing someone, it is better to bear with all those who promise to do their duty well and then reduce the number to sixty, as the members die. Those received into the Charity will be considered members of the Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, and it will not be necessary to belong to the latter in order to belong to the former.⁷

Three things should be done today: propose the rules to them in the names of the Archbishop⁸ and the Pastor; proceed to a new election; and, thirdly, fix the number of volunteers. As for the rest, present it when you see them again on Sunday. You should require them to meet on that day, or at least the officers, upon whom you will please impress their duty and that of the confraternity.

Your son is fine, according to what Monsieur Le Juge⁹ has informed me. He is the one who sent him your letter. So, be at peace in that regard. Meanwhile, I shall speak to the collège of the Jesuits on his behalf.¹⁰

We are busy with our ordination retreats;¹¹ I recommend their success to your prayers and I beg you to take care of your health.

Yesterday, Mademoiselle Sevin¹² was talking about going with Madame de Châteaufort¹³ to visit you, if she can.

65. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

Paris, Friday, April 11, 1631

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The short trip I made to the country, from which I returned the night before last, along with the ordinands' retreat which we opened again yesterday, prevented me from taking care of your son's business. Nevertheless, I have secured the word of Father Lallemand,¹ the head of the Jesuit collège, that he will accept him as a boarder and I am now going to send your letter to M. Wiart.²

I have been told that God is blessing your work, for which I thank Him with all my heart. I beg Him to bring you back replete with health and good works, whichever day next week you think suitable in order to be here for the Holy Week services.

I am sending you a letter addressed to me, but I have only just now read the note in which you ask me to forward to Mme Forest³ a painting, a pot, and a package delivered here, which I have been uncertain about sending. I shall do so tomorrow, with the help of God. Meanwhile, you see how unworthy I am of use and of serving as I ought. Our Lord will forgive me if He so desires.

I am in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

66. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTREUIL

[April 1631]¹

I received your letter of Wednesday, Mademoiselle, upon my return from the mission; I got back that same day.² I have sent you the answer³ by the Pastor of Montreuil. I was telling you in my letter how I secured a place which they promised me for your son among the boarders. The headmaster himself promised it to me very readily. I have, moreover, sent to Monsieur Yart⁴ the letter that you wrote to him, according to which I expect that your son will soon be here.

Since God has not allowed you to do anything further for the Charity, we must praise Him for this and believe that He wishes nothing else for the present. Now, since your girls have been trained, what remains to be done, and what is preventing you from returning tomorrow? They really need you here at the Charity of Saint-Sulpice. They have made some beginning but, according to what I have been told, things are going so badly that it is a real pity. Perhaps God is reserving for you the opportunity to work there.

I am leaving today, if I can, to go six leagues from here, and I hope to come back tomorrow. In the meantime, I am in the love of Our Lord your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montreuil

67. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saturday, 9:00 a. [April 1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

I was promising myself the consolation of coming to see you, but I had to leave unexpectedly for the Bois de Vincennes.² Your dear heart will forgive me and on my return, with the help of God, we shall talk about everything. Let me tell you in advance, however, that I am delighted the boy has decided on the Collège.³ On the other hand, as far as the cost of the room and board is concerned, it cannot be helped. We must enter by this door to get him used to it. I believe that the room and board is two hundred livres per person, and I think that there are some who pay more; but I trust that he will be satisfied with that.

As for the person you wish to replace, there is no danger in having someone according to your own inclination; but the one you mention to me will not be suitable for you, as I see it. You need someone entirely new and faithful, who respects and fears you, and thinks the same way as you do; ask God for such a one. As for the foreclosure you mention, there is no difficulty in using it as you have explained to me.

Adieu, my dear daughter, stay quite cheerful. On my return we shall discuss this whole plan and your trip in the country. Do not let your heart grumble against mine for leaving without speaking to you, because I did not know anything about this in the morning. I hope to see you again in eight to ten days. Meanwhile, I am your servant.⁴

68. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am at home but wondering whether or not I should return to the country for a week or so. Because we have some matters that will keep me busy today and will deprive me of the pleasure of coming to your house to see you, I most humbly beg you to be so kind, if you are in the neighborhood around two o'clock, as to send for me at Mademoiselle Le Gras' house. I shall come to see you or shall ask you to come to Sainte-Marie in the faubourg,² in case I cannot get to the aforesaid lady's house at that time. You see, Mademoiselle, how firmly convinced I am that you are quite available and willing to accommodate yourself to the need of the moment. What a blessed state to be in!

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

69. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1631]¹

My slight indisposition is not my usual little fever but a sore leg caused by a kick from a horse and a small tumor that had begun a week or two before that. It is so trifling that, were it not for a little tenderness it is causing, I would not fail to go into town. Thank you for your solicitude but please do not worry about it at all because it is nothing.

With regard to the interior trial² that caused you to abstain from Holy Communion today, you made a rather poor decision. Do you not see clearly that this is a temptation? And should you in this case yield the advantage to the enemy of Holy Communion? Do you think you will become more capable of drawing near to God by withdrawing from Him than you will by approaching Him? Oh! surely, that is an illusion!

Regarding little Michel, is that not another temptation for you to get upset because of anxiety over your obligation to take care of him? Oh! Our Lord most certainly did well not to choose you for His Mother, since you do not think you can discern the Will of God in the maternal care He demands of you for your son. Or perhaps you feel that that will prevent you from doing the Will of God in other matters. Certainly not, because the Will of God is not opposed to the Will of God. Honor, therefore, the tranquillity of the Blessed Virgin in such a case.

I am very glad that you will be sending the good child to us tomorrow and that he will be spending the morning here. I also hope that you will allow him to do some painting while he is here, and that you will honor Our Lord's peace of soul by perfect acquiescence to His holy Will in all things.

As for the community,³ it would be well for you to take the trouble of thanking them warmly. But as for a gift, I do not think you can do anything much for them right now. Honor the holy poverty of Our Lord.⁴ Besides, nothing will please them so much as the gratitude of words. And if little Michel were to write a thank-you note to M. Bourdoise, it seems to me that that would be fine.

Please remember Saint-Sulpice and me in your prayers. I am your servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

70. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

June 21, 1631

I am hoping for much fruit from on high through the goodness of Our Lord, if union, cordiality, and support exist between you two. In the name of God, Monsieur, let this be your principal practice. Because you are the older, the second in the Company, and the Superior, bear with everything, I say, everything, on the part of good M. Lucas.¹ I repeat, everything, so that, laying aside your superiority, you may adapt yourself to him in charity. That is the way Our Lord won over and directed the Apostles, and that is how you shall succeed with M. Lucas.

Therefore, humor him, never contradict him on the spur of the moment, but admonish him later cordially and humbly. Above all, let there appear no sign of division between you. You are, as it were, on a stage upon which one act of bitterness is capable of spoiling everything. I hope you will conduct yourself in this manner and that God will make use of a million acts of virtue which you practice in this way, as the basis and foundation of the good you are to do in that region.

71. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1632]¹

I thank you for the money [you] sent me, Mademoiselle, and ask you to mortify yourself by not hearing Mass here tomorrow. I shall say it about four o'clock and you could not get up at that hour without placing yourself in danger of a relapse.

As for the rest, I beg you, once and for all, not to give it a thought until Our Lord makes it evident that He wishes it, and at present He is giving indications to the contrary. We want a number of good things with a desire that seems to be of God, and yet it is not always from Him. God permits it that way to prepare the soul to be what we desire. Saul was looking for a she-ass and found a kingdom; Saint Louis, for the conquest of the Holy Land, and he found the conquest of himself and a heavenly crown. You are trying to become the servant of those poor young women,² and God wants you to be His own, and perhaps of more people than you would be in that way. And even if you were only His, is it not enough for God that your heart is honoring the tranquillity of Our Lord's? Then it will be fit and ready to serve Him. The kingdom of God is peace in the Holy Spirit; He will reign in you if your heart is at peace. So, be at peace, Mademoiselle, and you will honor in a sovereign way the God of peace and love.

I recommend myself to your prayers and wish you good evening with as much tenderness of my heart as I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

72. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME¹

July 20, 1631

So, you have finally arrived in Rome, there where the visible head of the Church militant resides, where the bodies of Saint Peter and Saint Paul lie, as well as those of so many other martyrs and holy people who, in former times, gave their blood and dedicated their whole life to Jesus Christ. O Monsieur, how fortunate you are to walk on the ground where so many great

and holy individuals have trod! This consideration moved me to such an extent when I was in Rome thirty years ago² that, although I was burdened with sins, I could not help being moved even to tears, it seems to me. I think, Monsieur, that it was this same consideration that strengthened and preserved you the night you arrived in Rome, where, after an exhausting walk of thirty miles, you were obliged to sleep on the ground and to struggle all the next day in the heat of the sun to get into the city. Oh, how many merits you gained in that way!

73. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

1631

You must make it understood that the poor are being damned for want of knowing the things necessary for salvation, and for lack of Confession. If His Holiness were aware of this necessity, he would have no rest until he had done all he could to set things right. It is the knowledge we had of this situation that brought about the establishment of the Company, so as to remedy it in some way. In order to do this, we must live in a congregation and observe five things as essential for this purpose:

1. leave to the bishops the power of sending the Missionaries into the part of the diocese they choose;
2. the above-mentioned priests are to be subject to the pastors where they go to give the mission, for its duration;
3. they are to take nothing from those poor people, but live at their own expense;
4. they are neither to preach, nor catechize, nor hear confessions in cities where there is an archbishopric, a bishopric, or a presidial court, except in the case of ordinands and those who will make retreats in the house;
5. the Superior of the Company is to have complete control over it; and these five maxims are to be as it were the basic principles of this Congregation.

Notice that M. Duval's¹ advice is that nothing be changed in the plan for which I am sending you the notes. The words do not matter; but as for the substance, it must remain intact. Otherwise, anything changed or deleted would be greatly detrimental. So, stand firm and make them understand that we have had this in mind for many long years and have had experience with it.

74. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You are a skillful woman to have adapted the rule of the Charity² in this way; I think it is fine.

As for the Attorney General,³ I do not know if there is any harm in telling him that it is the same one I establish wherever we go to give the mission. He indicated to me some time ago that he really wanted it established in Paris and instructed me to talk over means of doing so with the pastor of Saint-Nicolas⁴ and with the late pastor of Saint-Sauveur;⁵ but that did not work out well.

You did not tell me whether the pastor of Saint-Nicolas had been to the Archbishop's residence.

I would like to know if there is any contagion⁶ around that parish or within it and if your ladies⁷ are afraid.

I am going to drink some of Monsieur Deure's water soon. God grant that I may make good use of it, if it is beneficial for me.

I almost forgot to tell you that if the Attorney General mentions to you that he will speak to me about the matter, make him understand that I do not go out. If he raises no objections on the subject, you do not have to mention me to him. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT

74a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

Madame Laurent² is coming to see you, having considered that the most appropriate for the present. I am sending you the letters I had written for her; use them according to your prudence. I praise God that you are now better than when you left and beg Him to fill you with peace and tranquillity. I doubt that M. is capable of what you say or that the young woman is fit to follow you. I think we need to postpone the decision on that.

When will you be coming back? Will it be this week? It will be when good Madame Laurent's initiation permits. I think I shall begin the visitation of the faubourg³ tomorrow. Someone wrote me about a good young woman from a place near Pontoise, who is quite suitable and very anxious to serve God by instructing children. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

75. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 2, 1631]¹

These lines will serve to tell you good-bye once again and to entreat you to take good care of your health. As for your son's, do not worry about it; we are looking after him.² Please write to us often.

I am writing to Father de Gondi that I think it is a good idea for you to go and begin in Le Mesnil.³ According to the success of the venture, we shall see about the other place. If I do not mention any other to you, Bergier⁴ seems the most suitable to me, then Loisy.⁵ Monsieur Ferrat, the bailiff of the estates,⁶ who lives in Vertus,⁷ will introduce you everywhere. I shall write to this M. Ferrat and to the pastor of Le Mesnil. You will get the letters Friday morning in Montmirail.

Meanwhile, banish from your mind the reason you advanced to me for taking this trip. You could not imagine how that has saddened my heart. Oh no! I am not made that way, thank God; but God knows what he has communicated to me with regard to you, and you will understand in heaven.

I bid a good day to Mademoiselle du Fay, and to you, that you may return replete with merit and good works. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. P.

76. - TO THE PASTOR OF BERGERES

Monsieur,

Because Father de Gondi has seen the great good Mademoiselle Le Gras is doing in Montmirail and Villepreux by the instruction of the girls, he wanted to procure the same benefit for those in your parish and has asked this good lady to take the trouble of going to see you for that purpose. In her kindness, she has graciously consented to do so. She is on her way, therefore, and I beg you most humbly to assure me, Monsieur, that you will be quite pleased that Our Lord is presenting you with this opportunity for the benefit of the souls He has entrusted to you. I hope, Monsieur, that you and your parishioners will be consoled by it, if God chooses to give to her work among you a blessing similar to those He has given in the other places she has been.

Now, so that your people may be aware of Father de Gondi's intention, will you please be so kind as to notify them during the sermon and encourage them to send their daughters to the above-mentioned lady's house at the times she will suggest to you? She is also quite experienced in matters concerning the Charities. I beg you, Monsieur, to have her visit the ladies of the confraternity and to remember me in your prayers, who am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

Paris, September 2, 1631

77. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are some letters that I am sending you for the pastors of Champagne and for Monsieur Ferrat. Seal them, if you deem it advisable to give them to them, because I think there will be no harm done, whatever Father de Gondi may write. He wrote to me of the affection with which he was awaiting you; I hope you will rest satisfied with it.

I am still of the opinion that you should begin at Le Mesnil and from there to Bergier,¹ Loisy, Soulières,² Souderon,³ and Villeseneux,⁴ unless the Bishop,⁵ Monsieur Ferrat, or your own prudence judges it better to act otherwise.

I am not sending you any other report since I do not think it is necessary. The spirit of Our Lord will be your rule and your tact. I commend myself to your prayers for our retreat⁶ which I am going to begin as soon as I finish this letter. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 2, 1631

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Montmirail

78. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

September 4, 1631

A great person of rank, remarkable for his doctrine and piety, was telling me yesterday that he is of the opinion of Saint Thomas, namely, that he who is ignorant of the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, and dies in that state, dies in a state of damnation. He maintains that this is the basis of Christian doctrine. Now, that touched me and still touches me so deeply, that I am afraid of being damned myself for not being unceasingly engaged in the instruction of the poor common people. What a motive for compassion! Who will excuse us before God for the loss of such a great number of people, who could be saved by the slight assistance we could give them? Would to God that so many good ecclesiastics who could assist them in the midst of the world might do so! Beg God, Monsieur, to grant us the grace of redoubling our zeal for the salvation of these poor souls.

79. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

September 1631

You are always admirable in your humility. I receive a very great and quite special consolation from it, but particularly from the satisfaction you say you experienced during the visitation you made to our house in the faubourg.¹ The Superior² also writes me that she and all her daughters derived very great pleasure from it. May God be blessed, praised, and glorified for everything and may He be pleased to give my dearest Father a great crown for the pains he takes and the acts of kindness he performs for our good sisters! Alas, dearest Father, how good you always are to me! I know this because of those few tears you shed when you saw the overall tone of our most recent responses.

80. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

September 12, 1631

We are leading a life in Paris almost as solitary as that of the Carthusians. Since we are neither preaching, nor catechizing, nor hearing confessions in the city, almost no one has anything to do with us nor we with them. This solitude makes us long for work in the country; and that work, for solitude.

81. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN MONTMIRAIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since Providence is detaining you in Montmirail, you must adore it and do what God is presenting to you. It does not matter if that individual has a somewhat bad reputation; perhaps

she has it wrongly or, then again, she may have mended her ways. Magdalen, from the moment of her conversion, became a companion of the Virgin and a follower of Our Lord. Since I am a great sinner, I cannot reject those who have been, provided they have good will. And then, perhaps it is the Prior¹ who suggested that thought to Father de Gondy to whom I shall say nothing about the affair, for I think he will take care of it without saying so. If not, please write and let me know.

As far as going to some villages around Montmirail is concerned, they are very far apart. There does not seem to be anything to do there, even considering the season.

An indisposition that I had when Madame Rousseau's son came here did not allow me to speak to him, but I offered to be of service to him and I shall. Please assure his mother of this.

As for your son, he spent a very fine day here yesterday. He is well, thank God. We shall have him purged when it is time. He was promoted to the third² year. Monsieur Dehorgny assures you that he will write to you; but the short time we had to let him know about it is the reason for your not receiving any letters at this time. Do not be anxious about him.

Madame Laurent³ returned ill from Villepreux four or five days ago. M. Belin is going to teach the girls. I told him he will be relieved of that burden in a week or so, and I have spoken to a good young woman who will not be able to get there until the time I mentioned.

I know nothing about the tablecloths you mentioned. I shall thank Mademoiselle du Fay for them. As for Mademoiselle Guérin, I am going to find out whether she sent any here. She came to say good-bye to me this morning because she is leaving for Chartres. She told me it was because of the disease, which is spreading here. Between your house and this one, there are two infested dwellings. M. Guérin and his eldest son, however, are staying here.

Mademoiselle du Fay is ever so slightly indisposed. M. de Vincy⁴ came to see me yesterday and assured me that it is nothing. I can tell you the same for myself; I have not even had my little sensations⁵ for two days.

Germaine's brother came here today. I gave him her letter and the distaff. He is off to Villepreux, where he will pass on news of her.

How is the Charity coming along? Are the women doing all right? Do they have many sick people and plenty of money? Is Mademoiselle du Fresne in Montmirail? How is she? I greet her with all my heart and her mother as well. I am not mentioning Monsieur du Fresne, for I think he is at Court, but I send my regards to Germaine. I also want to tell you that Madame de Marillac,⁶ the Marshal's wife, is in Le Roule, very ill with diarrhea.⁷ Honor the patience of the Blessed Virgin in this and offer your grief to God. Would she not be most fortunate to leave this land of misery and go to enjoy the glory of Heaven?

Mademoiselle Guérin is writing to you and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 13, 1631

82. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am much obliged to you, Mademoiselle, for sharing with me the state in which you find yourself. I thank you for this and entreat you to take things really easy and to get good medical treatment in order to recover your strength, and then to take care of it so that you can afterwards serve God. Our Lord wills it so, Mademoiselle, and I ask it of you.

O mon Dieu! how admirable and adorable are the ways by which He leads His own, Mademoiselle! Surely nothing is too much for Him when there is question of sanctifying a soul. He hands over body and soul to weakness in order to fortify them in contempt of earthly things and in the love of His Majesty; He wounds and He heals them; He crucifies them on His cross in order to glorify them in His glory; in brief, He gives them death in order to have them live in eternity. Let us accept these appearances of evil in order to have the real goods they produce, Mademoiselle, and we shall be very happy both in this world and the next.

Furthermore, I thank the Mother of the daughters for the honor she does me of remembering me, and I promise to make amends to her for her complaints. O mon Dieu! how I am looking forward to a good quarter of an hour hearing her tell how her daughters have been treating her and how the community has been.² But I really do not wish this to be too soon, for the number of illnesses is increasing or, at least, is not diminishing. Today I was informed that yesterday three bodies were taken from a house near Mademoiselle Le Gras and that a Father of the Oratory died at Saint-Jacques³ and another at Notre-Dame-des-Vertus.⁴

I wish you good evening and am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

83. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL

September 15, 1631¹

Mademoiselle,

Yesterday, I received your letter of the twenty-third of last month, in which I read what you had to say about that clergyman.

If the Bishop of Châlons² has not sent for you and if he is nearby, I think you would do well to go to see him and tell him quite simply and frankly why Father de Gondi asked you to take the trouble of coming to Champagne and what you are doing. Offer to curtail whatever he wishes in your manner of acting and to discontinue everything, if he so desires. That is the spirit of God. I find no blessing at all except in that. The Bishop of Châlons is a holy man; you must look upon him as the interpreter of God's Will in the present situation. If he thinks it well for you to change something in your way of doing things, please be exact in doing it. If he thinks you should come back home, do so calmly and cheerfully, since you will be doing the Will of God.

If he is at a distance and is leaving you on your own, please continue to teach the little girls. If some women happen to be there, well and good, but at present please do not make an announcement for them to come. You can just have the sisters of the Charity³ notified to see you all together. Honor in this way of acting the humility of the Son of God in His.

Since our Company is presently in Bergères,⁴ I think it is inadvisable for you to go there. Please stay, therefore, in Le Mesnil⁵ until the mission comes there; then you can go to Bergères and to the other places. Let me know, please, the outcome of what you do regarding the Bishop of Châlons.

Your son returned to the collège yesterday in perfect health. He had been studying on his own here six hours a day. The head priest is fond of him and intends to give him a private room, which is no small favor. He was so at home with us that, as I said good-bye to him yesterday, he was moved to tears. That shows he is good by nature; you have cause for consolation on that point. You must ask God to continue His grace to him.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

84. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 22 or 23, 1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I wrote to you a week ago and addressed my letters to Father de Gondi; now I am sending you three bundles of shirts and the enclosed letter. Your son is fine, thank God, and it seems to me that his mind is developing more and more. As soon as the days are a little cooler, he will come here to be purged.

Good Madame Laurent is still sick; I sent someone to visit her. Mademoiselle du Fay has been a little ill, but she is better now, thank God. Marshal de Marillac's wife has gone to receive in heaven the reward for all her good works.² Come now! This will grieve you; but then, since Our Lord has willed it this way, we must adore His Providence and strive to conform ourselves in all things to His holy Will. Certainly, I am well aware that your dear heart asks nothing better and that, although the interior is upset, it will soon be quieted. The Son of God wept over Lazarus; why should you not weep for that good lady? There is no harm in it so long as, like the

Son of God, you conform yourself in this matter to His Father's Will. I am confident that you will.

But how are you? Does that thin air not bother you? And is Germaine not feeling sorry for her girls, who she knows are at the mercy of M. Belin?³ When are you going to Champagne? Is that good young woman getting stronger? Is there any good to be hoped for? A word about all that, please.

I cannot tell you anything new from here except that we have the disease across from our house and that Our Lord is keeping all of us in good health, thank God, except for my little fever. I trust that you are not forgetting us in your prayers⁴ and that you truly believe I am, in the love of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I made a mistake when I told you that I was sending you some packages. I thought that three bundles of cloth I found on our table were shirts and that they were for you.

85. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

Here at last is a letter I am sending you from your son. I hope that we shall have him purged next Monday and bled, according to the instructions that you gave us.

Mademoiselle Sevin stopped me the day before yesterday along with that good heavysset young woman in mourning who lives near your house and who wants to enter Sainte-Marie as a lay sister. She told me she was looking for a place for you to live because Monsieur Véron¹ needs your room. Since his son now has a position, he needs a place to receive people. I told her you would be very sorry to inconvenience him and that I was asking her to try to find a place for you and that I would tell you about it so as to find out if you have a preference for any neighborhood.² Please let me know about that and also if you need any money, because they brought you the eighty or so livres from your annuity.

Mademoiselle Tranchot³ really wants you in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges⁴ where the Charity is going badly. I think Our Lord is reserving the success of that good work for you. Mademoiselle du Fay is well. She is still looking for a place to live, too.

Yesterday a priest from Saint-Nicolas⁵ was taken to Saint-Louis;⁶ he is one of the new ones. Today I sent that good young woman from Saint-Sauveur to Villepreux.⁷

Now then, where are you at present? What is Our Lord doing with you? Someone told me that he met Father de Gondi on the way to Champagne. I imagine that you are there, too. May it please Our Lord to bless your work there and strengthen you for it!

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 12, 1631

86. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God for your health, for your work, and for everything you wrote to me. Your son came here with a slight headache four or five days ago. We had him bled the following day and made him stay in bed. M. Quartier¹ told us not to purge him until his headache was cured. It was gone after three days, so that he no longer feels ill at all. That is why we had him take his little dose this morning. He is cheerful and well-behaved with us, so that he edifies us all. If this keeps up, there will be reason to praise God and to hope that you will receive some consolation from him. When he has been purged and has been well for three days, we shall permit him to go back to the collège. I repeat, when he has been well for three days and, I mean, if his headache does not return--because right now, he has none at all.

Today, I shall send the money to Mademoiselle Sevin for the dress, and to our sister Germaine the letter, which will arrive just at the right time.

If that good eighteen-year-old girl has common sense and an intelligent mind, do not scruple about letting her take care of the girls.² A good mind is better at that age than a poor one at the age of fifty.

I shall also send the blanket to your son and do everything you told me.

It is true it is much to be desired that the people who want to apply themselves to this good work have no other concern nor matter to attend to but that. I am going to Pontoise at the first opportunity. I have heard about a young woman there. I shall hire her for Sartrouville³ where Madame de Villeneuve⁴ wishes someone.

Our little group will leave in two or three days.

Please give the Lieutenant my most humble regards and tell him that I am his servant and that I request him to reserve three beds for us at the inn. I also send greetings to Germaine; please tell her that I ordered her letter delivered to her brother.

In the meantime, I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, Eve of the feast of Saint Luke,⁵ 1631

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Le Mesnil

87. - TO MONSIEUR COLLETOT

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The Confraternity of Charity, whose rules I sent to you, is not intended for the care of the plague-stricken. There are a few places where the servants of the poor, that is, those fine women who belong to the Charity, have decided not to go and visit the contagious, but rather to take them food or carry it to some place for them, at a certain distance from where those poor people have taken shelter, so as not to be in danger of catching the disease. This is to be understood of places where nothing is organized for the plague-stricken. However, the confraternity in question is not for the plague-stricken specifically, only indirectly.

If someone in your parish is afflicted with the disease, then the Charity should appoint some good poor woman or man to deliver the supplies. The servants of the poor do not have to go there, each one on her day, as they do with the other sick people.

This, Monsieur, is all that I can tell you in answer to your letter, except that I am asking God to bless the holy work you are undertaking and to sanctify your soul. May He Himself be your reward in this world and in the next and make me worthy of being, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Colletot, Prior of La Forêt-le-Roi¹

88. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LE MESNIL

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I showed your letter to Father de Gondi, those of the Bishop of Châlons to you and yours to him.¹ Now, all things weighed and considered, and to his great regret, he is of the opinion that you should obey the Bishop of Châlons. He thinks that God wills it thus, since it is by order of the person who is the interpreter of His Will in the place where you are. Now, such being the Will of God, please come back home. You will not fail to receive the reward you would have had if you had instructed all the girls in that area. Oh! how happy you are because you have this relationship to the Son of God, having been obliged, like Him, to withdraw from a province where, thank God, you were doing no harm! Father de Gondi will thank you here for the trouble you have taken and will let you know how he feels about it. I beg you not to think that this is being done through your fault. No, it is not that, but a simple disposition of God for His greater glory and for the greater good of your soul. What is most sublime in the life of Saint Louis is the tranquillity with which he returned from the Holy Land without having succeeded according to his plan. Perhaps you will never have an opportunity in which you can give more

to God than in this one. Make use of it then according to the measure of the grace Our Lord has always shown in you.

Mademoiselle Sevin is writing to ask you to find another place to live. You can go with Mademoiselle du Fay and live there until you get a place that is suitable for you. Good Mademoiselle Sevin will be working on that.²

As for the fifty écus, keep them. Let us know here what you do with them. Your son has returned to the collège; he is very well and doing well likewise.

My most humble regards to the Pastor, to M. Ferrat, and to Germaine. And I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Paris, Eve of the feast of All Saints [1631]³

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Le Mesnil

89. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 74a.)

90. - TO JEAN DE LA SALLE, IN LE MESNIL

November 11, 1631

There is no objection at all to accepting Father de Gondi's charity. If you have already refused it, offer your apologies to M. Ferrat. Father de Gondi is our founder. We have no right to refuse what he gives us for the love of God any more than we would refuse a gift from someone who was not from the place where we were giving a mission. Saint Paul acted in that way; he never accepted anything from the place where he was working, but he took from the other churches in order to work in the new ones when the toil of his own hands was not sufficient, or when preaching and conversions prevented him from working with his hands to earn his living. *Spolians Ecclesias Macedoniae, ut non essem vobis oneri*, he said to the Corinthians,¹ although he stated that his glory in preaching the Gospel was in accepting nothing.

91. - TO GUILLAUME DE LESTOCQ, PASTOR OF SAINT-LAURENT¹

[1631]²

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday I went to the Attorney General's³ home and found four or five carriages in front of his door. Since it was very late and I would have had to wait a long time, I thought it better to put off my visit until today after dinner. Therefore, I shall see him presently, according to the Prior's⁴ order. I shall not have the honor of going to see the latter this morning, both because it seems to me that he wishes us to have the Attorney General's word before settling the matter,⁵ and so that you, Monsieur, may do us the charity of telling him a few difficulties to be found in the proposals which he did me the honor of offering me yesterday. The above-mentioned Prior did me the honor of telling me yesterday evening that he had consulted his religious⁶ about our manner of acting in choir, the housing and furniture, and the board that those who would wish to live with us would pay. Now, with regard to the last difficulty, which is that each religious would pay only two hundred livres board, I accept that most willingly, although I have calculated the expense exactly from what it has cost us at present and it will cost us more, and although even the students are paying ninety écus.⁷

As for the housing, I am afraid that some difficulty might arise in the course of time if we were together in the dormitory, because we observe silence from the evening after prayer until the next day after dinner, when we have an hour of recreation; and from recreation until the evening after supper, at which time we have another hour of recreation. When that is over, we again enter into silence, speaking only when necessary and in a low voice. Now, whoever takes that from a Community introduces into it an inexpressible disorder and confusion. This has led a holy person to say that he will guarantee, when he sees a community observing silence exactly, that it also observes everything else pertaining to regularity; on the contrary, when he

sees another in which silence is not observed, that it is impossible that anything else pertaining to regularity be observed.

Now, there is good reason to fear, Monsieur, that those gentlemen will not wish to obligate themselves to such silence and that, by not doing so ourselves, we may destroy so necessary a practice which we have tried to observe until now to the best of our ability. Therefore, I think it would be advisable to return to the proposals that the religious made to me in the presence of the aforesaid Prior, that is, that they take a few private rooms, with fireplaces, which we shall have arranged for their use. As for furniture, they can take their own from their rooms, and we shall provide them with linen and tableware or give each one fifty livres to buy some. Far from considering this simony, on the contrary, it seems to me more than reasonable to act in this way since those gentlemen will be leaving us their community furniture. By this means, therefore, they will leave us the dormitory, in which we shall be able to observe our silence without difficulty.

With regard to the choir, the Prior suggests an order of precedence and that we wear the domino⁸ and also the almuce.⁹ Now, allow me to tell you, Monsieur, that although I make no objection at all to the Company's having to leave the first places to those gentlemen when they wish to come to choir, nonetheless, I do not think it advisable to burden us with the almuce nor with the domino. To avoid confusion and the suspicion that Parlement¹⁰ might have of our beginning to become canons, and consequently that we are tacitly renouncing our plan to work unceasingly for the poor people of rural areas, it is, I repeat, advisable that we not be burdened with the almuce nor with the domino and that the service be left to us to be performed according to the obligation of our conscience, as is agreed in the contract. Now, the manner in which I intend to do that and which the Prior formerly thought proper, is to recite the office *media voce*, without singing, except for High Mass and Vespers on Sundays and feast days.

Those, Monsieur, are the difficulties I find in the proposals that the Prior did me the honor of offering me yesterday evening and which I most humbly beg you to mention to him this morning and to let me know how he feels. I am perfectly confident that, since he is thinking primarily of the glory of God and the salvation of the people in these matters, and, seeing the inconveniences that could arise if things were carried out as he suggested, he will accept the very humble protest I offer him. I would prefer that we remain forever in our poverty rather than change the direction of God's plan for us. I am ashamed to bother you so much; please forgive me.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

92. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall send for the painter tomorrow and shall do as you told me. By the same means I shall let the nurses of the sick poor of Saint-Sauveur know what Mademoiselle Tranchot has told you concerning your son. We shall see him whenever you wish, but I do not think that you should have him take Orders so soon. He is not old enough for Holy Orders;² and as for the four Minor Orders, they are neither useful nor necessary at present. He would have to set aside his studies to prepare for them. That would also be a great loss for him.

How sorry I am about your suffering! But, such being the order of Providence, what can you do? And truly, what real harm do you have to fear from this? So, there is a man who says you promised to marry him,³ and it is not true. You are being falsely accused. You are suffering interiorly, unjustly, and without cause. Are you afraid that people are talking about you? Maybe they are, but rest assured that that is one of the greatest means of conformity with the Son of God that you could have on earth. You will thereby acquire victories over yourself that you could never have had. Oh! how much vain complacency is being destroyed in this way and how many acts of humility are being brought forth by this means! Courage! Nothing but good can

come to you from this, both in this world and the next. So, strengthen yourself within against the feelings of nature, and the day will come when you will bless the hour in which Our Lord tried you in this manner. I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. D.

I beg you to excuse me for not [having sent]⁴ this reply to you today; the trouble I am having with our negotiations prevents me from doing so.⁵ Please find out from Mademoiselle Sevin what she knows about it and let me know. I have just returned from town, where I have been since this morning.

Tuesday evening

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

93. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]¹

Here is that good young woman who has come to be your servant, if you so desire. She is healthy, thank God, except for a slight fever which recurs regularly. I think she will look after you very well. If you like, you can send her back home for a week or so.

As for the water,² drink it freely; it has never harmed anyone and there are many who are cured by it. Madame de Portnal is beginning to feel well from it. I shall tell Monsieur Deure to send you some, or else, you can ask Mademoiselle to tell him.

I shall be leaving tomorrow in haste. If I can, I shall see you. I hope to be only ten to twelve days. Assist us with your prayers and be comforted in the object of your love, who is our suffering Lord. I shall be in the love of our Lord and in that of His holy Mother, your servant.

V. D.

I repeat that you are not to stop drinking that water.

94. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

December 23, 1631

. . . As for the reports you would like to have presented by others who might be less interested in the matter than we, I also would like that, although it seems to me to be rather naïve, but what recourse do we have? One who says things quite plainly as they are and puts his faith in God is pleasing to God, as is, I think, this line of action. Truth and humility go well together.¹

94a. - TO POPE URBAN VIII¹

[January 1632]²

Some years ago, having reflected in his piety and charity that in many places of France the country people in particular are deprived of spiritual consolation, and that many of them are ignorant of the principal articles of faith about the Most Holy Trinity and the sacred mystery of the Incarnation, without which there is no salvation, or do not believe in them as they should, that they do not dare to reveal and confess their sins to their pastors, either because of shame or because they are too familiar with them, and that many live in error thinking they have confessed correctly although they are concealing even more serious sins, the nobleman Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny, gave the sum of forty-five thousand lire of Turin for the foundation of a congregation of secular priests called the Missionaries who were to instruct the above-mentioned country people in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, hear their confessions, administer to them the sacraments of the Church, preach to them, and teach them all the other things concerning their salvation, wherever and whenever they should be sent by the local Ordinaries to perform these spiritual functions. Some secular priests, living together in a house located in the city of Paris and occupying themselves with spiritual activities of this sort to the very great edification of the people, have already happily begun such an institute under the direction of Vincent de Paul, a priest of the diocese of Aix in the province of Auch, founder of the said Congregation and Superior of the aforesaid house. They observe the following:

1. First, the principal purpose of the said Congregation is to venerate the Most Holy Trinity and the Sacred mystery of the Incarnation.

2. The priests of the said Congregation are sent by the local Ordinaries--to whom the Congregation submits itself in this matter only, and to whom it wishes and intends, now and in the future, to show a perfect obedience--to the cities and towns and other places of the Kingdom of France which are subject to the rule of the Most Christian King, except those which have the title of Parlement or Bailiffship, where there is no lack of priests, either secular or regular, or other ecclesiastical ministers. They are sent to them to teach the Commandments of God to those who do not know them and to instruct them in the rudiments of Christian doctrine, to hear their confessions, to administer to them the Sacraments of the Church, and to carry on among them the office of teaching catechism and preaching. However, they first obtain the permission of the pastors, without which they never go in to perform these functions, nor do they wish to be able to do so.

3. In places where they have preached, they establish, by authority of the Ordinaries, Confraternities of Charity, as they are called, if these are needed in order to help the sick poor, and they themselves contribute something to this holy work out of their own goods.

4. With the greatest possible charity they try to settle and calm lawsuits and quarrels in which the country people in particular are sometimes involved all through their life.

5. They welcome into their houses parish priests who wish to make spiritual retreats and receive instruction about the administration of their parishes. They make an effort to assemble these parish priests once a month to deal with cases of conscience and the administration of the Sacraments, whenever this can be done conveniently for the local vicinity and is without detriment to their churches.

6. At ordination times they welcome into their houses those who wish to receive Orders so as to teach them how they are to exercise these Orders and receive them worthily.

7. The aforesaid Congregation does all these things without charge and without any expectation of compensation, and promises to do the same in time to come.

As time went on, lifting up their minds more and more to heavenly things, the aforesaid priests decided upon the following ordinances:

1. The Congregation shall consist of laymen,³ clerics, and priests who shall have all things in common.

2. The laymen shall be content with the service of Martha and take care of domestic matters.

3. Clerics shall have to be seventeen or eighteen years old before they can be admitted into the Congregation, and shall become members of the Congregation after a year of probation.

4. The above-mentioned Vincent de Paul shall remain Superior of the said house of Paris, and after the other houses of the Congregation have been founded, he shall be elected for his lifetime as Superior General of the Congregation.

5. After the death of the said Vincent de Paul, the Superior General of the Congregation at any given time shall be elected every three years, and may be maintained in office for no more than one other term of three years.⁴

6. The Superior General shall appoint Superiors and other lesser ministers and remove them at his discretion. He shall visit each house of the Congregation, the property and members, correct, and have other authority and superiority which the Superior General of similar or other Congregations have, may have, or will have in the future.

Moreover, since experience has proven that this pious institute has brought forth abundant fruits, and since it may be hoped that such happy beginnings will have even happier progress, and since those things which are strengthened by the protection of the Apostolic See are more lasting, Vincent, the Superior of the said house and the other priests of the Congregation humbly beseech the said Congregation⁵ to show itself especially gracious to the aforesaid Congregation, and through it to each of its members, and to approve and confirm by apostolic authority everything that has been done so far, strengthen it by apostolic recognition, and allow the Superior General of the aforesaid Congregation and his successors, for the greater progress of this Congregation, to enact any other statutes, beyond the aforesaid ordinances, provided they are licit and proper and in no way contrary to the sacred canons and decrees of the Council of Trent. May they also be allowed, according to the nature of circumstances and times, and as often as it shall seem appropriate, to change, alter, modify, limit, and correct them, and have the power to issue new norms freely and unrestrictedly, provided the aforesaid statutes, their changes, alterations, modifications, limitations, corrections, and the new ones to be issued are

first approved by the Ordinary. May the Congregation itself and each one of the present and future members enjoy all and each one of the privileges, immunities, freedoms, exemptions, faculties, favors and graces, indults, indulgences and other concessions which other Congregations use, have, and enjoy, or may or will be able to use, have, and enjoy in the future. May they use, have, and enjoy them in the same way and to the same extent and without any difference, as if they had been specifically and expressly granted to the said Congregation, its Superiors, and other members. May you be pleased to grant and permit this and to declare null and void [everything to the contrary].

95. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that His goodness is strengthening you more and more in His love and in the accomplishment of His holy Will. It will indeed be fitting for you to make some sort of pilgrimage for what you told me; but for the love of God, Mademoiselle, do not get sick on the way. We must accept illness as we would a divine state. It is true that Our Lord helps you in a special way. It seems to me that you are killing yourself from the little care you take of yourself. Be quite cheerful, I beg you. Oh, what great reason people of good will have to be cheerful.

96. - TO SAINT LOUISE

To be on the safe side, you should have a doctor's certificate stating that it would be advisable for you and your son to eat meat, and send it to the secretary of the Archbishop of Paris whose name is M. Baudouyn. He will get you the permission without any difficulty. Once that is done, do not make any objection to eating meat. On the contrary, as far as in me lies, I order you to do so and to put aside the misgivings that you are allowing to enter your heart. Be fully confident that you are the dear daughter of Our Lord, through His mercy.

I am ordering you, moreover, to procure for yourself the holy joy of your heart by all the relaxation you can possibly take, and to forgive me for not having had the happiness of seeing you because of the great number of matters that are keeping me busy. Rest assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall have this happiness as soon as I can and that I am your servant.

V. D.

I beg you to see about that permission tomorrow morning, so that you can start eating meat tomorrow, because fish doesn't agree with you at all.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

97. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]¹

I beg you, Mademoiselle, do what Monsieur Bouvard² tells you, confident that God will bless his remedies. I am not telling you to take them all; I hope there will be no need for that. Come now, you must do this. As for the rest, it will take care of itself in its own time. Above all, remain in good spirits. I shall see Monsieur Bouvard and talk to him about you and about the drug.

As for the other matter we talked about yesterday, do not be concerned about it. He who has time at His command will take care of that affair in the time He has foreseen as appropriate from all eternity.

Get better, then, and soon, I beg you, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

V. D.

98. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]¹

Did I not tell you yesterday, Mademoiselle, that you had to consent to what you were asking, because in any case your heart would have no rest until it was done. Do it then, at an appropriate time, calmly and without haste. Because of you I shall have one done again myself one of these mornings. However, visit Monsieur Bouvard afterwards. But get well soon in order to serve God. Oh, how my heart longs for that to be so, and quickly! Come now, do what has to be done on your part. In the meantime, keep your spirits up and do what you have to do in a cheerful way. I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

V. D.

I would like to know if M. Meynard is an attorney at the Châtelet² or at the Court.

99. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing these lines to tell you about us and to find out about you. For our part, as things stand now, thanks be to God, I am feeling better and better. Were it not for a slight fever that has taken hold of me for a day or two, I would have come to thank you for your great kindness to me.

And you, Mademoiselle, how is everything with you? Are you in better health now than you were a few days ago? Are you stronger? But are you taking better care of your health than in the past? And are you being brave? Do you let yourself get depressed sometimes? For the love of God, Mademoiselle, strengthen yourself on both of those points so that you may serve God in holiness and justice for many years to come.

Also, please let me know where disciplines can be bought because I need about a dozen of them. But there is no need to send me an answer right now; a day or two will be soon enough. My cordial greetings to M. de Vincy.² I remain, for you and for him, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

100. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur le Jarriel, the banker, has very kindly undertaken for us the forwarding of the bulls uniting Saint-Lazare with our little congregation and has had them directed to Monsieur Marchand.¹ As soon as you receive the said documents, Monsieur, please take the trouble to go and see Monsieur Marchand and to begin work on the matter, in order to get them expedited as soon as possible. They are absolutely necessary to us, because of the opposition we are getting² and on account of which they are pressuring us back here. I still dare to hope from the kindness of Messieurs Le Bret³ and de Luzarches that they will continue their charity to us at this crucial time in our establishment. We shall owe to both of them what God alone can give them. You can address your letters to the above-mentioned gentleman, Monsieur Jarriel, as to an old friend of ours to whom, after God, we owe a considerable part of the success of this affair.

It remains for me to entreat you to take care of your health above all things, and while waiting for God to bless the outcome of your work, I remain in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, March 2, 1632

101. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very glad that you have taken as you should the news of Mademoiselle de Potrincoirt's¹ illness; I have not heard anything about her for five or six days now. But I am sorry that you are allowing your spirit to plunge into certain useless apprehensions which are more a hindrance than an advancement to your salvation. I beg you, place yourself completely in that holy love which is brought about by trust in God and mistrust of oneself, Mademoiselle. Leave that fear, which seems to me rather servile at times, to those to whom God has not given the understanding of Him that He has given to you. Above all, disregard those thoughts which seem to weaken the holy faith that God has placed in you.² Disregard even more the author from whom they come who has no power but that which you give him. Now absit³ that you have ever given him that control! The tears brought on by your suffering from this problem are so many witnesses of what I am telling you. So be at peace in that regard.

As for Monsieur de Marillac,⁴ I consent to everything that you think proper, but take care not to implicate yourself. I think that in these matters one must be disposed to take the advice of the person from whom one has asked counsel. When he tells you something contrary to your opinion, you must not go back to it again. Do, however, what Our Lord suggests to you. Of one thing I can well assure you, He will give you nothing but perfect advice. I am in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

102. - TO N.

[1632]¹

You are well aware that the religious of [Saint-Victor] are contesting our possession of Saint-Lazare.² You could hardly believe the acts of submission I have rendered to them as the Gospel prescribes, although truly they are not called for. M. Duval has assured me of this as has everyone who knows what this affair involves. Things will be as Our Lord wishes. He knows that His goodness has made me as truly indifferent on this occasion as during any other difficulty I have had. Please help me to thank Him for this.

102a. - R. DOGNON¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

Two reasons seem fitting to me for dedicating to you Le Bon Laboureur.² The first is the gratitude owed to you by all good tillers of the soil for the profit that comes to them through your holy exercises, which oblige all those who experience them or have some knowledge of them to bless God. For the good of our century, He has passed on to you, by a metempsychosis,³ which He alone can bring about, the spirit, affections, and design, together with the name of the great Patron of missionaries, Saint Vincent Ferrer.⁴ The apostolic missions he instituted in his time are manifestly more necessary now than they ever were before. May God be blessed for having given you that spirit and the ardent charity of Jesus Christ which urges you, as we see, to run to the assistance of souls who cost Him all His blood.

Blessed also be those who, urged on by the same charity, assist you in this truly laborious yet noble and honorable undertaking. There is none more excellent since it divinizes the men whom it associates with the works of the Savior, and makes them His collaborators in the salvation of the very men for whom He died. Men among whom I do not doubt that we must number all the firstborn at whom the world has scarcely deigned to look, tillers of the soil and other villagers. They have been of singular importance to Our Lord. In order to show them His special love, He wanted them to be the first to have the news of His birth into the world. And as if He had been born primarily for them, He went about during the years of His public life seeking them everywhere in villages large and small to announce to them the Kingdom of God. Finally, He deigned by a prerogative of incomparable favor to associate them with Him in the works of His Passion, for Simon the Cyrenean who helped Him to carry His Cross was, says the Evangelist, a man who was coming from the village.

All these considerations are worthy of that burning zeal which you have for poor village people. You certainly have this consolation and advantage in your undertakings that, although

our century is indiscreetly critical, and although the majority of people, since they judge the projects of other people's devotion by their own feelings, take part in censuring all new establishments whether they be of religious orders or of other congregations or communities, yours, nonetheless, by a certain secret privilege which is a manifest blessing of God, remains sheltered from the contrariness of tongues. It meets with general approval both in the mind and on the lips of all those who know what it is. They have savored the good odor with which you fill every place to which you go and they recognize in the abundance and sweetness of your fruits that the tree which produces them can only be thoroughly good.

Now, besides this general reason, I have a personal one for dedicating *Le Bon Laboureur* to you. The reception you gave my book on its first appearance obliges it to present itself to you again now that it is ready to be published a second time. Since it is in the world only to be used for the instruction of country people, it comes to offer you all that it is and all that it can be, begging from you the influence it needs to be profitably employed. Not that, heretofore, it has been unsuccessful, for, thanks be to God, it has surpassed the hopes of its author and has been received better than it deserved wherever it has appeared. But, because the recommendation received from you up to the present has lent it credibility, it is convinced that when it is henceforth fully endorsed by you, you will treat it as your very own, and that with an extraordinary charity you will supply for its defects which are only too frequent.

It would have been better for it to have received its own education from you before undertaking the instructions of others. But to tell the truth, the same thing happened to me that once befell a great Spanish clergyman, Master Avila,⁵ when he saw the Company of Jesus established by Saint Ignatius. "There," he said, "is a project which I had conceived, but in such a confused way that my spirit was not able to bring it to birth." I say that in some way the same thing befell me, without for all that wishing to enter into comparison with that great man. And in fact it is a truth that I believe I once told you. I had been thinking for a long time of contributing what I could to assist the poor in the villages, since I was under an obligation to do so by my birth, by my role as a priest, and by the necessities everyone can see only too often everywhere.

As I was preparing to carry out this plan according to my capabilities, I fortunately heard about the institution of your Congregation, dedicated to the salvation of the same people for whom I intended to work. It was this common partiality for and aim at a like goal which made me earnestly seek the honor of your acquaintance which I shall cherish all my life, and the means of learning through the practice of your works, in which out of your kindness you afforded me as much experience as my free time allowed, how to be a good missionary. This experience led me to realize especially that I was finding in your missions what I had sought with such great difficulty and not found elsewhere: the right way to assist tillers of the soil effectively. And had it not been that the poor *Bon Laboureur* had even then more than half appeared, and that its printing was almost completed, I would have withheld it completely, but only until it had learned at your school what it would afterwards be obliged to repeat to the people in the villages. However, as it was far advanced, and because you ordered it that way, I allowed it to appear on condition that, if it were once again to be printed, you would do it the charity of correcting its defects. It is the carrying out of that promise that it has been awaiting, of which your weighty and continual occupations, as I see it, have deprived it up to now.

People do not cease, however, urging it to make its appearance once again just as it is. And it is doing so to please those who are encouraging it, but not without taking on your livery so that it might have more reasons to call itself your own. It has taken the rules from your missions and the organization of your Confraternity of Charity, in order to make them known, everywhere that it is found, as exercises quite suitable for tillers of the soil, and of a piety both exemplary and greatly necessary in the villages. It still hopes that you will one day do it complete charity and keep your promise, so that it may appear less defective the third time it is published, if such comes to pass.

That is what I am asking of you, Monsieur. Also, continue the honor of your gracious kindness to me with the place you have given me among your Missionaries, and the title, Monsieur, of your most humble and affectionate servant.

R. DOGNON

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Paris

103. - TO SAINT LOUISE

It is better, therefore, to act in the way you wrote to me, Mademoiselle, and to postpone your plans so as not to run any risk. If between now and my return you find some trustworthy person, act; if not, wait.¹ Our Lord will see to the matter, especially if you are happy at the foot of the Cross where you are at present and which is the best place in this world you could be. So be happy there, Mademoiselle, and fear nothing. Do not forget us in your prayers, and I will take care to recommend you to our good country people.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

104. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This note will serve three purposes: to say good day to you and to thank you for that altar cloth you so kindly sent us; it was so beautiful and delightful that it almost stole my heart away with pleasure yesterday seeing your own in it. Even though I did not know it was there, I saw it the moment I entered the chapel. The pleasure lasted all day yesterday and still lingers with an unexplainable tenderness which gives rise to a number of thoughts within me. God willing, I shall be able to share these with you, contenting myself, meanwhile, with telling you that I am asking God to adorn your soul with His perfect and divine love while you embellish His house with so many beautiful adornments.

The third purpose is to request you not to go to the poor today. In that way you will honor the inactivity of the Son of God and that of Saint Joseph, who, although he had the power of heaven and earth in his care and under his authority, nonetheless, wished to appear powerless. Send Madame Richard to them. Perhaps God will then impart to her some grace that she needs and to you, some degree of humility, of compassion for the sick, or of self-knowledge--your powerlessness to advance towards the object of your fervent aspiration.

In short, you will profit if you do this, because Our Lord wishes it so, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother and of Saint Joseph, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

105. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

What you tell me about the Marshal de Marillac seems worthy of great compassion and distresses me.² Let us honor therein the good pleasure of God and the happiness of those who honor the suffering of the Son of God by their own. The way our relatives go to God is of no importance to us, provided they go to Him. Now, the good use of this kind of death is one of the most certain paths to eternal life. Let us not feel sorry for him then, but let us accept the adorable Will of God.

106. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Here I am, your neighbor, since noon.² I sent someone to see if you were at home around two o'clock, but you had gone to pray. If you would kindly take the trouble to come here tomorrow right after dinner, we will hear from you in person what you have been writing to us. In the meantime, I beg you to honor the interior states of abandonment in which the saints, indeed even the Saint of saints, found themselves at times, and the closer union they afterwards enjoyed with God. I bid you good evening and am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

I cannot resist telling you that I intend to give you quite a scolding tomorrow for giving way as you do to those useless and futile apprehensions. Oh! prepare yourself for a good talking-to!

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

107. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

As for your little retreat,² make it in a leisurely way according to the order set down in the Introduction by the Bishop of Geneva,³ but make only two meditations a day: one hour in the morning and half an hour after dinner. In the intervening time, read something from Gerson⁴ or the lives of the holy widows to whom you have a more particular devotion. Use the remaining time to reflect on your past life and on the time you still have left. But please do all this quite calmly, after you have changed your lodgings, and be satisfied with doing so for six days. Do not forget me in your prayers. Perhaps I shall make my retreat at the same time. May God grant us the grace to make it well!

I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

108. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May or June 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ be with you!

If with M. Compaing's² advice you think it advisable to dismiss that woman, do so. If you need money for that purpose, I shall pay it. I am involved up to my ears with a large number of retreatants, an appointed bishop, a Premier Président,³ two doctors, a professor in theology, and M. Pavillon,⁴ in addition to our exercises. All that, I must say, prevents me from coming to see you.⁵ For that reason, please send me the report you mentioned to me.

I am very pleased with your fine lodgings, and I shall have a word with Germaine at her convenience. M. Belin is here. As regards that gentleman for M. Renouard, you must ask for him through little Hermite; he knows him. You will have to tell him that he is the one he wanted to give us, the one who was formerly a merchant. Your son is here; he returns to me better and better each time.

Adieu, Mademoiselle, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

109. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[June 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, how many faults I commit in your regard! Yesterday I assured you that I would have the pleasure of coming to see your devout and beautiful paradise² today and that I would see Madame Goussault,³ the President's wife, and Mademoiselle Poulaillon.⁴ And yet I did neither one nor the other, but went off to the country. I have just returned from there. I went to work at the Charity of Champigny⁵ which really needs your presence. I most humbly beg you to forgive me and to go to Villeneuve tomorrow, if Madame Goussault and Mademoiselle Poulaillon will take you there. Please write to them about it this morning. If neither of them can go, I wonder if you would be uncomfortable in the boat for Joigny⁶ which is leaving at eight o'clock on Saturday. I think not, because it is covered. When you are in Villeneuve, stay at Mademoiselle Tranchot's house⁷ and give the pastor the letter I write to him, the tenor of which you will see. There will be no harm in your instructing the girls only; it will

facilitate the means of winning their mothers over to God. As for the Charity, you will find only nine sisters in the confraternity; try to get some others. If we can, we shall send you Monsieur Pavillon to preach some Sunday.

I shall say nothing to you about the rest. Our Lord will advise you as to what you must do. Please take care of your health and honor Our Lord's cheerfulness of heart. For my part, I beg God to bring you back in perfect health, full of merit, and laden with spoils from the enemy of the empire of God, in Whose love I am your servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

110. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLENEUVE-SAINT-GEORGES

Mademoiselle,

Your letter of the twenty-seventh was given to me here in the house. I wrote to M. Pavillon right away asking him to go and see you and I sent him your letter; he has not answered me. As soon as I receive an answer, I shall send it to you. Otherwise, M. [Soufliers],¹ who rather enjoyed teaching catechism in Villeneuve, will come. M. de la Salle is not here either.

I certainly had no doubt at all that you would find very great difficulty in reestablishing the Charity and more than you tell me. But blessed be God that there is some reason to hope you will set it up again!

As for the difficulties you reported to me, I think it wise for you to act as you have written to me. Mademoiselle Poulaillon told me that she hopes to spend Saturday night at your house, and I wrote to Madame Goussault that they were counting on her in that town to pay a visit to the school teacher of Villeneuve on Sunday afternoon. O Dieu! What a virtuous little group! I beg Our Lord to bind your hearts together into one, which will be His own, and to strengthen you in your work.

Paris, July 7, 1632

111. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN VILLENEUVE-SAINT-GEORGES

Saint-Lazare, July 10, 1632

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, that in the midst of so much work you are well and that He has blessed your efforts! I really do think it would be well to establish a schoolmistress in Villeneuve, but where shall we find one? From a letter written to me by M. Belin, I gather that Germaine would not mind going there; but how can we withdraw her from Villepreux if someone else is not put there? And then, where shall we find that someone? I surely cannot see any way to do it, especially in the little time you have before seeing Mademoiselle d'Attichy. We shall see about it when you return, which will probably be some day next week. In the meantime, please give the mothers of your pupils the hope that you will send them a teacher as soon as you can, or that you will come to see them and discuss the means of housing and maintaining the schoolteacher. We will be expecting you then during that time.

Please find out how the Charity in Crosnes¹ is doing. It is a little village as far from [Villeneuve]² as the Saint-Victor gate is from Notre-Dame, or thereabouts. If you had a horse to go there, you would not lose any time.

112. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

July 12, 1632

As soon as I have received the statements that the Congregation wishes from the Nuncio¹ and from the Archbishop,² I shall send them to you, if indeed we can obtain them. For, it is true that they are trying to cause us trouble as you informed me, even the person from whom we should expect the greatest assistance after God. But all that would not surprise me. It is my sins which give me reason to be afraid, not the outcome of the affair. Sooner or later, that will be settled both there and here. But I could not express to you how much the deceit amazes me. The Father General³ denies it all, however, and has promised to write to Cardinal Bagni,⁴ to the Ambassador,⁵ and to Father René.⁶ As soon as I have his letters, I shall send them to you. In the

meantime, please act in as Christian a manner as possible with those who are hampering us. I see them here, just as often and cordially, thank God, as I have been wont to do. It seems to me that, by the grace of God, not only do I feel no aversion towards them, but I honor and cherish them the more. Furthermore, I have not yet complained to Father de Gondi⁷ about them, for fear of making him averse to his vocation. What they wrote from there is true, that Father B.⁸ went to give a mission in Normandy with six or seven others about two weeks after Easter, and that I sent them M. Renar⁹ because they entreated me to do so in order that they might conform themselves to us. Since then, one of their men came to spend two or three days at one of our missions in this diocese to see how we do things. If they wish to come more often, they will be welcome. I could not consider myself a Christian if I did not try to participate in the *utinam omnes prophetarent* of Saint Paul.¹⁰

Alas! Monsieur, the countryside is so vast! There are people by the thousands filling up hell. All the ecclesiastics, with all the religious, would not suffice to remedy this misfortune! Should we be so despicable as not to allow these people to devote themselves to the assistance of those poor souls who are constantly being lost! Oh! Surely, that would render us guilty of hindering the accomplishment of the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. And if they wish to place obstacles in our way, we must pray, humble ourselves, and do penance for the sins we have committed in this holy ministry. Therefore, I beg you, Monsieur, not to stop seeing those Fathers, acting in their regard as Our Lord advises us to act towards those who try us and hinder us, and begging those to whom God has given good will towards us to do them no harm by word or by action.

113. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

It will be well for you to contact Madame Goussault and Mademoiselle Poulailon to ask their opinion about Germaine. Just two days ago I became aware of that way of acting, which seems cordial and deferential to me. I may perhaps have offended them by having you make the final decision about your work without telling them.

114. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since a very close friend of mine is involved in a case for which M. de Villenosse is the judge, my heart could not hide from him that I hoped to be able to render him some service through your kindness. I very humbly ask you, Mademoiselle, to do me the favor of taking an interest in the matter and of presenting the enclosed document to him with your recommendation. The eminent virtue of this person, his need, and your charity in my regard give me the confidence to bother you with this. My embarrassment at having to trouble you will make me more circumspect and reserved another time so as not to do so, on condition that you will not take the trouble of coming here and that you will not spare me in any way that you judge me capable of serving you. I am, in the love of Jesus and His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your. . . .

The case is to be judged tomorrow. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to see to the recommendation today.

115. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

Charity towards those poor convicts is of incomparable merit before God. You have done well to assist them and will do well to continue in any way you can until I have the pleasure of seeing you, which will be in two or three days. Give a little thought to whether your Charity at Saint-Nicolas would be willing to take on the responsibility for them, at least for a time. You

could help them with the money you have left. Indeed, it is difficult, and that is what makes me suggest the idea casually.²

115a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1630 and 1638]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never been less satisfied with myself as far as you are concerned, because it has been such a long time since I have seen you. You may well believe that only an excess of work keeps me from doing so. I shall try to have that happiness tomorrow, begging you meanwhile to take care of your health. Send word to me about it, as to one who is, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Friday morning

116. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I approve of everything you wrote to me. Because Madame Goussault is in the country and Mademoiselle du Fay does not have her carriage, I shall try to come and see you tomorrow or the day after. Meanwhile, get much stronger.

I bid you good-day and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Sunday morning

The young woman you take with you to Villeneuve² will have to be very determined; she will have much to suffer.³

117. - TO SAINT LOUISE

I praise God, Mademoiselle, that you are not ill as Mademoiselle du Coudray¹ made me fear this morning. But is what you say true, that it is not so? Well, I am begging Our Lord that that be the case.

We shall, therefore, postpone Mademoiselle du Coudray's confession until the Blessed Virgin's feast day, since it seems that you want it that way without saying so, and know all about it.

Besides, I have some business here in the house tomorrow morning. I wish a good evening to her as to you, and to your son the grace to do what you mentioned to me.

I did not answer you sooner because I have just come back from the city.

Good evening, Mademoiselle. Please offer to God the interior needs of him who is, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

118. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I would not have been so slow about seeing you to thank you for all the good things you have so kindly done for our chapel and for us, or rather, for Our Lord and His holy Mother, were it not that God chose to do me the favor of keeping me home with a slight fever which I have had since last Sunday. Please accept my thanks by means of these lines, Mademoiselle, along with the assurance that my heart, as seems fitting to me, would be most happy to see yours. But since Our Lord does not want this yet, may His Holy Name be blessed! However, I shall not fail to bring you to Our Lord in my unworthy prayers. I also recommend myself most humbly

to yours, begging you to honor the holy tranquillity of Our Lord's soul by believing that you are His dear daughter and He your dear Father, and I, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

119. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1634]¹

Since in conscience you can have [the matter taken care of without any fear]² and you realize that if you do not do so you are jeopardizing the transaction which so many people [want], ask Monsieur Clichun to do you this service, as he will gladly do it. If you are troubled by the doubt that you can deal with this affair in that manner, be at peace and think no more about it. If it is the treatment you get from your auditors, think of the fear of those who render an account before God at the moment of death. Let us try to act so rightly that we shall have reason to trust in the infinite goodness of the Auditor of our Life, our Sovereign Judge.

Thank you for the book [you] sent me and please take care of your health. It is no longer yours since you destine it for God.³ And my heart is no longer my heart, but yours, in that of Our Lord, Whom I desire to be the object of our one love. Please remember to offer to God a matter that affects us.

120. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ASNIERES¹

Mademoiselle,

My regards to the president,² as well as to the curate in Asnières, and to all your good women of Charity. I recommend myself to their prayers.

Please tell the above-mentioned lady that I beg her and also you, to help us thank God that our case concerning this house³ was confirmed in Parlement the day before yesterday.

121. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]¹

In your opinion, Mademoiselle, am I not rather ungracious to you? Did your heart not murmur a little against mine for my being so close and not having seen you nor sent you news of us? Now then, some day you will know the reason for all that before God.

I came here² yesterday to work on something I had to write. Perhaps I shall still be here tomorrow, but not without going into the city nor without seeing you, perhaps at Mass.

In the meantime, I bid you good evening. I have scarcely directed your son at all yet. There goes the bell taking the pen from my hand.

Good evening, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

122. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We must wait for that good young lady to make up her mind. Madame Goussault wants to take the trip with Marie² before confiding her to you.

Draw up the rule; then I shall go over it and do what you asked me. Tell me the obstacles that you fear.

I begin my retreat today and am putting everything aside for later. Please pray to God for me.

I am, in His love. . . .

V. D. P.

123. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Since I am unable to come and see you myself, I want you to know, Mademoiselle, that I am begging Our Lord to tell you Himself what you should do. Go ahead then and do in nomine Domini what you think our amiable and ever-adorable Savior is asking of you. I beg Him with all my heart to take you and to bring you back, to be the light of your heart and its gentle warmth, to let it know and love what He desires of you and, especially, to let you be the consolation of His dear daughters, and they yours, in His perfect love.

One of those Jacobin Fathers¹ was the Prior and the other the Novice Master two years ago. As for the candlesticks you gave to Sainte-Marie,² I commend you for that, provided they are not silver.

Remember me before God, in Whose love and in that of His holy Mother I am, for the superior who will be elected from your group³ and for her young women, a most humble and obedient servant.

Monsieur Clichun returned half an hour after you yesterday.

124. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur du Coudray, your brother, wanted me to enclose this letter with the one he is writing to you and to join my prayers to his, so that you may see fit to conclude the business you have with one another. I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, to do this as soon as possible, if you are not ready to leave soon and if your business can be concluded by someone else to whom you can send your power of attorney and some written statements. But I beg you that it not be to me, because I am too busy and do not at all understand business matters.

I know you will tell me that it was not your fault and that you have sought him out many times for that purpose, and will call me to witness myself that I have been a mediator between the two of you in order to reconcile you. But my answer to that is that the time was not ripe then, as it appears to be now from the frame of mind I seem to see in your brother. So, while awaiting your favorable reply concerning this matter, I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 19, 1632

Your brother would like two guaranteed and accurate copies of annates¹ from two different agents, M. Marchand and some other. I most humbly beg you, Monsieur, to send them to him.

Addressed: Monsieur du Coudray, Priest of the Mission.

125. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN MONTMIRAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday, I received your letter of the seventh of this month. It made me aware of the blessing Our Lord is pleased to continue bestowing on your mission, which consoles me as much as you can imagine. O Monsieur, how touched I was by the note you sent me concerning the success at Courboin¹ and the needs of Viffort!² Well now, may God be glorified for everything. May you recognize, Messieurs [sic], the gratitude you owe Him for having chosen to make use of you for that purpose. And may I be confused at seeing myself unworthy of cooperating in this good work!

I am, moreover, in arrears for not having written you with every coach. Lay the blame for it on some rather unusual difficulties I am having here.

What shall I say about your way of going to Joigny except for you to manage as you think best. But, if you do go on foot and take only one horse, I ask two things of you: that you travel by short stages and that those who are tired take turns riding the horse. If you have not yet sent anyone to Soissons, do not do so. The Bishop of Soissons³ is supposed to be in this city soon. I will do what is necessary. If there is still some village that needs attention, what do you think, Monsieur, of leaving Messieurs Bécu⁴ and Miloir⁵ for that purpose? However, if it is only for three or four days, wait for them and leave as soon as you have finished. You are needed in

Joigny where you will find Monsieur Pavillon, M. Renar, Messieurs Morel,⁶ Massé,⁷ and another from Saint-Nicolas,⁸ besides Messieurs de Sergis and de Renel.⁹ M. de la Salle is not there; he remained here because he is ill.

We gave orders for M. Pavillon to do the preaching, and for Messieurs Renar, Roche,¹⁰ Grenu,¹¹ and Sergis to be responsible for the following: the first man, the Credo; the 2nd, the Commandments of God; the 3rd, the Our Father and the Hail Mary; and the [4th],¹² the Sacraments. As for the children's catechism, Messieurs Roche and Sergis are to be relieved when they are teaching the adult catechism, and you, Monsieur, will take care of directing the group. I pray Our Lord to grant you a generous share in His spirit and guidance for that purpose.

Courage, just undertake this holy work in that spirit, Monsieur. To that end, honor the prudence, foresight, meekness, and exactitude of Our Lord. You will do well if you have the rule observed as it should be. The blessing of God is found abundantly in this. Begin then with rising, retiring, prayer, the Divine Office, and entering and leaving church at the appointed time. O Monsieur, what a precious treasure is the habit formed by these things, and how many disadvantages are found in the contrary! Eh! Mon Dieu! Why shall we not take the trouble of doing this for God, since we see that most people are exact observers of the rule of life they have laid down for themselves in the world? Never, or very rarely, do lawyers fail to rise and retire, to go to and from court at the same hour; and most workmen do the same. Only we ecclesiastics are so fond of our ease that we work only according to the impulse of our inclinations. For the love of God, Monsieur, let us strive to rid ourselves of this miserable sensuality which makes us prisoners of its whims.

I have written rather at length to Monsieur de Sergis concerning what you will have to do in case this letter finds you in Montmirail. Go then, in nomine Domini, and please greet or, rather, embrace our men in nomine meo. Write to me often. Tell our men that, of all the missions we have given, there is none more difficult nor important than that of Joigny, both because of the mentality of the place and because of the power the Evil One has there in some matters. Tell them that hoc genus daemoniorum non ejicitur nisi in oratione, maxima modestia et prudentia et humilitate,¹³ and that the men who make up the Company require those very virtues. Let them beware of two notable faults remarked during the preceding mission, namely, sensuality, not to say intemperance, and an exaggerated love of self, not to say gross vanity in sermons and discourses on this subject.

I beg you, Monsieur, to warn the Company of this so that they can avoid falling into these faults. Do not forget at Chapter to admonish the group in general and the individuals whom you see falling into these faults. For believe me, Monsieur, if we are not careful, we shall fall into these faults. If we do so, O Dieu, where shall we be? What will become of a company so important and nonetheless composed of sensual, effeminate, and immortalized men? Who does not see that it cannot last long and that these vices are the source of all the others? Now then, Monsieur, for the love of God, pray with regard to this matter and see that it is done. I, wretch that I am, have reason to fear being the cause of all these faults because they are all to be found in me as in their source. From me they spread to the Company, or to a part of it. (For thank God, there are some people who are not like that. They rather mortify and humble themselves in all things.) Pray that God will forgive me and grant me the grace to correct myself. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, November 28, 1632

Addressed: Monsieur Portail, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

126. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1632]¹

Mademoiselle,

I praise God that you have suffered no harm from your journey nor from your short sojourn in Serain.² I beg Him to strengthen you completely, so that you may serve Him for the good of the little souls in the place where you are now.

As for what you tell me about Saint Benoîte, you will be honoring the spirit of Our Lord in her by the relationship of your work to hers and the remoteness of your customary place of residence.³ If you cannot do this in all things, God be praised that you are doing it in something, while waiting to do more if His Divine Goodness so pleases. He who is faithful in a little, says Our Lord, will be set over a greater work. Be faithful to this little and perhaps Our Lord will have you do more. Only God knows whether or not that will contribute to the glory of M. Le Gras, for whose soul and for your own you wish me to pray.

127. - TO N.

[Around 1633]¹

In conformity with the former practice of the Church, by which bishops would have instruction given in their own houses for a period of several days to those desiring to be promoted to Orders, the Archbishop² ordered that, from that time on, those in his diocese who had that desire would retire for ten days before each Order to the house of the Priests of the Mission in order to make a spiritual retreat. They practice meditation, so necessary for ecclesiastics; make a general confession of their whole past life; review moral theology, especially that which concerns the use of the sacraments; learn to perform well the ceremonies of all the functions of all the other Orders; and, finally, are instructed in all the other matters necessary for ecclesiastics. They are lodged and fed during that time. Such fruit is resulting from it, by the grace of God, that it has been observed that all those who have made this retreat afterwards lead a truly priestly life. Furthermore, most of them dedicate themselves in a very special way to works of piety. All of this is becoming evident to the public.³

128. - TO SAINT LOUISE¹

I was afraid that your difficulty had not been settled because Mademoiselle Delamare has been at your home for a long time. That is why I wrote the note I sent you, and not to dissuade you. Now, since your judgment has dealt with it in that way, we shall wait until tomorrow right after one o'clock. In the meantime, make your meditation tomorrow morning on the Birth of Our Lord and repeat the same thing at ten o'clock. Then, after dinner, meditate on the shepherds. Your last meditation will be on the Purification of the Blessed Virgin.

Adieu, Mademoiselle, remember our spiritual needs and that I am your servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

129. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION¹

[January 15, 1633]²

I have learned from various people of the blessings the goodness of God is so kindly lavishing on your mission in [Mortagne].³ We were all greatly consoled by this. And because we recognize that this abundant grace comes from God, a grace which He keeps on giving only to the humble who realize that all the good done through them comes from God, I beg Him with all my heart to give you more and more the spirit of humility in all your duties. You must believe most assuredly that God will take this grace away from you as soon as you allow vain complacency to enter your mind, attributing to yourself what belongs to God alone.

Humble yourself greatly then, Monsieur, at the thought that Judas had received greater graces than you, that those graces had produced more results than yours, and that, in spite of that, he was lost. What would it profit, therefore, the greatest preacher in the world, endowed with the most eminent talents, to have made his preaching resound with applause throughout an entire province and even to have converted several thousand souls to God, if, in spite of all that, he were to lose his own soul!

I am not telling you this, Monsieur, because I have any particular reason to fear this vain complacency in you or M. . .⁴ who is working with you; but, so that, if the demon should attack you from that angle, as doubtless he will do, you may very carefully and faithfully reject his suggestions and honor Our Lord's humility. These past few days, I have had as the subject of my talk the ordinary life Our Lord wished to lead on earth. I realize that He had so loved this

ordinary and abject life of other men that, in order to adapt Himself to it, He had humbled Himself as much as He could, even to the point (O marvelous act which surpasses the whole capacity of human understanding!) that although He was the Uncreated Wisdom of the Eternal Father, He had wished, nevertheless, to preach His doctrine in a much simpler and more humble style than that of His Apostles. Pray, consider what His sermons were like and compare them with the epistles and sermons of Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and the other Apostles. It would seem that the style He uses is that of a man of scant knowledge and that the style of His Apostles is that of men possessing far greater knowledge than He. What is even more astonishing is that He willed His sermons to have less effect than those of His Apostles. We see in the Gospels that He won over His Apostles and disciples almost one by one and did so with great labor and fatigue, while Saint Paul converted five thousand at his first sermon. This has certainly given me more enlightenment and knowledge, so it seems to me, about the great and marvelous humility of the Son of God than any other thought I have ever had on the subject.

Every day at Holy Mass we say these words: In spiritu humilitatis, etc. Now, a holy person told me one day, as he had learned from the blessed Bishop of Geneva,⁵ that this spirit of humility which we ask of God in all our Masses consists mainly in remaining ever attentive and ready to humble ourselves incessantly on every occasion, both interiorly and exteriorly. But, Monsieur, who will give us this spirit of humility? Indeed, it will be Our Lord, if we ask Him for it and if we are faithful to His grace and careful to put it into practice. Let us do so then, I beg you, and to that end let us try to remember one another when we pronounce those same words at the holy altar. I hope for this from your charity.

130. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

February 11 [1633]¹

Most honored and dear Father,

Alas! how good and paternal your heart is towards me and how I wish to believe for my consolation that it is most faithful in continuing its dear remembrance of me before the Divine Goodness. I have great need of this because of my age and difficulties. Now eternally praised be His Divine Goodness for the mercy He is pleased to lavish on souls by the holy and efficacious meekness of the spirit of His faithful and true servant, our most holy father!² For it is true, I admit to you, my dearest Father, that the spirit of our most worthy and true brother and father³ has indeed been caught in his nets. I do not think that any other hand than that of this blessed man could have guided him so wisely, so gently, or so firmly as it did in this retreat. It was so exact that he is now completely separated from the world to the edification and consolation of everyone, and what is more, to the greatest glory of God and the consolation of his dear soul, and most certainly to the profit, honor and consolation of the Daughters of the Visitation who are infinitely obligated to him.

Our dear Sisters in the city are especially privileged with a great happiness by having him so near them. Oh! may God grant us the grace of corresponding faithfully to the sincere friendship and wholehearted charity that good gentleman has for us. I can assure you, dearest Father, that I love, honor, and revere him with all the breadth and strength of my soul.

I believe that you are now spending more time in Paris. Eh! mon Dieu! take care of that dear and worthy person and do not allow him to live a life that is too severe or austere. I know he has great confidence in you. Moreover, I believe that our good Father Binet will now be. . .⁴ You see, I rather think that I am becoming hardened with age.

I have to finish in order to go to that blessed parlor. My dearest Father, may God fashion you more and more according to His own heart! Earnestly beseech His goodness to be merciful to me so that, together with our blessed father and all of you, our dear friends, I may praise Him eternally. Amen.

Most honored Father, I am in spirit your most humble and most obedient daughter and servant in Our Lord.

131. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January 1632 and February 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

I learned just now, only an hour ago, about the misfortune that befell the young woman² whom your nurses of the poor were sheltering, what the doctor thinks about it, and how you went to visit her. I confess to you, Mademoiselle, that at first it touched my heart so deeply that, had it not been night, I would have set out at that very moment to come and see you. But the goodness of God towards those who give themselves to Him in the work of the Confraternity of Charity, no member of which has ever been stricken with the plague, makes me trust completely that you will suffer no harm. Would you believe, Mademoiselle, that not only did I visit the late Sub-prior of Saint-Lazare,³ who died of the plague, but that I even felt his breath? And yet, neither I nor our men who nursed him to the end suffered any ill effects. No, Mademoiselle, have no fear. Our Lord wishes to make use of you for something that concerns His glory, and I think He will preserve you for that purpose. I shall celebrate Holy Mass for your intention. I would come to see you tomorrow were it not for an appointment I have with some doctors at the Madeleine with regard to business pertaining to the establishment of that house.⁴

132. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You can imagine, Mademoiselle, how my heart feels the sorrow of yours. Danger for you, there is none, by the grace of God. As for Marguerite,¹ it would be well to have the surgeon from the Santé² visit her in case the doctor objects to going there.³ Monsieur Cotti is easily frightened. Nevertheless, I think it would be wise to have that done as soon as possible. Monsieur Bourdoise⁴ will give the order for it. Please see that he is asked. He knows what has to be done; he has been through this before.

Regarding the sick poor, I think you should discontinue that practice. It is to be feared that, if the money is distributed to them, the ladies may be content to do that hereafter. However, propose it to the pastor and follow his orders.

If that poor girl is brought to Saint-Louis, you will have to give the other one some money and send her off.

As for you, I am wondering if it might not be advisable for you to go and relax in the country⁵ for a little while and visit the Charities of Verneuil,⁶ Pont,⁷ Gournay,⁸ and the others.⁹ I have given Jourdain¹⁰ the responsibility of coming to see you to tell you when the coach for Senlis is leaving, and of serving you in any way you may wish.

The Archbishop has just asked me to come to see him. As soon as I can, I shall come and visit you. In the meantime, write me your opinion concerning what I am suggesting. If you need money, please take your traveling expenses out of the funds of your Charity. I beg you to do this and to remain quite cheerful.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

M. Dehorgny will come to see you immediately after dinner.

Saint-Lazare, feast of Saint Matthias [1633]¹¹

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

133. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE¹

March 1, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Is he to whom you are giving up your parish a good man? Will he be able to do in your parish the good that you are doing there? Will you be able to support yourself on four or five hundred livres? The first seems to me a large amount and the second, considerable. I have been in that place. It seems pleasant enough to me, but larger than yours. It would indeed be well for a pastor to have enough money to do good for the poor; I think there are enough of them to be found. In either case, you could set aside two hundred livres as an allowance for yourself. That being so and there not being any question of the first difficulty, you need to take some time to

think about it, and even to go to the place to find out what the man is like and to see if you will like the locality. Whatever you do, I beg you not to hurry. It is a matter of great importance, and I assure you that I would be grieved if you made a decision without having asked God about it and without having consulted M. Duval or M. Coqueret,² or both. It is a question of knowing whether God wishes you to leave the spouse that you have taken or, to be more exact, that He Himself has given you.

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I answered you immediately after receiving your letter.

134. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for the rosaries and pictures you sent us. I beg God that they may be profitable to those to whom we shall distribute them, and that He may be your glory as He is the One Who gave you this devotion. As for the rest, are you being quite faithful to what you were directed concerning your manner of observing Lent, Mademoiselle? I beg you, if you are not, to become so and to let me know how you are feeling.

I most humbly recommend myself to your prayers and ask that you give the enclosed letter to Monsieur de Vincy.

I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

135. - MADAME GOUSSAULT TO SAINT VINCENT

Reverend Father,

By the mercy of God, we have heard Holy Mass every day. As soon as we were in the carriage I would say: *In viam pacis*,¹ and everyone would answer me. Then I would remind them of the points of prayer, after which we said the Angelus.

Sometimes the first of our chats was about the thoughts we had had during our prayer, and then, in a somewhat more entertaining conversation, either about our distractions or our dreams, sometimes waging war on those who had said something amiss. Afterwards, Grandnom² would read for about half an hour from the *Pèlerin de Lorette*; then two of our girls would sing the Litany of the Holy Name of Jesus and the rest of us would repeat the same thing they had sung. When we were passing through a village, we would greet its Guardian Angel; and in the village where we were to stop, I would ask particular assistance from Our Lord.

In Etrechy,³ we had our first dinner. I made my way to the church and asked if there was a *Hôtel-Dieu*. I came upon some little children with whom I chatted, and the thought came to me that they were God's children. I experienced a joy with them--while having them say their Our Father--which did away with the slight sadness I had had the morning of my departure. Every time my clock struck the hour, whether in the carriage or out of it, we would say a Hail Mary, placing ourselves again in the presence of God and asking for the accomplishment of His Holy Will.

We spent our first night in Etampes. As we passed the church, I asked to leave the carriage and sent someone to find out where the *Hôtel-Dieu* was. It was very far away; nevertheless, I went there on foot with only my maid and my footman. I spoke to a young nun who turned out to be the Superior. I sat down to talk with her while my footman went to buy something to give to the sick. As I spoke to her of the necessity of a director, she stared at my face. I was dressed with a low collar and no farthingale,⁴ like a servant. She said to me: "What sort of woman are you? Are you married? I have heard so much about a certain Mademoiselle Acarie,⁵ but I think you are someone else." She then began to tell me how she had wanted to join the hospital nuns, that she had been chosen to be the Superior of six nuns there who are unreformed, but that after two years she had as yet accomplished nothing. I encouraged her a great deal. She told me that it would be necessary for her to come to Paris. I offered her my house. I had a great desire to pray

to God for her. At the inn, I heard that the hostess was greatly afflicted because of her son. I spent my time after supper conversing with her, then I gave the subject for prayer and the examen, as usual.

The next day, about dinner-time, in Angerville,⁶ I could not find a Hôtel-Dieu. While dinner was being prepared, I went to the church. After dinner, I came down to find quite a number of poor people waiting for me, and also some children and adults who were acting surprised. I began by having them make the Sign of the Cross, which the majority did not know how to do, and I felt very sorry for them. They seemed to me to be a likable group of people.

I slept in Artenay⁷ where I taught catechism in the church; I think I already told you that. Then I had dinner in Orléans where I arrived fasting at the Jesuit Fathers in order to receive Holy Communion, for it was Thursday. I marveled at the fact that everywhere I found everything just as I would wish, both for soul and body. Their Hôtel-Dieu is wealthy, from what I am told, but the sick are not better off for it. There are few nuns and they have servants under them on whom they rely too much. I had intended to stay there a little while for some business. I do not know why I disliked it so much. I was lodged with some Huguenots. I left everything there and went to spend the night in Cléry⁸ where I visited and had Holy Mass said the next day at Notre-Dame. I had dinner in Saint-Dyé,⁹ where I found the church very well looked after, and the poor and the children better instructed than anywhere else.

I went to spend the night in Blois. There I found many devotions, but the Hôtel-Dieu is not visited at all and is in disorder. I mentioned this to one of my cousins who is very devout. She told me that Father Lallemand, the Superior of the Jesuits,¹⁰ had strongly encouraged the ladies to visit it, but that perhaps God had allowed me to come there to convince them that in Paris women of rank visit the Hôtel-Dieu, and now they will be prompted to go there.

I did not stay there because there were measles in my uncle's house. I went to have dinner in Veuves¹¹ and to spend the night in Amboise where God granted me many graces. Their Hôtel-Dieu is poor. They take in all the transient cripples and orphans, but not the sick. There is a tradesman in that town who has put up funds for a schoolteacher. I questioned some of the poor in her presence and asked her to come and see me the next day. She did so and I was very edified by her. It was the first Sunday of the month. I went to Confession and Communion at the Minim Fathers¹² and after dinner I did not fail to set out again in order to spend the night in Tours. There I saw the finest and most well-organized Hôtel-Dieu anywhere. The following day I went to Communion at Saint François-de-Paule where indulgences could be gained and there was a large gathering of people. In the afternoon, I left to spend the night in Langeais, and the following day I went to hear Holy Mass in Chouzé,¹³ which belongs to this diocese here. The good priest who said the Mass could really, to my mind, stand having a mission. I even contemplated saying something to the Bishop of Angers¹⁴ about it. The little children are hardly instructed at all!

From there I went on to Saumur where I remained that day, the whole of Wednesday. On Thursday I went to Communion again there. All my servants were very devout. As soon as we caught sight of the place, we sang the Te Deum.

I almost forgot to tell you how we spent our afternoons. Sometimes we recited our chaplet in two groups, and every day, the Litany of the Blessed Virgin; the others would repeat the same thing so that we might say them twice.

Our recreation lasted just as long as our prayers. Sometimes we played the game of not saying `yes' or `no'; whoever said it paid a Hail Mary to the one who was able to catch him. We sang Alleluia and other hymns, but did so in such a merry way that one of my farmers, who was on horseback, enjoyed watching us. I tried to teach Catherine how to read well and to enunciate properly. She would give answers and use language that made us laugh until we cried. In a word, Father, it is quite easy to serve God on these terms.

When I arrived here, two gentlemen came to meet me and kept me from going to the Hôtel-Dieu or to the church; and besides, it was early. I came straight here where I found a magnificent supper and so many people to welcome me that, in short, I was treated like a great lady.

The following day, I had time only to hear Mass. The gentlemen of the Court of Justice and all the leading citizens of the town came to visit me. Again the following day I had a hard time slipping away to visit the Hôtel-Dieu, which I found in fairly good order. There is a good

woman, the wife of a townsman, who had made a vow to end her days in the service of the sick and she has been a great blessing for them; above all, she is very mindful of their salvation. Since then, I have been to visit the prisoners twice, bearing in mind what Our Lord said in the Gospel: "I was a prisoner." I gave them pictures and rosaries and obtained the release of some poor prisoners who aroused my compassion. What is unpleasant is that everything is known in the town and always exaggerated.

Sunday I went to Vespers in the church of a religious order where, contrary to my custom, I spent two hours before the Blessed Sacrament. While there, I thought of a way I could talk about catechism in the presence of the women in this house whom I thought in great need of it. I decided to go to the poor on the farms, took the ladies along, and questioned the children who are fairly well instructed. There is a good priest who takes great care of this. Father, this turned out so well that Mademoiselle Le Fèvre, who is married to a Councillor and has four children, told me on our return that she had enjoyed it very much and that she knew almost nothing about all that and added: "It is quite evident that you love the poor a great deal and that you are at your heart's content among them. You looked twice as beautiful while you were talking to them."

Father, it is admirable that God granted me the courage to speak in the presence of their priest and at least one hundred people. They listened and then, afterwards, paid me so many compliments. Even the good priest told me that he would consider himself most fortunate to be able to end his days near me, without wages or reward, just to listen to the words that would come from my lips. Those are his own words.

Well now, Father, I am writing to you, trusting that you will praise God and love Him for His infinite mercy. I cannot tell you the graces He granted me here and in Saumur, in spite of my very great unfaithfulness. I should be transported with love towards Him. Father, pray that He will bring down my pride in any way He sees fit. I am ready to lose everything and to leave everything, preferring humility to all consolations and possessions. The example of my Savior is very powerful; He left the bosom of His Father to come and practice it in poverty and self-abasement.

Well, let us get back to the catechism lessons. The fact is that, since then, those good women come to pray with me whenever I give the subject for prayer, especially one who is a young girl. Now, I think she is deeply touched, I may say, won over. There is a good, devout woman who came to see me and told me that, if I were here for a year, I would convert the whole town. I assure you, she really made me laugh. [Three]¹⁵ things please the people here: I do not play the role of the reformer, I laugh heartily, and I go to my parish church.

Recently, they urged me strongly to have my portrait painted. They have a man who does it to perfection--he is the one who painted the late Monsieur--and it is the custom here. There is no middle-class woman so unimportant that she is not painted. After their death, their portrait is placed in the church near their tomb. Well, I refused them and was sorry. I think I did so through a false humility of not wanting to appear so vain as to have my portrait painted, and there would have been more virtue in having it done out of condescension.

Recently I played backgammon for an hour and made up my mind to obey them in everything that is not sin until I receive an answer, because I shall do whatever you wish.

You know that I am, for the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

Angers, April 16, 1633

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

136. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[April 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

I am not writing you myself because I have had a bloodletting for my slight fever. I forgot to send you Monsieur Figeard, the doctor, a little while ago. I beg you to forgive me for this and also for not sending you the notes on the retreats. Allow me to tell you that you should not send your young women to the place you mention without finding out from the doctor if there is any

danger.² I trust, nevertheless, that God in His goodness will not allow any harm to result from doing so, for you are aware of the special protection He affords the members of the Charity.

I received a letter from Madame Goussault about the blessings of her trip. When I get further news from her I shall share it with you.

Your letter of yesterday is not near me and I cannot remember its contents except what concerns the young man³ you mentioned to me. With regard to him, let me say that I do not feel he should lay aside the cassock while he is uncertain about the choice of his present state in life. I think he should be left in his present situation until he has definitely made up his mind, and let his good mother not help him too much to come to a decision. Very likely the clerical state is best for him. If he is inclined that way, I think he should be strengthened in his determination.

As for the young woman who is making her retreat,⁴ since she is ready for her general confession, you may use Busée⁵ in French. After her general confession, give her the following subjects of prayer: on the first day, the Incarnation; second, the Nativity, which she will repeat for her third meditation; and fourth, the shepherds. On the second day, the first meditation will be the Circumcision; the second, the Magi; the third, the Purification; and the fourth, the life of Our Lord from his twelfth to His thirtieth year. The third day, the first meditation, the vocation of the Apostles; the second, the first sermon of Our Lord; the third and fourth, the Beatitudes. The fourth day will be on judgment, concerning which you will have her consider the happiness of those who have taken pity on the poor, which meditation she will repeat twice; the third and fourth will be on some mystery of the Passion; and at the end you will have her draw up her rule of life, that is, her schedule for the day. The hours for meditation will be: the first upon rising, the second at ten o'clock, the third at two, and the fourth at five o'clock. She can read from Granada⁶ and the lives of the saintly women who have excelled in charity.

That is all I can tell you for the present except that, tomorrow morning or the day after, I shall send you Monsieur Brunet. That will not prevent you from observing the order of these meditations. In the meantime, please let me know what the doctor thinks of the curate's illness, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

If the girl is accustomed to making only three meditations a day, please do not give her any more. I think I shall be unable to send you M. Brunet until the day after tomorrow in the afternoon.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Paris

137. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The horse's falling on top of and under me was quite dangerous and the protection of Our Lord most extraordinary. It is God's goodness which dealt with me in this way, and the misuse of my life which caused Him to show me His rod. I beg you to help me obtain the grace to mend my ways for the future and to begin a new life. The fall left me with a slightly sprained ankle which, at present, gives me little pain.

I am supposed to be purged tomorrow, and the next day I shall be able to go out in the carriage to a place a league away. Wednesday I shall be able to go to Sainte-Marie¹ in the city. From there, if I can do so, I shall have the pleasure of coming to see you. In the meantime, regarding what you said about that doctor, I shall tell you that if you said anything that might lessen his reputation, you will do well to tell the good you know about him to the same person and to two or three others.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, May 1 [1633]²

I am sending you a letter from Madame Goussault,³ the President's wife. Please send it back to me tomorrow morning after you have read it.

138. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not believe that the Commander² has made a donation nor a will in favor of anyone. I shall see the notary today and let you know the decision. If, however, you wish to plan your trip, you may as well; for in any case, if there were need, you could be here by the next day. I would really like you to be able to go by coach because of the very hot weather.

With regard to your employment,³ my mind is not yet enlightened enough before God concerning a difficulty which prevents me from seeing whether it is the Will of His Divine Majesty. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to recommend this matter to Him during these days in which He communicates more abundantly the blessings of the Holy Spirit, rather, the Holy Spirit Himself. Let us persist, therefore, in our prayers, and may you remain quite cheerful. I certainly hope that what you fear about your legs is not true, I who am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

139. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE

Feast of Saint Barnabas,¹ 1633

Monsieur,

At last the little meeting for you pastors can be held Monday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, here in this house.² Do you think you can be present? I have given the group great reason to hope so. Expecting then the happiness of seeing you on that day, before dinner, and that you will recommend the matter to Our Lord in the meantime, I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

140. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1633 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

I did not obey you last evening nor the rest of the day with regard to that little remedy, certainly not through lack of respect or condescension for your charitable advice but because of some difficulty of my own. I want to be sure that you will excuse me for this, as also for not having the pleasure of seeing you before I return to Saint-Lazare because of a pastors' meeting we are having there today. Be assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall make it a point to use the remedies you suggest at Saint-Lazare and that I shall return here² afterwards, God willing. Then we shall give you more spiritual direction than I have been able to do at this time.

Meanwhile, please see to it that you take care of yourself while you have that little cold, and that you do not do so much another time. Trusting that you will heed this advice, I say adieu once again and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

141. - TO AN ECCLESIASTIC

[July 9, 1633]¹

May God be glorified, Monsieur, for all the graces and blessings He is bestowing on your mission! Does it not seem to you that so many workers who remain idle could be well employed in the great harvest in which you are now working, and that those who are aware of the need the Master of the harvest has for workers will be guilty of the blood of His Son which they are allowing to remain fruitless for want of application? Oh, how well the idea you so kindly shared with me some days past was received by the ecclesiastics, by all those we mentioned in general and by each one in particular! We saw them together about two weeks ago² and, in a uniformity of spirit which appears entirely of God, they resolved to do what you proposed. I began my speech with the words you expressed to me, without mentioning your

name, except when it was necessary to include you as one of them and to reserve your place in their group. They are to meet again today.³ O Monsieur, what reason there is to hope for much good from this group! You are its promoter and it is to your interest that it succeed for the glory of God. Please pray to Him for that intention, Monsieur, and for me in particular.

142. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME¹

[July 1633]²

You should know something that I think I have not yet written to you: it has pleased the goodness of God to grant a very special and unimaginable blessing to our ordinands' retreat. It is such that all those who have made the retreat, or almost all, are leading lives such as ought to be led by good and perfect ecclesiastics. There are even a number of them, outstanding by reason of their birth or the other qualities which God has granted them, who are living as regular a life in their own homes as we do here, and who are as interior and even more so than many among us, were it myself alone. They live by a schedule, make mental prayer, celebrate Holy Mass, and make their examens³ every day as we do. They work hard visiting the hospitals and the prisons, where they teach catechism, preach, and hear confessions, as they also do in the collèges, with very special blessings from God. Among others, there are twelve to fifteen in Paris who live this way and who are persons of rank. The public is becoming aware of this.⁴

Now, a few days ago, one of them, speaking about the way of life led by those who had made the ordinands' retreat with him, put forward an idea that he had had of binding them together by way of meetings or by forming a society. This has been done to the great satisfaction of all the others. The goal of this assembly is to attend to their own perfection; to take the means of seeing that God be not offended, but that He be known and served in their households; and to procure His glory among ecclesiastics and the poor. All this is to take place under the direction of someone from here, where they are to meet once a week. And because God has blessed the retreats which a number of pastors in this diocese have made here, these gentlemen were eager to do the same thing and have in fact begun. Now, there is reason to hope for much good from all this, if it pleases Our Lord to bless His work, which I recommend particularly to your prayers.

143. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

. . . their hardness of heart. O Mademoiselle, how that sort of sin captivates hearts in a tyrannical way and how fortunate are those who are delivered from it! After all, you acted in that matter according to what was in you and before God you will have the reward as if you were entirely the cause of the salvation of those souls; for God does not consider the outcome of the good work undertaken but the charity that accompanied it. May the Divine Goodness be pleased to forgive me the insufficiency of my own, I, who am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

144. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

How are you, Mademoiselle? Could you join us on the trip to Pontoise? If so, you would have to be ready by two o'clock today, Sunday, and you could go to Confession tomorrow morning.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. Please write what you have decided to Madame Goussault. I wish you good-day once again and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

145. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

O Monsieur, how fortunate we are to honor the poor family of Our Lord by the poverty and lowliness of our own! I was saying with consolation, a few days ago when I was preaching in a community, that I am the son of a poor farmer; and in another gathering, that I have looked after pigs. Would you believe, Monsieur, that I am fearful of feeling vain satisfaction from this because of the pain nature suffers from it? It is true that the devil is quite clever and cunning, but surely, even more so than he, is the man who considers himself honored by the lowly condition of the Child of Bethlehem and His holy parents.

146. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have in no way doubted your charity towards us, Monsieur, but I am certainly dissatisfied with myself. That utterly divine virtue appears quite different in the use you make of it and in mine. The manner in which you have had those young ecclesiastics² received and the way you treat them make me see as it were a diamond of God's goodness in your charity and reveal to me my own clumsy, insipid way of welcoming and treating the servants of God. Oh! To be sure, I am determined to mend my ways, if Our Lord is pleased to grant me this grace through the prayers which I am begging you to say for me.

Moreover, they tell me of the refreshment not only corporal, but also spiritual, which you are giving them. It is with such lofty sentiments that they are receiving it and conveying it to me that I really intend to give our Company a good conference about it. By all means, Monsieur, please continue, in the name of Our Lord, to do them so much good.

On the whole, Monsieur Lambert³ is very good. The other man⁴ is not bad, thank God, but he has a slight disinclination, not to say aversion, towards practices which resemble religion, and he does not have enough submission and humility with regard to matters which offend his intelligence. In the Rouen seminary⁵ he acquired some sort of spirit of reserve and of opposition to private direction. As a result, when he finds himself in conversation dealing with those matters, he cannot help showing some of that in his words, which have even done harm to two people here. In spite of this, he has always been perfectly obedient to all the superiors I have sent to him in the country and to me, without any act of disobedience whatever. I thought, Monsieur, that I ought to tell you this because I hope this letter will be delivered to you during the time I think you will have him for retreat.

Now let us talk about the Pébrac affair.⁶ I went to see the Archbishop of Arles purposely and gave him the letter you had written to him. I also gave Monsieur Fontaine his. Then we talked about the Pébrac affair. Here is the Archbishop's advice: he feels that you must first satisfy the Archbishop of Bordeaux,⁷ and then Abbé Olier.⁸ But if the Archbishop has not gotten Sablonceaux⁹ settled, and is not doing so at present, he thinks you would do well to arrange for Pébrac. It remains then to find out what the Archbishop of Bordeaux intends to do. If he is not considering some action at the present time, you should negotiate with good Abbé Olier. There are eighteen religious in that monastery. He is now offering one thousand francs, from which he will be exempted in proportion as the religious die. It will be up to you, Monsieur, to inform us of what you have worked out with the Archbishop of Bordeaux, who is on his way to your districts, and to let us know your pleasure. As for Cardinal de la Rochefoucauld,¹⁰ the Archbishop of Arles thought it best not to mention the matter to him yet.¹¹

The Abbot of Foix¹² is also here with us. He is a very fine young man who visits us often and with confidence. His abbey belongs to your Order. The revenue of the monks, including the offices and benefices belonging to them, is worth ten thousand livres. He wants to have reform at any price and already began to talk about it here, but since people told him about Chancelade, its nearness makes him desire that service from there. You know that Foix is near Toulouse, and God knows that you are one of the people in the world in whom Our Lord has given me the most confidence and that I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 23, 1633
Addressed: The Abbot of Chancelade

147. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around September 2, 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

Marie has replied to me quite earnestly, lovingly, and humbly that she is ready to do what you wish and in the way you wish. She is only sorry that she does not have enough common sense, strength, or humility to be of use for it; but, if you tell her what she has to do, she will follow your instructions completely. Oh, what a good girl she seems to be! I certainly think, Mademoiselle, that Our Lord has given her to you Himself so that He might make use of her through you.

What shall I say to you about the rest of your letter except that I praise God for having consoled you on the feast of Saint Lazarus at the Bons-Enfants, and that what I think He is asking of you is that you honor His Holy Providence in your conduct by not hurrying nor bustling about? I shall try to come and hear about the thoughts Our Lord has given you with regard to this matter. But as for Chartres,² I do not see any way of going there because right now we are in the midst of our most important affairs.

As for what you say, that you need some reproof to keep you from falling back, we shall give it, please God.

Business has caused me to detain Marie until now. Send her to visit those virtuous religious of the Hôtel-Dieu every day if you can give her that time, but please have her do so in such a way that the good young woman does not get tired of it.

Madame Forest³ would like very much to get acquainted with you; she is a good and virtuous lady. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

148. - TO SAINT LOUISE

To be sure, Mademoiselle, it is well to take notice of the more ardent affections that agitate your heart so that you can do your best to regulate them by the standard of the holy and ever-adorable Will of God. And you have done well, in this doubt, to seek enlightenment so that you may do what Our Lord is asking of you, without fear of burdening me by seeking it. Understand once and for all, Mademoiselle, that a person whom God in His plan has destined to assist someone else is no more overburdened by the advice that the other requests than a father is by his own child.

As for that good woman, Madame Sarvoisy, I think it would be advisable to seek information about her from those good gentlemen before coming to the point of acting. However, we are not that far yet because we have suggested that Sainte-Marie¹ test her to see if she has a vocation for that holy house. When she has been tested and rejected, then we shall do as you are suggesting.

Rest assured, Mademoiselle, of the heart of one who is, in the heart of Our Lord and in His love, your most humble servant. Permit me to add to this the recommendation of holy indifference, although nature grumbles against it. I tell you that everything is to be feared until we succeed in this, since our inclinations are so wicked that they seek themselves in all things. Courage! May Our Lord be in our hearts and our hearts in His, so that they may be three in one and one in three and that we may wish only what He wills.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

149. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just now finished reading your note in haste; it worries me a little because of your slight fever. I beg you to send for M. Le Sourd.² You probably began to purge yourself too much; but

still I hope it is nothing. Meanwhile, let me tell you that Madame Goussault wishes that good young woman from Montdidier to be a member of the Charity, so please regard her as such.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Ten o'clock

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, rue de Versailles, opposite the Epée-Royale³

150. - TO MICHEL ALIX, PASTOR OF SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMONE

September 16, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The blessing of peace and reconciliation in lawsuits is something so great and pleasing to God that He says to each one of us: *Inquire pacem et persequere eam.*¹ He not only tells us to accept this divine peace when it is offered to us, but to seek it out and run after it. Now, I praise God that you want to do this by leaving all your business matters to go and settle the dispute you are having in your district. But I think it is important for the glory of God that you put off your trip until the Monday after the [first] Sunday of the month.

You have your two curates here who are doing well, thank God, and are edifying us very much. The retreat they are making was not only necessary for them in a certain sense, but useful as well. You could not recall them in less than a week without prejudice to the Church in general, to your own parish in particular, and to them.

Moreover, neither could you miss the upcoming pastors' meeting, which is of very great importance and which absolutely requires your presence, without prejudice to the good of the Church in general and to as many individual parishes as there are pastors. That is why, Monsieur, I think you would be wise to write, either to the person with whom you have to deal or to someone else who is acting as an intermediary to adjust the differences between you, that you cannot leave any earlier for the two above-mentioned reasons, but that you will not fail to do so the Thursday after the first Sunday of the month in order to go the place required so as to proceed to the settlement of this matter in the spirit of peace Our Lord has given you.

What I am saying to you, nevertheless, Monsieur, is said with all the submission and deference I owe you and wish to render you all my life in Our Lord. It is said also with the confidence I have that there is no one in the world so difficult, if he is somewhat predisposed to reconciliation, who will not listen to your reasons and wait until that time--during which nothing is done, even at law. Moreover, I am hoping, Monsieur, that *si quaerimus sic primo regnum Dei, omnia adjicientur nobis in bonum.*²

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

V. D. P.

151. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August or September,¹ around 1633²]

Madame,³

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just received your letter which worried me a little because of your relapse. I greatly fear that you risked going out too soon. Oh, well! Blessed be God! I beg you, Mademoiselle, in the name of Our Lord, to do all in your power to take care of yourself, no longer as a private individual but as a person upon whose health a number of others are dependent.

Today is the eighth day of our little retreat; I hope to continue to the tenth with the help of God.

I think your good angel did what you told me in the letter you wrote me. Four or five days ago, he communicated with mine concerning the Charity of your young women. It is true; he prompted me to recall it often and I gave that good work serious thought. We shall talk about it, God willing, on Friday or Saturday, if you do not write to me sooner.

As for that good young woman from Beauvais, please do not send her on Thursday. Would she be suitable for teaching the little girls in the villages? That is what you will mainly need. Our

Lord, in the footsteps of Whose Providence you are walking, will Himself provide someone. You must leave that worry to Him and remain in peace.

Have you seen a doctor? Would you like me to send you ours? We are at your service.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at two o'clock.

152. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September or October 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

They had indeed told me that you would not do anything just now in the region of Villeneuve² during the grape-harvesting season. Oh, well! Go there at the appointed time, please. If, meanwhile, you would like to go to the Bois de Vincennes, there is great need for it; but then, those good women will likewise be unable to come. I think it would be well for you to postpone your visit a little while longer.

We must surely meet before making a firm decision about the girls, and it can only be towards the end of the week. In the meantime, please send them away for the next twelve to fifteen days, at which time you can notify them through the student. It will be good, meanwhile, to have them understand that they must remain in a spirit of indifference. Indeed! They must be trained in the knowledge of solid virtues before we can make use of them.

The pen is being removed from my hand. There is a good priest here asking for me. Therefore, I must conclude with a thank you for the concern you have for my health, assuring you that I shall take care of it as you desire.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

You do not mention the state of your own health, which I heard is a little worse. Please take care of it.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

153. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1633]¹

Mademoiselle,

Here is that good young woman whom Madame Goussault, the President's wife, thought we should send to you.² Please be so kind as to have someone see her so that she can be instructed. Monsieur Compaing³ can send you some priest for that purpose, or else, if necessary, Monsieur Véron⁴ will be happy to take the trouble to talk to her. I hope she will be a capable young woman and conduct herself well.

The President's wife bids you good-day and [I] am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

154. - TO THE LIEUTENANT DE GANNES¹

December 19, 1633

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The time is at hand when we are obliged to come and work on your estates in Picardy.² Father de Gondi allowed us to put it off until now. Therefore, there are six priests of our Little Company coming to work there. I commend them to you and entreat you to furnish them with money if they need any. I shall reimburse you for it upon receiving a letter of demand, giving it to whomsoever you send.

I returned the night before last from Villepreux where I had gone to see the General's wife³ who, for her age, is one of the most accomplished persons I have ever seen. I hope she will follow the example of our good deceased Madame.

I have been assured that the Duc de Chaulnes⁴ has promised the General⁵ that he will be firm in keeping his estates free of gendarmes. The new title of Duc de Retz which he will have will not harm matters.

I saw Martin in Villepreux and he has probably given you all sorts of news. That is why I shall close now with the affectionate and humble greetings I offer your wife, your son, and your daughter-in-law. I am, in the love of Our Lord and His most holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

155. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

May the charity of Jesus Christ, which urges you to think of me, be your health!

I have just learned that you are ailing somewhat and that worries me a little. I beg you to do all you can to get better for His service. I most humbly thank you for all the care and charity which you exercise towards me, for such good bread, your preserves, your apples, and for what I only now learned that you have just sent me. Oh! surely, Mademoiselle, that is too much! God knows with what pleasure I receive your gifts; yet also, ever in my mind is the fear that you are depriving yourself of necessities in order to practice charity in this way. In the name of God, do not do it any more.

I went out today and am none the worse for it, and tomorrow I shall have to go to Saint-Lazare² I admit that I have worked rather hard these past few days, but I am actually out of doors, thank God.

Well, our mail has left for Rome and, because we still have a few less pressing matters to work on, I shall be able to come and spend the night here tomorrow and stay for a few days.

Therefore, we shall have more time to discuss matters with you. I was setting aside tomorrow for seeing you here at Mass; but, since your cold requires you to stay in your room, I beg you not to budge from it; we shall see each other on my return. If I do not see you tomorrow morning at your house before I leave, it will be because I am practicing the little rule of the Missionaries with regard to people in the Charity.³ But, nevertheless, if you wish to see me, you have only to say so, if by chance you are not well.

I did not talk to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.⁴ I thought it would be better for it to be Madame Goussault, the President's wife, or Madame Poulailhon; I shall talk to them about it. In the meantime, I wish you a good evening and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

156. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

January 17, 1634

What shall I tell you about those ecclesiastics from Provence?¹ You saw from the letter they wrote to me, how they have formed ties with the congregation of Father Paul de Motta;² that they tell me they have the same purpose as we; and that if we wish to join forces, they will be allowed to make that agreement and to come to this city with someone from the aforesaid congregation of Father Paul to discuss it with us. I praise God that He is so good as to raise up in this century so many good and holy souls for the assistance of the poor common people. I beg Him with all my heart to bless the plans of those holy ecclesiastics and grant them success for His glory. As for the union, it is to be desired; but unions require the same end, the same means and, what is more, one same spirit. Even though people have the same aim, they cannot help being divided. All the Orders in the Church have the same end, which is charity, and for lack of the same means they do not always agree. An Order has the same end, the same means, and the same spirit; nevertheless, it often has disorders.

I say this, Monsieur, so that you may realize how important it is, if we do unite, that we have the same end, the same means, and the same spirit and that, before uniting, we be mutually

informed about one another's expectations, the means of attaining them, and whether we have one same spirit. Now, they are right in offering to see us to find out about these things. If they do us this charity, God knows with what pleasure we shall welcome them and how simply and familiarly we shall approach the subject.

I am writing a letter to that good priest--you will see it. If he is in the same disposition in which he wrote to me, and Father Paul is, too, give him the note; but, if he is not, do not give it to him. If he is and Father Paul does not want to have anything to do with the affair, you will decide whether it would be wise to give it to him. If they really want to join us, to tend to the same end, to accept our means, and to send some men here to take on our spirit, then I think there is nothing to be said against the union.

I just remembered a serious error which I noticed only too late: in the exposition of our Bulls,³ it seems to me that pastors are spoken of in an insulting way. How can this be remedied? I beg you to look into the matter and have that part taken out.

156a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter yesterday and your outline of the rules for your Daughters, which I have not yet had the chance to read. I shall do so as soon as I can. As for what you tell me about them,² I have no doubt that they are as you describe them to me, but we have to hope that they will mature and that prayer will allow them to see their faults and encourage them to correct them. It would be well for you to tell them what constitutes solid virtue, especially that of interior and exterior mortification of our judgment, our will, memories, sight, hearing, speech, and the other senses, of the attachments we have to bad, useless, and even to good things; all this for the love of Our Lord Who acted in this way. You will have to strengthen them a great deal in all these matters, especially in the virtue of obedience and in that of indifference. But, because too much talking is harmful to you, do so only occasionally. It would be well for you to tell them that they must be helped to acquire this virtue of mortification and given practice in it. I shall also tell them so that they will be well disposed to it.

Let us allow that good young woman to continue the practices of the Third Order since she is a member. Please have her make her devotions privately on Wednesdays. I really wish that widow from Colombes³ could read; please have her see us. Well! I just noticed, on rereading your letter, that she has two children; if that is so, how could we admit her?

I keep forgetting to have the pictures bought for your Daughters. M. de Sergis has just come back; I shall ask him to do it.

Enclosed is a short note to Father Faure⁴ for M. Gallois' son.⁵ I would like to have more influence with him than I do in this matter. He will understand. Well then, let us end with the request I am making that you take care of your health. I am, in this hope, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

156b. - TO FATHER FAURE, SUPERIOR OF THE CONGREGATION OF SAINTE-GENEVIEVE

Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been asked to use my influence with you to request you, as I am doing most humbly, to be pleased to receive among your seminarians the son of Monsieur Gallois. I have heard much good about the latter and that he willingly assists those houses where he has children.

Therefore, please do him this charity, Father. In addition to your being satisfied with it, I shall add this obligation to many others I have towards you, and I shall be all my life, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL,

prêtre indigne de la Mission¹

Bons-Enfants, January 1634

Addressed: Father Faure, Superior of the Congregation of Sainte-Geneviève

157. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for everything in your letter and was quite consoled by what you told me in it. I am indeed looking forward to finding you truly strong and brave. Now then, let us become so, Mademoiselle, and draw our strength from our weakness which serves as a reason for Our Lord to become Himself our strength.

I praise God for what you told me about your brother,² Mademoiselle, and pray that he will continue to grow stronger and stronger in the fidelity Our Lord is asking of us.

I am even better than a few days ago. The doctor, who just left here, advised me to go, on the first nice day that comes along, to the mission that is going to be given in a place two leagues from here. I shall not fail, meanwhile, to remember you in the Holy Sacrifice, which I shall offer to God for your intentions, being in His love, your. . . .

158. - TO JACQUES PERDU, IN POISSY¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for the difficulties He is pleased that you should encounter! You must honor, on this occasion, the ones His Son had on earth. O Monsieur, how much greater they were since, because of the aversion people had for Him and His teachings, He was forbidden entrance to every province and [it] cost Him His life! People thought they had discovered Him preparing His disciples when He told them that He was sending them like sheep in the midst of wolves; when He told them that people would make fun of them, scoff at them, and spit in their face; that fathers would turn against their children and children would persecute their fathers; and, finally, when He justified the ceremony of shaking the dust from their garments when they found themselves among people who would not make good use of their teachings.

Let us make good use of them, Monsieur, on these occasions, and let us, like them, bear with the contradictions that will befall us in the service of God. Rather, let us rejoice as at a great good when they come upon us, and let us begin on this occasion to use them as the Apostles did, following the example of their Master, Our Lord. If we do this, oh! rest assured that the very means by which the devil has tried to battle against you will help you to overcome him. You will rejoice all heaven and the good souls of earth who will see or hear of it. The very persons with whom you have to deal will bless you in the end and be grateful to you as a collaborator in their salvation. However, hoc genus daemoniorum non ejicitur nisi in oratione et patientia.²

The holy modesty and interior recollection of the Company will be yet other means to this end, and notably circumspection in questions which one cannot ask in confession without some difficulty.

For the love of God, Monsieur, work out well together the things that are to be asked and the manner. Monsieur Renar has great experience in that matter. Come to an agreement about it and learn how to overcome the dislike those people have for the Missionaries so as to refrain from what has scandalized them or do the opposite if the occasion arises. I beg you, Monsieur, to look into the matter and to let me know about it, as also about the place from which the talk of this scandal is coming.

Having weighed all the reasons you sent me, I think it will be good in the future to give only a short catechism lesson at which all the boys and girls will be present, reserving the right to decide otherwise if the large numbers require it. And because an excess of the word of God dat illis nauseam,³ please follow Monsieur Renar's advice with regard to the discontinuance of sermons on Sundays and feasts, and even with regard to the other days if he, together with the Prior, thinks it advisable. By the latter's advice, I believe, he has probably told you what he told

you about the sermons, and wisely, since *contraria contrariis curantur*.⁴ O Monsieur, how willingly we ought to fall in with the opinions of others! Saint Vincent Ferrer observed this practice as a means of perfection and holiness. If it is good for an individual, why not for a company? And nevermind saying that you are not accustomed to it, because it is God's good pleasure that we adapt ourselves to people's moods, to places, and to times. Oh! let us act then in this way, and you will constantly see what it will win for you before God.

I am sending you the organ and shall delegate you to deliver it if Monsieur Régnier⁵ cannot attend to it, or if indeed that gentleman is not discreet enough and you think I should recall him. In that regard I beg you to observe him carefully, and Leleu⁶ as well, and to tell me promptly of their misconduct.

As for the wood and the other things, I greatly fear that the Prior will refuse to pay you for them. Please find out where you can get them and if you can afford to get them elsewhere even though everything is rather expensive.

I praise God that the good Prior of Aigue sometimes eats with the Company. Show him that you enjoy this and thank him affectionately and humbly.

I beg you, moreover, to strongly recommend holy modesty to the Company as being perhaps one of the most efficacious means of doing good to those people.

This, Monsieur, is all I can tell you for the present, except that I add thereto my most humble regards to the Prior, to Monsieur Renar, and to Monsieur Flahan.⁷ Please commend an important affair to God and tell Monsieur Renar that it will perhaps be advisable for him to be present next Wednesday at two o'clock at the meeting at which the pastors will be present and the catechism will be discussed. He will be able to leave the same day and be back home the following day at noon.

Good evening, Monsieur. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

February 1634

Addressed: Monsieur Perdu, Priest of the Mission, in Poissy

159. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The meeting took place yesterday at Madame Goussault's house.² Mesdames de Villesabin,³ Bailleul,⁴ Dumecq,⁵ Saintot,⁶ and Poulailion were there. The proposal was accepted and [they] decided to have another meeting next Monday.⁷ In the meantime, we shall offer the affair to God and shall receive Holy Communion for that intention. Each one will propose the matter to the ladies and young women of her acquaintance. What do you think of Mademoiselle Guérin? Madame de Beaufort⁸ will join them. We shall need you and your Daughters; we think four of them will be necessary. That is why we must see about a way of getting good ones. Think about the sister of that good young woman you have. Talk about it to Michelle. I do not know whether the widow of Les Clayes⁹ would want to do it and would be suitable. Moreover, what shall we do with her children? I am going to Saint-Lazare and shall perhaps come back this evening to spend the night here.¹⁰

Madame Goussault spoke to me yesterday about the recall from exile of that widow you sent to her. I told her that I would scruple interfering in those matters unless I knew the person as well as I know you, and that the wife of the Keeper of the Seals¹¹ can scarcely get mixed up in those affairs. If you take my advice, you will relieve yourself of such occupations. The law did not deal with her in that way without serious grounds.

Well now, you see that your work is growing more diverse. Strengthen yourself as much as you can.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

160. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

I thank you most humbly for the good you have done for that good widow.² I believe they will not be taking any of your young women for the Hôtel-Dieu. They feel that some of those being offered from the city will be more suitable for representing the Ladies in their absence and they are probably right.

But how are you? Please send me word. I praise God with all my heart for the most loving dedication He gives you of belonging entirely to Him and I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Pardon me if I am so brief; I am in a great hurry.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

161. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1634, around March]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday three fine girls from Argenteuil² came to offer their services for the Charity at the suggestion of the priest to whom I had someone mention it. He is supposed to come and see me tomorrow concerning the matter. I did not send them to you because it was too late when they arrived but, according to what they told me, they will come to see you on Friday.

I see no great difficulty in Jacqueline's³ going to her brother's wedding. Marguerite, from Saint-Paul,⁴ will be doing likewise, and from what she said, she is also supposed to send you a fine young woman. Mademoiselle de la Bistrade⁵ and Madame Forest are supposed to come and ask you to relieve them of Nicole because of her many health problems and because Marie, who is bearing the whole burden, cannot go on unless you send them someone to replace Nicole.⁶ They will be asking you, therefore, about both matters and Mademoiselle de la Bistrade will promise to pay you for Nicole's food. I told her I would write to you about it. So think about it, Mademoiselle, and about whether that poor young woman who is so weak and ill-fitted for the Charity could earn her living by sewing or some other trade when she is a little stronger. And do all you can, in the name of God, to get well yourself.

I am very glad that you did not go out yesterday. On the day you do go out, take something before leaving. Our Lord is a continual Communion for those who are united to what He wills and does not will.

I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Monday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

162. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between January and March 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

All things come to him who waits; this is true, as a rule, even more in the things of God than in others. It is not advisable for me to be the one who speaks to the Master²--for a reason of my own--unless I meet him by accident. If Madame Goussault, the President's wife, thinks it appropriate, she can say a word to him about it, if you want to let him know and if she does not see any disadvantage in doing so. It is true that it is advisable to see the Ladies³ once more, both to give them some advice concerning that matter and to teach them how they ought to instruct the sick to examine their consciences and recognize their sins.

I have not yet been able to go to the Madeleine;⁴ I shall go there tomorrow if I can. In the meantime, forgive me. As for Nicole, it is greatly to be feared that she will never change because of her age. On the other hand, I would still find it hard to give my vote to send her

away. Try depriving her a little of Holy Communion; perhaps that will help her. If not, in nomine Domini. After you have done what you can, if she does not improve, send her away. I send you my regards, meanwhile, and ask God to keep you in perfect health and in His love. I am, in this same love of Our Lord, your most humble. . . .

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

163. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March or April 1634]¹

I [cannot help]² telling you, Mademoiselle, how reluctantly I depart for Villers³ with M. Lumague⁴ because I have not had the consolation of seeing you on account of our ordinands whose number includes the Commander de Sillery.⁵ I assure you that if you knew how sorry I am you would have pity on me. Oh, well! Please do all you can to stay well. I hope to return next Monday.

Madame Forest came here to thank us for the good stout young woman you wanted to send them, because their Nicole is better. That being the case, I think you will do well to send Jacqueline to the Hôtel-Dieu, or else Jeanne. The one who is left can help at your Charity⁶ with the young woman from Grigny.⁷

Madame Goussault thinks it advisable for us to consider finding you a place to live near Notre-Dame. Think it over, please, and do your best to stay well.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am leaving in an hour and am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

163a. - TO SISTER HELENE-ANGELIQUE LHUILLIER¹

Saint-Lazare, Palm Sunday, at nine o'clock²

My very dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received with consolation your letter of yesterday, as well as that of our worthy Mother³ for the Visitor,⁴ whom I also hold most dear. I hope to share in the profit you derive from reading these letters. Thank you for all that.

Please, my dear Sister, tell the good young woman destined for Le Mans⁵ through your kindness what she has to do. Her brother just told me that she is in a state of holy impatience on account of her happiness.

I am, in the love of Our Lord and with the affection that He knows, my very dear Sister, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

i.s.C.M.

164. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am, back from the mission of Villers² since last evening and in good health, thank God. Please let me know the state of yours and whether you think it well to send for two fine young women chosen by Mademoiselle Poulailon for the Charity. They seem to be very good young women. Let me know then by this messenger what you think, please, because I have to give Mademoiselle Poulailon an answer tomorrow. She sends you her regards but will not be here until Saturday.

I shall have the pleasure of seeing you as soon as twenty-five ordinands allow me to do so. I am, meanwhile, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Wednesday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

165. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

I just arrived from town about fifteen minutes ago and found the enclosed upon my return. You see that I have to be at Saint-Lazare before seven o'clock tomorrow, which will deprive me of the consolation of coming to see you in the morning as I had planned. Please forgive me and on Thursday, God willing, I shall make up for my absence, being unable to do so tomorrow because we are having the priests' meeting at Saint-Lazare.²

I saw good Madame Saunier this morning and found her all afire for the Charity and ready to become a member. But a problem has arisen in this affair which causes us to judge it advisable to postpone the Ladies' meeting, which was supposed to have taken place on Thursday, until another day. Please inform her of this, Mademoiselle, and do all you can to stay well. In that regard, it will be a great help to you not to worry so much about your Daughters, to eat well, and not to go out so early.

I bid you good-day and I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

166. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198a.)

167. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have seen that good young woman, Madeleine. I think you will have to work with her a little as her passions are rather strong. So what! When these young women have the strength to overcome themselves, they work wonders afterwards. Accept her, therefore, please, and I shall speak to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.²

As for that good young woman from Argenteuil who is melancholy, I think you are right in raising objections to taking her, for it is a strange disposition, that of melancholy. I think that you have enough young women for some time and that you should train them well to read and sew so that they can work in the country.

I shall be expecting you on Tuesday. Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Therefore, send that young woman's companion back, please.

168. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198b.)

169. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198c.)

170. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198c.)

171. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198d.)

172. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 198e.)

173. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

(Now 198f.)

174. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

(Now 198g.)

175. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1636, probably July 22]¹

I am like you, Mademoiselle; there is nothing that bothers me more than uncertainty. But I do indeed greatly desire that God may be pleased to grant me the grace of making everything indifferent to me, and to you as well. Come now, we shall make every effort, please God, to acquire this holy virtue.

Yesterday I was at Saint-Victor² until five o'clock with the Archbishop,³ who had ordered me to come there. Then he had me get into a carriage to go to the city with him. From there I came back to spend the night here⁴ without going to the collège. That is the reason you have not heard from me. If this afternoon, right after dinner, you can take the trouble to come to the collège, we shall discuss everything, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord, that of the holy Virgin, and of Saint Magdalen, your servant.

176. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]¹

So here at last is the first victim Our Lord has chosen to take from your Daughters of Charity.² May He be forever blessed! I trust, Mademoiselle, that she is very happy, seeing that she died in the practice of a virtue with which she could not be lost; for she died in the exercise of divine love since she died in that of charity. I am asking Our Lord to be therein your consolation and that of our very dear sisters. I beg you to wish them all a good-day for me.

I think it is too much to put off the funeral until tomorrow, seeing that you have no other room in which to put it;³ it is to be feared that it may be too greatly upsetting for our sick Sisters and for you. You could speak to Saint-Nicolas⁴ about it, asking whether it could be done this evening. If not, well, send the notice as it is, but the Ladies in office cannot be there so early in the morning.

As for the young woman's clothes, I see no objection to giving them to her mother. That will not prevent you from giving her an alms such as twenty sols or a demi-écu⁵ each month. I think it will suffice to send the notice to the Sisters and not to the officers in the parishes.

As for the rest at the end of your letter, I agree, and am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

177. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

July 25, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday, I received your letter of the second of this month, in which [you] spoke to me about Saint-Lazare and how you have put that affair in order. You spoke to me further about the translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin and about the young Maronite and sent me a copy of one part of the privileges you obtained. Now, I shall tell you that yesterday I saw Advocate-General Bignon¹ about Saint-Lazare. He is considered one of the most learned, pious, and capable men in his field in Christendom. His advice is that, although he does not think it necessary for us to have recourse to Rome, we do so, nonetheless, in order to root out, as he says, all the pretexts that anyone might have to harass us hereafter, but still that we must try to

do so as quickly as possible. He says that a thousand écus is a great deal and for you to make an effort to get the best bargain you possibly can. You must make them understand that this benefice does not depend on the Pope and that it did not belong to the religious of Saint Augustine. It belongs to the city of Paris and its conferral has always rested with the bishop of Paris. The priors gave him an account every year of the administration of the revenue, which administration was given to them only one hundred or one hundred twenty years ago. Before that, the property was administered by secular priests and sometimes by laymen because it is a leper-house. It so happens that about three hundred years ago a bishop of Paris named Fulco² took the administration away from some secular priests who were living in the house in community, one of whom was the administrator, and gave it to some others on no other authority than his own. Poncher, also a bishop of Paris,³ removed it from the hands of secular priests who were also living in community--one of whom was the prior, whom the bishop used to name *ad nutum*,⁴ note that--and he put it into the hands of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in 1517. He gave its administration to one of the Canons whom he named prior, likewise removable *ad nutum*, without the authorization of the Pope or any other than his own, not even of the King, or of the court.

The letters of appointment of these priors have always been *ad nutum* and all of them have given an account to the bishop of Paris. Finally, never has any prior obtained a letter of appointment from the court of Rome except the one in question. He did so in an attempt to retain the position in perpetuity, eight or ten years after he was made prior by the bishop of Paris. You can see that very fact in his letters of appointment whose date I have sent you. Please hold fast and bear carefully in mind this observation concerning the nature of Saint-Lazare that I am sending you here, so that you may have it thoroughly examined by the officers of that court. Although the benefice does not depend on the Pope, nevertheless, because of the devotion we have of not possessing anything except by his authority, we were eager for both his approval and his blessing. The Advocate-General, who is familiar with the court of Rome from having been there, believes that, if you were to represent all this clearly to the officers, you would soon get to the end of it and inexpensively. If, after all, you cannot succeed within a month after receiving these remarks, he is of the opinion that that should not keep you from coming back here. The confidence we must have in Monsieur Marchand's⁵ good will and the recommendations we shall have sent from here will enable us to conclude this affair in a reasonable way, as one does in like matters, in the course of time.

That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly beg you to act in this way and not to delay because of this matter, nor for the proposal you received to work on the translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin. Well do I know that the translation would be useful to the curiosity of some preachers, but not, to my mind, to the winning of the souls of the poor for whom the Providence of God has destined you from all eternity. It must be enough for you, Monsieur, that by the grace of God, you have devoted three of four years to learning Hebrew and know enough to uphold the cause of the Son of God in His original language and to confound His enemies in this kingdom. Imagine then, Monsieur, that there are millions of souls stretching out their hands to you and speaking in this way: "Alas! Monsieur du Coudray, you who have been chosen from all eternity by the Providence of God to be our second redeemer, have pity on us. We are wallowing in ignorance of the things necessary for our salvation and in the sins we have never dared to confess, and for want of your help we will certainly be damned." Imagine further, Monsieur, the Company telling you that for three or four years it has been deprived of your presence and is beginning to miss you. You are one of the first members of the Company and, as such, it needs your advice and example. And please listen, Monsieur, to my heart telling yours that it feels intensely moved by the desire to go to work and die in the Cévennes,⁶ and that it shall go if you do not soon come into those mountains. The bishop from there is crying out for help. He says that the region, which was formerly among the most devout in the kingdom, is now perishing from hunger for the Word of God. There are no villages, except five or six, which do not have some Catholics among the Huguenots; and there are a great number where there are no priests or churches. They are, perhaps, awaiting their salvation from you and me.

Come then, Monsieur, and please do not put it off any longer, unless it be for about a month or six weeks to do what you can with regard to the matter of Saint-Lazare. I will expect you, at the latest, towards the end of November. Bring with you, please, good Monsieur Gilioli⁷ and that

good Maronite, if you think he wishes to give himself to God in this Little Company. And please practice speaking modern Greek with him on the way so that you may teach it here if necessary; who knows?

The Ambassador to Turkey⁸ did me the honor of writing to me, calling for priests from Saint-Nicolas and from the Mission. He thinks they will be able to do more there than I would dare to tell you. Well now, we shall consider the proper action to take when you are here, both with regard to that affair and to all other matters concerning our consolidation.

But in the name of God, Monsieur, do all you can to obtain the indulgences His Holiness has given the Jesuit Fathers and the Oratorians when they give a mission in rural areas. The indulgence is plenary for those who attend their instructions, go to Confession and receive Communion from them in the country. And would to God that you could also get them for the Confraternities of Charity; they are working wonders, by the grace of God! We have established them in several parishes in this city and recently set up another composed of one hundred or one hundred twenty ladies of high rank.⁹ Every day, four at a time, they visit and assist eight or nine hundred poor or sick with jellies, soups, broth, preserves and every other kind of sweet--in addition to their ordinary food, which the house provides--so as to dispose those poor people to make a general confession of their past life and to see that those who die leave this world in a good state and that those who recover take the resolution never to offend God again. This is being done with a special blessing of God, not only in Paris but also in the villages. It is for this Confraternity of Charity that Mademoiselle Aubry de Vitry is asking for indulgences, that is, for the women who are members of the confraternity and for those who take care of the alms.

Well now, Monsieur, this is a long letter for you, but then, in no way could I have laid aside my pen any sooner, so much am I comforted by talking to you.

And I must also ask you to bring us five or six books like the first three you sent us concerning the parishes of the Congregation of the Priests of the Assumption of Our Lady, which was organized by Father Savone, the Jesuit, among the Jesuits of Naples. Bring also any other that may be useful to us for the missions and for our ordinands.

Moreover, Monsieur de Creil¹⁰ did not ask me for any money. I shall wait until he does, because I have already sent someone there and they did not find him. I think that, if he had received the order, he would have asked us for it.

I am, meanwhile, as I beg you to take care of your health, in the love of Our Lord. In His love I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I almost forgot to tell you that I have not received the Bulls. I praise God that you have had them set right; I cannot tell you the joy that gives me.

Addressed: Monsieur du Coudray, Priest, in Rome

178. - TO POPE URBAN VIII

[Between July and November 1634]¹

Most blessed Father,

In the faubourg Saint-Denis in the city of Paris, there is a certain hospital of Saint-Lazare, called a leprosarium, which was founded and endowed a long time ago by the Provost and the City Magistrates to sustain and care for the inhabitants of the city of Paris who were afflicted with leprosy. In the course of time it acquired the name or title of priory, which it still holds. As its revenue, from the beginning of its foundation until the year 1513 or 1514, was administered by secular or regular priests, or perhaps even by laymen, who were usually appointed and removed by the Bishop of Paris in office at any given time, Poncher,² of happy memory, who was then the Bishop of Paris, entrusted its administration to the reformed Canons Regular of the Order of Saint Augustine. He brought them to the said priory with the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours in the church of the priory, celebrating a sung Mass daily, and receiving any poor lepers who might come to them, supplying them with what they needed. Moreover, he stipulated that he, whom the Bishop or the Bishop of Paris at any given time appointed at his pleasure as prior from among the said religious, was to be the administrator of the priory or

hospital and of its revenue with the obligation of rendering an account of his administration to the same bishop each year.

Recently, however, Adrien Le Bon, an expressly professed priest of the same Order, the present prior or administrator, who had been appointed at the good pleasure of Henri de Gondi of happy memory (during his lifetime), then Bishop of Paris and Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church with the title of Cardinal de Retz,³ and other religious of the same priory or hospital, devout petitioners of your Holiness, considering that at present and for a long time now there have been no lepers in the said priory or leprosarium and that, therefore, the revenue bequeathed by the founders no longer serves the uses for which it was intended, reflected that it would be worthwhile to allot that same revenue to those workers who offer food and medicine, if not for the body then for the health of souls afflicted by spiritual leprosy. Among other such institutes, the most conspicuous is the Institute of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, established by apostolic authority in the city of Paris not very long ago. Its members, according to their own particular institute, have taken as their purpose the instruction of country people living in towns and villages in matters pertaining to the salvation of their souls. They do this without recompense for the love of God, expecting a reward for their labors from God alone. It has been recognized that in carrying out this work they have labored and are laboring with such zeal and fervor that thanks to their instruction many who were infected by heresy in different regions and provinces of France, and especially in the diocese of Montauban--as is well known throughout France--have abjured their heresy and embraced the Catholic faith. Therefore, judging that it would not be contrary to the intention of the founders if the revenues in question, which had been destined for those who care for bodily leprosy, were assigned to those who care for leprosy in souls and also to providing bodily nourishment for the latter from the means at their disposal, the petitioners entered into a contract with the humble co-petitioner of Your Holiness, Vincent de Paul, Superior of that Congregation, who, in the name of the same Congregation, with the good pleasure of Your Holiness, the Apostolic See, and the Archbishop of Paris, sets and accepts the following terms:

The same Adrien Le Bon, Prior or administrator, and the religious of the priory or hospital have consented, to the extent of their right and interest, that the said priory, together with its church and buildings, and all its property, rights, fruits, appurtenances, and dependencies without exception, be given to or united with the said Congregation. They have surrendered every right they have on this priory or leprosarium or its competent administration with, however, the following conditions, reservations, and agreements: the entire living quarters thus far occupied by the said Adrien, Prior or administrator, as well as the title of Prior shall remain his for life, so that he cannot be removed from these quarters for any reason whatsoever; he remains free to go to the church or priory or hospital and assist at divine offices in his place or seat in the chapter or in the refectory, whenever he chooses to be present; during his lifetime, the estate of Rougemont,⁴ a dependency of the said priory or hospital, with all its appurtenances, shall be reserved to him. Moreover, the priests of the Congregation shall pay to the same Adrien as his portion, or instead of pension, as long as he lives, 2,100 livres in the money of these parts, free of all ordinary and extraordinary tithes, reparations, pensions for religious, and other burdens and impositions. This amount is to be paid each year in four installments, namely, on the feasts of Easter, the Birth of Saint John the Baptist, Saint Remi, and Christmas, the first payment being due on the first of these feasts immediately following the taking possession of the said priory or hospital by the priests. In order to assure this payment, not only all the property and revenues of the priory or hospital or leprosarium but also all the property of the Congregation shall be bonded and, furthermore, your devout servant Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, priest of the Oratory, shall stand as surety or guarantor. Likewise, all the credits of the said priory or hospital and everything that is, or will be, due to it before the Congregation takes possession shall accrue to the benefit of the said Adrien. He can collect them from his debtors and, for that purpose, he can use all the necessary means, even in the name of the said Congregation. The priests of the Congregation shall be obliged, according to the estimate of experts, to repay him for the provisions and supplies of grain, wine, and wood he had bought in advance for the use of the house, priory, or hospital to the amount that shall be found there at the time of their taking possession.

Adrien himself shall not be liable for the rest of the accounts of his administration from the time when the administration had been entrusted to him to the day of the transfer. Conversely, the priests of the said priory or hospital shall be exonerated with regard to Prior Adrien who, at the time of transfer, will clear the priory of all debts. As regards the revenues or rents bought by Adrien during his administration in favor of the priory or hospital, he shall enjoy them during his lifetime, but, after his death, they shall accrue to the said Congregation.

And since the farm leases of the priory or hospital and the majority of its rents and revenues were paid only on the feasts of Saint Remi and Saint Martin, and in the meantime the said Adrien had to spend large sums and contract debts in order to cover the expenses for the upkeep of the church and the other buildings, and also for the food and the other needs of the religious, it has been agreed that, at the time of transfer, the said Adrien may reimburse himself for these expenses from the above-mentioned leases and rents.

When the Prior Adrien or any of his religious die, the priests shall give them ecclesiastical burial as their benefactors. They shall celebrate three Masses on the day of Prior Adrien's death and on the two following not impeded days. Every year thereafter in perpetuity they shall celebrate on a similar day one anniversary in the church of the priory or hospital for the repose of his soul. In order to leave to posterity the memory of such an obligation, they shall erect some kind of tombstone or monument in the same church with an inscription of this obligation. They shall also celebrate two solemn services for the founders, benefactors, and religious, one on the first free day after the octave of the Epiphany and the other on the Monday after the feast of the Holy Trinity. For each religious of the priory they shall be obliged to celebrate one service at the end of the year following their death.

The other religious shall also be allowed to stay and live in the same priory or hospital as they did before while living under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop. They shall occupy as their living quarters the apartment overlooking the main road of the faubourg and other suitable places in the priory or hospital. However, the dormitory and the cloister they shall leave entirely free for the priests.

The priests of the Congregation shall also be obliged to pay five hundred livres for food and clothing to each of the religious every year during their lifetime at the aforesaid times or others, as the religious shall wish or their needs may demand. To facilitate the payment of these portions both to Prior Adrien and the other religious, the priests of the Congregation shall allow the religious receiver⁵ to continue collecting the revenues until the peaceful possession by the said Congregation. For this purpose they shall submit to him all the necessary powers. If the religious should wish to live in common with the priests, they may do so by paying two hundred livres each for food from the above-mentioned amount of five hundred livres given to each one. The remaining three hundred livres shall be left to them for their other needs.

In the case of illness, either of Adrien or the religious, they shall be cared for in the common infirmary and the priests shall provide them with food, drink, and medicine, and pay for the physician, surgeon, and pharmacist to the amount of two hundred livres, according to the length of time.

The religious shall also be free to live separately and individually in the priory or hospital, or to retire to some other religious house with the Archbishop's permission, without reduction of the above-mentioned sum. In the event that one of the said religious dies, the priests of the Congregation shall be free from paying his portion or pension and no other religious or novice may be received in place of the deceased. In the event of such a death, the furnishings of the deceased shall be put to the use of the surviving religious personally residing in the priory or hospital. After the death of all the aforesaid religious, all the furnishings shall accrue to the Priests of the Mission.

Likewise, as soon as the priests of the Congregation take possession, they have the obligation of residing personally in the priory or hospital, of serving its church, and of diligently celebrating the Divine Liturgy for the glory of God and the peace of their conscience. They shall receive all the vestments, relics, and furnishings, which will be inventoried and handed over to them by the religious. They shall maintain the buildings and the property of the priory or hospital and make the necessary repairs at their own expense, without any contribution by the religious. They shall also receive any lepers who may present themselves, providing for all their needs both corporal and spiritual.

If, however, the priests of the said Congregation should abandon the priory or hospital, unless they do so because of some act or fault of the religious, they shall have no right to demand any return from the said Adrien or the other religious for the payments advanced, for the repairs they have made, or for any other expenses they have incurred in any way. Moreover, in the event of such desertion or departure, this contract shall be null and void, and the religious shall resume their original rights and privileges.

The above-mentioned Superior, Vincent, has accepted, in the name as above, the agreements, conditions, and everything as expressed above, in the event that the same priory with all its appurtenances and dependencies should be transferred to his Congregation, and he has promised to fulfill these as well as other conditions which are more fully contained in another contract or agreement and in a public document drawn up concerning this matter.

Whereupon your dedicated servant Jean-François de Gondy, present Archbishop of Paris, to whom belongs, as it belonged to his predecessors, as has been said above, the right to appoint and to remove the prior or administrator of this priory or leprosarium, rightly considering that the introduction of the priests of the said Congregation into this priory or hospital and the concession of its properties and revenues and everything belonging to it would result in the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, fully cognizant of the contract and everything contained in it, and with the consent of the Most Serene Prince Louis, Most Christian King of France and Navarre, as well as the consent of the Provost of Tradesmen and the City Magistrates, founders of the priory or hospital, by his ordinary power granted, united, attached, and incorporated the said priory or hospital with its church and all its buildings, gardens, properties, appurtenances, fruits and proceeds of any kind, along with all its freedoms, franchises and privileges, to the same Congregation, with the obligation of observing the agreements and conventions contained in that contract, under the following conditions:

The aforesaid Adrien shall also henceforth continue to be the Superior of the said religious, and the religious shall render him the obedience they have professed. The Archbishop of Paris at any given time shall have the jurisdiction and the right of visitation in spiritual and temporal things over the priory and the priests of this Congregation living in it at any given time. The priests of the Congregation, one of whom shall be elected Superior by the same Congregation, shall have the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours in choir in a moderate voice, without chant, the doors of the choir being closed, and of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass quietly so that they will not be delayed in their work of going to villages to instruct the people there. They shall fulfill all the foundations of the priory or hospital and receive into the priory the lepers of the city and its suburbs.

There shall be at least twelve members of this Congregation, at least eight of whom must be priests. Their work shall be to go from village to village in the diocese of Paris at the expense of the Congregation. They shall stay in each village for a month or two, according to the needs of the place, and teach the mysteries of faith, hear confessions, especially general confessions, instruct the people in a Christian life, prepare souls for the worthy reception of the Most Holy Eucharist, and reconcile enemies. At the times when Orders are customarily conferred in Paris, they are obligated to receive the candidates for orders from the Parisian diocese who are sent to the said Priory by the Archbishop and, for a period of two weeks before the ordination days, to give them room and board with them and prepare them by spiritual exercises, a general confession, a daily examination of conscience, meditations on the change of their state and of their life and on those things which are proper to each order and suited to the clerical way of life, and by the proper performance of the ecclesiastical ceremonies.

Whatever income of the priory should remain after satisfying these obligations, they shall apply to the common needs of the Congregation. In view of this, the same Archbishop Jean-François, acting in his own name and in the name of his successors, has forever dispensed and exonerated the priests of the Congregation from rendering an account of the funds and administration of the priory or hospital and its appurtenances and dependencies, as stated more in detail in the letter of the same Jean-François.

And since, Holy Father, all these agreements have been entered into for the greater glory of God and the said petitioners wish them to be strengthened by the patronage of Your Holiness and the Apostolic See so that they may last, the petitioners humbly ask your Holiness to act in this matter and, as a special favor to them, to approve and confirm forever by your apostolic

authority and to validate with everlasting and inviolable apostolic stability this contract entered into by the said petitioners concerning the transfer or union of this priory or hospital, of its church and all its goods, chattels, properties, and dependencies made by the said Archbishop Jean-François to the said Congregation of the Mission, and each and everything contained in the said letter, provided they are lawful and honest, with all their consequences. Supply all and each of the defects, of either law or fact, and the formalities, however substantial and required by law, if any of them should be found. Enjoin the petitioners that they are obliged to observe this contract and its contents and they they cannot withdraw from it. Rescind, as far as necessary, all previous contracts. Remove every connotation of a religious order of life, which, on account of the introduction and residence of the religious of the said order, might have attached or seemed to have attached to the priory or the hospital or the administration of the revenues or to any of its parts and appurtenances, not, however, to the persons of the said religious of this order. Suppress and extinguish any connotation of a religious order of life as to its state, essence, dependence, or denomination. Reduce all of these to the secular state and transfer to the Congregation of the Mission the priory or hospital, which is not an ecclesiastical title or benefice but a simple administration, removable at the will of the Archbishop of Paris at any given time. Transfer in the same way the church and all other parts and appurtenances, all its individual burdens, reservations, agreements, and conditions contained either in the contract, in the document, or in the letter of Archbishop Jean-François, which are here fully and sufficiently repeated, so that its Superior or priests may either themselves, or through one or several persons, in the name of the same Congregation, by their own authority take real and actual possession of the priory or hospital, of its church and property, of all its rights and dependencies, and keep them. May they collect, demand, rent, or lease its fruits, income, revenues, rights, proceeds, and perquisites of any kind and, after they have discharged the burdens and fulfilled the agreements and conditions contained in the contract and document and in the aforesaid letter of the Archbishop Jean-François, may they use the rest for the common good of the said Congregation without asking permission of the diocesan bishop or anyone else. Likewise, by the same apostolic authority, may they permanently grant, assign, or unite, attach, or incorporate them.

May your Holiness decree as a special favor that the present letter and the reply to it shall not be included in any similar or dissimilar revocations, suspensions, limitations of graces, or contrary dispositions, but that they shall always be excepted from them, so that whenever they may seem to be revoked, suspended, limited or interfered with, they shall always be brought back to their original and perfectly valid state, restated and fully restored, so that all judges, etc., must judge, etc., accordingly and declare null and void, etc., notwithstanding the aforesaid possibilities to the contrary, or Your requirement concerning the indication of the value, or the decree of the recently held Lateran Council prohibiting perpetual unions, except in cases permitted by law, as well as other apostolic constitutions or ordinances, the statutes, etc., of the said hospital or priory or Order, even confirmed by oath, etc., as well as the former Indults, Apostolic Letters, etc., and all other things to the contrary, with their pertinent decrees.⁶

179. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

(Now 206a)

180. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]¹

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you forever!

Monsieur de Cordes² wanted me to ask you, as I am doing most humbly, to be so kind as to go and drop in tomorrow at the Quinze-Vingts³ to see the officers of the Charity--in the morning-- and to do so every day in the afternoon. He also feels that the presence of Mademoiselle Poulailion would do no harm and that it would encourage those good women.

There are a few practices in that place which are not be be found anywhere else. The sick must be admitted by order of the directors of the hospital, among whom are Monsieur de Cordes and Monsieur Lamy. Monsieur de Cordes suggested to me today that from now on we should

accept the better situated among those who are applying and are offering to maintain the Charity: there are about twenty families. But it is felt that incurables, such as consumptives, those with gout, and other types of sick people, should not be admitted. It would be well to suggest to those good people that they give twenty or twenty-five hens to the Charity. One of the members could be given charge of them. The purpose of this is to have eggs, which are very expensive in that area.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

181. - TO ISABELLE DU FAY

[Between 1626 and 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

Your entrance into Sainte-Marie² is put off until tomorrow. I beg you, Mademoiselle, to postpone your act of piety until then, or else go to Confession to your own confessor and receive Communion the day after tomorrow at the Visitation. I have to say Mass there tomorrow between 7 and 8 and, after that, I have to go into the monastery. Before I enter, everyone will be asked to leave the church and the door will be closed. Such being the case, you would be too rushed. I am letting you know this too late. Forgive me, and I shall be, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, your. . . .

182. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 156a.)

183. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[1634 or 1635]¹

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think it advisable to ask Madame Fortia² to come to your officers' meeting at three o'clock. I shall be coming to it to see what should be done about the difficulty at the Hôtel-Dieu. She knows that house very well, has good judgment, and does what good can be done. Please be so kind also, Madame, as to invite Mademoiselle Poulailion and Mademoiselle du Fay to come. Please send your carriage to the Madeleine for me about half past two.

In the meantime, I bid you good-day and am, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday, ten o'clock

At the bottom of the first page: Madame Goussault

184. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[After 1631]¹

Mademoiselle,

This is Mademoiselle Brou,² the treasurer of Saint-Barthélemy.³ Since I cannot have the pleasure of talking with her because I am in a hurry, I beg you to do so and to look upon her as a good servant of God, worthy of some good employment for His glory.

V. D.

185. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1634 or 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Mademoiselle Poulaillon is asking for that good young woman. Please send her with Mademoiselle's footman. Will she be able to go on foot or, if it is convenient, would you lend her your little horse? The first way would be more edifying. It is nine leagues from here. If she cannot make it in one day, she may do the trip in two. Please have her ready when the footman arrives. I beg Our Lord to bless the young woman.

Mademoiselle du Fay is seriously ill. I am not asking you to offer her to Our Lord; I am sure you will do so.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Tuesday evening

I sent word to the footman to come tomorrow morning.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

186. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around 1634]¹

I think, Mademoiselle, that it would be well to recall that young woman who is with Madame de Suivry and to send someone for her. In the meantime, we shall see about what has to be done. I am going to the collège² and shall try to see M. Le Gras. Good Sister Alix brought you one young woman and is talking about another. Did you keep the first one?

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

i.s.C.M.

187. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Your letter seems fine to me. The evil spirit is meddling in the spiritual assistance project for those poor women. M. Chenevis spoke to me about it again this morning and said that the Chevitaïnes are taking considerable umbrage at the plan. He also said that they do not belong to the community. Please get more information about it. The worst that can happen is that we may have to give up the idea. If that is the case, well and good. However, we must peacefully find the source of the evil and see to the remedies.

I am going to see Madame Goussault, the President's wife. It did not seem to me that you were speaking to her too freely, as you say. Always be quite simple and sincere and ask God to grant me those two virtues.

I am, in His love. . . .

Saint-Lazare, October 29, 1634

188. - TO FRANCOIS DU COUDRAY, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter, of October 8 I think, in which you informed me that Monsieur Le Bret told you that Dom Le Bret,² his cousin, wrote to him with regard to your return. Now I must tell you, before God, in Whose presence I am speaking, that I do not know anything about it. I have not said a word to Dom Le Bret, to my knowledge, to give him any reason to write that nor anything approaching it. Perhaps it is the result of someone from there telling him that you had no more to do in Rome and that you had said you were to leave in two weeks. All I know about the affair is what I am surmising here in telling you this, because that good Father did not tell me anything about what he wrote.

As for what you say he told you before, along the same lines, I tell you that, while I was speaking to that good Father about our affairs in Rome--for Monsieur Le Bret writes to him about everything that is done--while I was speaking, I repeat, about our stay in Ferrara, I expressed to him my worry about the situation, not telling him anything else than what I could say in your presence without giving you offense. It is true that that good Father, because of the

zeal he has for us--which is such that I doubt strongly whether my own enthusiasm for the Mission is as great as his--told me that he wanted to write to his cousin to procure the Bulls in your absence. Now, since he said that to me quite simply, I did not pay much attention to it. But having thought it over, I went to see him expressly for the purpose of asking him not to do anything about it because I was afraid it might upset you and because I realized that it was proper for you to take care of it. Nevertheless, I found out later that he had written something about it and I was extremely annoyed.

That, Monsieur, is all I can say concerning the matter, with all the liberty and simplicity in my power. But do not feel that that good Father has any opinion of you except a very good one, thank God, one full of esteem and affection, and certainly with good reason.

That is why I most humbly entreat you not to give rise to any thought contrary to what I am telling you and to put far from you the thoughts, which I see from your letter, that you have formed with regard to me and that good Father. You know that the goodness of your heart has given me, thank God, the freedom to speak to you with full confidence, without concealing or disguising anything. I think you were aware of that up to now from my way of acting towards you.

Jésus, mon Dieu! could I be reduced to the misfortune of having to do or say something in your regard against holy simplicity! Oh! may God preserve me from that, Monsieur, with regard to anyone whomsoever! Simplicity is the virtue I love the most and to which, I think, I pay the most attention in my actions; and, if it is permissible for me to say so, I would say that I am practicing it with some progress by the mercy of God.

In the name of God, little Father, reject those thoughts as temptations that the evil spirit is putting into your mind. Believe that my heart is not so much mine as yours, and that you are more a pleasure and consolation to me than I am to myself. That is what makes me hope for your return. But I do not want you to come back in the depth of winter and in danger, but the way I wrote to you in my last letter, that is, around the month of February or March, unless you take passage on the galleys from France which are to bring the Cardinal of Lyons² to Rome. He is supposed to leave around Advent, in which case it would be good either to ask Monsieur Gilioli to come and meet you in Rome or to go and get him and wait for the galleys in Leghorn which is the seaport for Florence.

I am not saying anything to you about the Saint-Lazare affair because I have already written asking you to have the petition signed by the Pope so as to put matters in a state to be acted upon fifty years from now, as you wrote us. If the matter could be expedited at some small cost, you should attend to it.

Well now, Monsieur, here then is all I shall tell you for the present about myself except that I greet you with all the tenderness of my heart. Please take care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, November 6, 1634

Addressed: Monsieur du Coudray, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

188a. - TO M. DE MONTHOLON¹

[December 1634]²

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very sorry I did not have the happiness of being here when you did us the honor of coming; I was in a little village nearby. However, I returned a quarter of an hour after you left and found your brother. Mon Dieu, Monsieur, how much I feel the pain that he and the others are giving you. He told me his story,³ and whatever I contrived to say to him about the fear I have that he has made a mistake, that he must trust you absolutely and follow the advice of your relatives, and even something about the family into which he is marrying, with whom I am acquainted,⁴ I only stirred up his feelings more. I had asked his permission to come and see you with the Pastor of Saint-Germain,⁵ but when I was at Saint-Merri,⁶ I became greatly apprehensive that he might escape. I came back and found him resting. That is why I have taken the time to write and ask you to let me know how you wish me to act.

I am looking forward to the honor of seeing you tomorrow so that I may thank you, as I do most humbly, for the favorable beginning you have afforded our defense.⁷ I have been informed by two of our counselors that you have worked wonders. I trust, Monsieur, that the conclusion will be even more favorable and that Our Lord is reserving a great recompense for you in Heaven. I am, in His love, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur de Montholon, advocate at the Court

189. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL¹

December 7, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

M. de la Salle has written me several times about the fondness Our Lord has given you for our modest way of life, for himself, and for M. Brunet, and about the ardor with which you work for the salvation of the poor, and for us when the occasions arise.² Now, for all that, Monsieur, I thank you most humbly and beg Our Lord Himself to be your thanks and reward and to shed upon you more and more abundantly His graces and blessings.

O Monsieur, how my heart is filled with consolation every time the above-mentioned M. de la Salle writes to me about your zeal for the salvation of souls, your diligence in winning them over, the blessing Our Lord is bestowing on you, and the solid virtue you possess! I assure you, Monsieur, all that gives me a joy I cannot express to you and a very special fidelity in asking God to be pleased to continue for you and to increase the same graces within you.

That, Monsieur, is the reward you may expect from us for the many, many acts of charity you incessantly perform for us there. I add to that the offering I am making to you, Monsieur, of the Little Company and its services, and my own in particular, with all the affection and humility of which I am capable. This gives me the confidence to recommend myself to your holy prayers. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

i.s.C.M.

190. - TO MONSIEUR BELIN

December 16, 1634

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The time has finally come when we are going to glean after the abundant harvest Our Lord has reaped through you in that part of the country. I beg you, Monsieur, to continue your charity towards the Company and to advise it of all that is expedient in Domino. You will see new faces on all sides, but what can you expect? That is how Providence subjects us to vicissitude.

I beg you to speak frankly and without reserve to M. Grenu and to any one of them with regard to the advice you feel it advisable to give them in your meetings; otherwise, both they and the most prudent men could make mistakes.

And if you can, will you kindly go to Saint-Nom¹ or to Les Clayes to teach catechism and hear confessions? Do so, I beg of you, and take your choice. Are you really unaware that Our Lord has made you a Missionary when it is you who have one of the greatest shares in the conception, gestation, birth and development of the Mission, and that, were it not for the clear signs God has given that He wanted you in Villepreux, you would belong to the Mission completely?

Good M. Pillé² is at the Bons-Enfants with a slight stomach ailment; M. Portail is having trouble with his eyes and I with my legs, but all three of us love you dearly with all our heart. Take care, Monsieur, in the name of Our Lord, to ask God to grant us the grace of doing His will in all things. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please find a servant to bring in and to prepare the food at Saint-Nom; we shall pay him.

191. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]¹

. . . If you think it advisable to make a proposal to him about it, do so; if not, say nothing to him. I am sending Madame de Villegoubelin's² letter back to you; we shall discuss what is in it after your retreat. Well now, how are you doing? Are you bustling around? In the name of God, act gently as you can picture our blessed Father, the Bishop of Geneva,³ doing.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

192. - JEAN DE LA SALLE AND JEAN-JOSEPH BRUNET

TO SAINT VINCENT¹

1634

The sermons are well attended in the diocese of Bordeaux. The faithful come from far away. They are so anxious to make a general confession that they wait their turn for weeks at a time without returning home and would rather die than lose this opportunity of making their peace with God. There are some who accuse themselves quite loudly so as to humble themselves more.

193. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I talked to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals² about the Charity of the Daughters. She gave one hundred écus to Madame Goussault, the President's wife, which she will send you today; and what is more, she would like to go to the country with the rest of you.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

194. - TO CHARLES-CHRETIEN DE GOURNAY, BISHOP OF TOUL¹

January 19, 1635

Saint Vincent asks Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, who had requested an appointment with him, to kindly wait a few days, because the following day he has to begin the visitation of the Sisters of the Madeleine which he will be continuing for at least a week. Moreover, the following Sunday, the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, he is expected in Montreuil where he is supposed to preach and ascertain the smooth functioning of the confraternity established in that place.

195. - TO N.

[Around 1635]¹

I fell seriously ill two or three days ago, which has made me think about death. By the grace of God, I adore His Will and acquiesce in it with all my heart. And on examining myself as to what might cause me some anxiety, I found nothing except that we have not yet drawn up our rules.²

196. - TO GUY-FRANCOIS DE MONTHOLON

[1635, after March 28]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall tell you, with very great sorrow, that I am unworthy of the honor of your benevolence because I was unable to watch over your brother.² He escaped this evening through a little out-of-the-way door which is used by our leper,³ while I was talking to your clerk whom you had sent to see me about a letter I had written you. I and M. De Saint Lou. . . in, who had come to see me, had just left him in the garden with one of the religious from the house.⁴ All I did was accompany my visitor to the door where they told me your clerk was asking for me. I was scarcely with him when someone came to me and said: "That gentleman is running away!" Immediately I went to the garden and from there to the little door by which I was told he had just left and that he was with one of the religious from the house who, I would imagine, had shown him the way to escape. We have no one capable of chasing after him, and besides, the soldiers would most certainly have assisted him.⁵

I cannot tell you, Monsieur, how distressed I am about this, especially since it is the first favor you had asked of me. How upsetting such poor service is to me, only God knows, and were it not for my hope that your goodness will pardon me and that you will make use of this occurrence to guard him better, I do not know who would be able to console Me. So, once again I have recourse to your goodness, Monsieur, and beg you by the love of Our Lord to try to forgive me. Hoping this from your goodness, I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Saturday evening⁶

197. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have received two letters from you since you left, three in fact: one from Brie-Comte-Robert,¹ the other from Lion, and the last one the day after Quasimodo² from Luzarches,³ your first mission. I did not answer your first one because I did not receive it until a week or so later, and I thought my letter would not find you in Lion; I did not answer the second either because I did not think it expedient. So here is my answer to all three.

Let me tell you then, with regard to the first, that I do not think you need any other authorization than the one I gave you; as for the second, how I praise God for what you told me in that little note.

Let us talk about the third. To be sure, Monsieur, it consoled me more than I can tell you because of the blessing God has been pleased to give to your simple catechism lessons, and Monsieur Lucas' sermons, which you tell me are good, and to everything that followed from them. O Monsieur, how good it was for you to have been humbled, first of all because, ordinarily, progress does not come about any other way, and because that is the way Our Lord prepares those whom he wishes to use profitably! And how many times was He Himself humiliated from the very outset of His mission! Just as *extrema gaudii luctus occupat*,⁴ so is it said to those who labor in anguish and under pressure that *tristitia eorum vertetur in gaudium*.⁵ Let us love the latter and fear the former. And, in the name of God, Monsieur, I beg you to enter into these sentiments, and Monsieur Lucas as well, not to claim anything from your work but shame, ignominy, and ultimately death, if it so please God. Must not a priest die of shame for claiming a reputation in the service he gives to God and for dying in his bed, when he sees Jesus Christ rewarded for his work by disgrace and the gibbet. Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ, and our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ. Now, once these foundations have been laid, let us give ourselves up to contempt, to shame, to ignominy, and let us disclaim the honors people pay us, the good reputation and the applause they give us, and let us do nothing which has not that end in view.

Let us work humbly and respectfully. Let us not challenge the ministers in the pulpit; let us not say, unless it be rarely and in a spirit of humility and compassion, that they could not point out any passage in Holy Scripture concerning their articles of faith; for otherwise God will not

bless our work. We shall drive the poor away from us. They will judge that there was vanity in our behavior, and will not believe us. We do not believe a man because he is very learned but because we consider him good and love him. The devil is very learned and yet we believe nothing he says, because we do not love him. Our Lord had to predispose with His love those whom He wished to have believe in Him. Do what we will, people will never believe in us if we do not show love and compassion to those whom we wish to believe in us. Monsieur Lambert and Monsieur Soufliers, because they acted that way, were considered saints by both sides, and Our Lord did great things through them. If you act in that manner, God will bless your labors; if not, you will produce noise and fanfare, but little fruit. I am not telling you this, Monsieur, because I have heard that you have done the evil of which I speak, but so that you may refrain from it and labor constantly and humbly in a spirit of humility.⁶ Therefore, let Monsieur Lucas continue the sermons, and you the catechism lessons.

I greatly doubt that Monsieur Olier⁷ and Perrochel⁸ will come to see you. The first had already left and the other was supposed to follow him a few days later. But Monsieur Olier was detained by the urgent proposal made to him by the Bishop of Langres⁹ that he take over his bishopric. They are negotiating the matter. The affair is still doubtful because of the conditions. It seems more likely that the matter will be arranged than not.¹⁰ The above-mentioned Monsieur Olier will perhaps still make a short trip as far as Pébrac to farm out his lease. If Monsieur Perrochel had some companion, perhaps he would not fail to come to see you. We shall see. In the meantime, please write to me often and let me know to whom I should address my letter in Mende.

This evening I sent Monsieur Lucas' letter to Monsieur Tinien, and to Monsieur Olier the one for him, because I received yours just this morning.

What news shall I give you about us? Everyone is well, thank God. Since your departure we have admitted a Limousin gentleman who was a protestant--a relative of Monsieur de Saint-Angel--and a student from Auvergne;¹¹ but, on the other hand, we led Monsieur Flahan to acknowledge that he would do better somewhere else rather than here. He just left about an hour ago. I think that shall also admit a cousin of Monsieur Meyster;¹² he was formerly Brother Etienne.¹³ Monsieur de la Salle is receiving a great deal of help from God on his mission;¹⁴ so are those who are in Normandy. Some are going to leave for two or three places in the diocese of Chartres and for two in this diocese. I have told M. du Coudray to come back with Monsieur Gilioli.¹⁵

And there you have all our news. I have not yet read your letter to the Company; I shall do so tomorrow, with God's help, in the love of Whom I greet and affectionately embrace good Monsieur Lucas and you as well, Monsieur, without forgetting good Brother Philippe or the simplicity with which I have spoken to you and am, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, May 1, 1635

Addressed: Monsieur Portail

198. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS

June 28, 1635

The Saint gently reprimands Antoine Lucas for his conduct towards heretics, whom he treats scornfully and provokes to dispute.

198a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since my slight fever goes on, I decided to go on with your advice which is to do as I did in the past for it, enjoy some country air. I am going to try, therefore, to visit a few Charities and perhaps, if I feel well, I shall go as far as Liancourt² and Montmorency³ to begin what you will be able to complete later. But strengthen yourself in the meantime, I beg of you. I promise to do

the same on my part. I send my regards and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble [servant].⁴

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at one o'clock

198b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635¹

Yesterday I received your letter, which touched me a little when I learned from it of the slight indisposition which obliged you to go to bed on your arrival. I beg God, Mademoiselle, to strengthen you so that you can serve Him in the work for which He is sending you.

Here are your rules from Saint-Nicolas and Saint-Sauveur,² but please use in Beauvais the ones from that locality and try to put into practice there as elsewhere the things that are not being done.

198c. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I did tell you, Mademoiselle, that you would find great difficulties in the Beauvais affair. Blessed be God that you have made such favorable progress! When I set up the Charity in Mâcon,¹ everyone made fun of me and would point at me in the streets, but when the deed was accomplished, everyone wept for joy. The town magistrates paid me so much honor on my departure, that not being able to stand it, I was compelled to leave in secret to avoid the applause; and that is now one of the best established Charities. I hope the embarrassment you had to suffer at the beginning will be changed into consolation and that the work will be more stable because of it.

I approve of your suggestion to set up the confraternity and to arrange it like the others in the diocese and for that reason I sent your letter to the Bishop of Beauvais² this morning. He is leaving this very day and could be in Beauvais on Saturday. Speak to him about the matter and be sure to take care of the little bit of health that you have. I am very much afraid that your great weariness may incapacitate you.

M. Durot,³ who left the day before yesterday, told me that he was hoping the Ladies of Basse-Oeuvre would be able to attend to Sainte-Marguerite. See who can do so more conveniently, either they or the Ladies from Saint-Martin.

Yesterday I saw your son conversing very seriously with an old Jesuit Father, but I was not able to speak to him. I do not know how that happened; perhaps he did not see me and left while I went into a chapel. He is in good health.

Mademoiselle Poulaillon is leaving today for Villers. As you are in Liancourt, if you write to her or choose to go and rest at her home in Villers, she will be quite pleased and happy to do whatever you wish. Villers is only two or three leagues from Liancourt; it is near Saint-Leu. She has visited Montreuil. I am sending you her letter to entertain you a little.

I feel urged by the alms from the wife of the Keeper of the Seals⁴ to do what can be done to set up the Charity in Saint-Laurent,⁵ but I shall wait until you are here to work on it.

I sent your letter to Mademoiselle Guérin and I saw Marguerite⁶ from Saint-Paul who is finding the burden of that parish unbearable because of its great size, the large number of sick, and the fact that the Ladies do not make their visits.

I greet with all my heart and am the most humble servant of Madame de Villegoubelin, your good and charitable hostess, whom Providence led to Beauvais for the express purpose of doing the good she is doing there. Oh! how I wish her better health and a very long and happy life!

Take care of your own health, Mademoiselle, I repeat it once again, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, July 21, 1635

198d. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635

Thank you for the information you so kindly gave me about the condition of the Charity in Beauvais. The Bishop of Beauvais is supposed to go there to give a mission in October. Perhaps at that time we will be able to prevail upon more people to take a hand in the Charity. The above-mentioned Bishop of Beauvais is leaving to give the mission in Liancourt; perhaps you will be there before him; however, do not hurry for the sake of avoiding him. Follow the order of Providence. Oh! how good it is to let ourselves be guided by it!

Take good care of your health and spare nothing in order to eat properly during your hard work. I still think that you do not eat enough.

I beg you to remember me very affectionately to good Mademoiselle du Coudray and all the good sisters¹ of the Charity in Bulles,² not forgetting good Mademoiselle Toinette in Clermont, if time allows you to see her.

198e. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

1635

I am really astonished, Mademoiselle, that you did not receive two of my letters. I gave one to the Theologian of Beauvais and sent him the other, so that he would deliver them to you personally. Now, he told me that he had sent you the first one; as for the second, he said that you had already left for Bulles¹ and that he would try to send it to you. Indeed, I cannot help thinking I do not know what! Ah well, it is nothing-- we must bow to all encounters with Providence.

With regard to Gournay,² if the president³ is there, which I do not nor cannot know, it is too late to send someone there. I say, therefore, that in the event she is there, she will need at least two days. Please give her as much time as you think advisable.

Monsieur de la Salle saw the woman whom Madame de Longueville⁴ has had locked up in Creil according to the wish of Madame de Liancourt.⁵ Please tell the aforesaid lady that he could obtain no reparation from the woman except that she will do anything they want, as long as she has her freedom and that she will not fall into evil ways again. With regard to those kept in confinement, the above-mentioned Monsieur de la Salle feels that she will never agree to that.

I send my humble greetings to the above-mentioned lady and am her servant.

I received the letter and the keys that Madame de Longueville sent me.

As for the difficulty you have had and which you mention at the end of your letter, we shall talk about it.

My greetings to Mademoiselle Poulailon.

Madame Goussault, the wife of the President, returned two days ago.

I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in Liancourt

198f. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LIANCOURT

1635

Blessed be God, Mademoiselle, for the blessing he bestowed on you in Beauvais and in Bulles and may His Goodness be pleased to continue to bless you where you are now.

The suggestion concerning the establishment of the Charity seems good to me but I fear that the house may ruin it.¹ Before long, the sisters of the Charity will withdraw from the responsibility of going to visit the sick in their homes and will be content to bring the food to the Hôtel-Dieu. The nurses will make a contribution to the food in order to rid themselves of the same bother so that, with both groups contributing to such a disorder, it will soon come about. The experience we are having in Joigny gives me good reason to fear this.

What can be done for the present is to found the establishment and to try to find some young women. I would approve of your leaving Marie there to begin with, were it not that you need her. If Madame² could give you someone suitable for this, or Mademoiselle Pavillon, then you could leave her there and train here the young women Madame is able to give you, or the

schoolboy's sister whom the nurses at Saint-Nicolas are supporting. She came to see me and offered to come whenever she is needed. She seems to me to be a fine young woman.

I shall send you Monsieur de la Salle who will be arriving in Liancourt Saturday evening or Sunday morning. Meanwhile, discuss with Madame what will be best, but you must not forget to get permission from the Bishop of Beauvais for the establishment, if he has not already given it. If he has told Madame that he has no objection, that suffices. If Madame does not have this permission and writes to the Bishop of Beauvais and he chooses to send Monsieur Duchesne³ to do the preaching on Sunday, M. de la Salle will take care of the rest and the preaching as well in the event that Monsieur Duchesne has started his treatments. But because M. de la Salle has some kind of sciatica in his thigh which prevents him from walking, Madame will please be so kind as to send a horse here for him by tomorrow evening.

As for what remains to be done in Beauvais, I think you will have to go there again, and while you are there, ask the Theologian for the letter I wrote to you at his address last Sunday, if he has not sent it to you. That is all I have to say to you for the present except that M. de la Salle will bring you news of your son.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Saint-Lazare, Friday, at two o'clock

198g. - TO SAINT LOUISE

1635

Mademoiselle,

I am apprehensive about the house¹ if Madame is putting those young women² there now. In a short time she will think it advisable for her to have the sick brought there. The season is scarcely opportune for establishing the Charity in several places. If the Duchesse is not satisfied with Liancourt for the present, I think it unwise for her to make establishments anywhere except in two or three neighboring villages only.

The Bishop of Beauvais wants us to discuss thoroughly the union of the Charity with the Rosary³ throughout his diocese. Then Madame will be able to establish and combine the Rosary and the Charity in accordance with what has been decided. The aforesaid Bishop has asked me to send him my opinion and, in the meantime, he will discuss the matter with the Prior of the Jacobins.⁴ Perhaps we shall have to get together about this because the Fathers of that city are objecting to it.

All things considered, I think that it is not advisable for you to return to Beauvais at present. When you have finished in Liancourt and, if necessary, in Gournay--as Mademoiselle Poulaillon may invite you there--if you see fit, a little rest will be needed. When you are here, we shall work on the rules for Beauvais. I even think it is unwise to draw up the ones for Liancourt right now because of that house and those young women, but send them the general set of rules unsigned, for experience will perhaps show that something should be added or curtailed. Since Our Lord has given the law of grace to man without writing it, let us do the same here for a time. I am, meanwhile, your servant.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

199. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 207a.)

200. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 207b.)

201. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 207c.)

202. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

August 10, 1635

Please tell our Brother Philippe that I am very happy to learn that he is so zealous in instructing the poor people insofar as he is able. And indeed, Monsieur, it is true that what you wrote me about him has greatly consoled me, especially what you told me about having sent him to a little village where he saw a shepherd high up on a mountain and went up to visit and catechize him. Now then, may God be blessed since it can be said that: *Idiotae rapiunt caelum!*¹

What can I tell you about us? At present, almost the entire company is gathered together here. We are going to make our retreat and then start practicing controversies and preaching again. As for the younger members, perhaps we shall have them read the Master of the Sentences.²

203. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I really think it advisable to begin telling that young woman from the Hôtel-Dieu about her fastidiousness and elegance. But how will you broach the subject? Making her change her manner of dressing seems to me neither feasible nor expedient. I think it would be well to rid her of the desire of appearing well dressed and for her to be a little less careful about herself in that regard. You will see to it.

As for the Hôtel-Dieu, it is not expedient to be there all the time but it is advisable to come and go. Do not be afraid of undertaking too much of what you can do without coming and going; but fear only the thought of doing more than you are doing and more than God is giving you the means to do. Offer yourself to His Divine Majesty never to do anything except what you are doing. Any idea to the contrary makes me tremble with fear because it seems to me a crime for children of Providence. I praise His Divine Goodness that you relieved me of that worry yesterday. I shall see your Daughters individually and then all together, and you can tell me whatever you want as soon as I am able to come.

Do not worry about that long trip. It seems to me that there is less chance of it. Perhaps I shall be able to take one for just three or four days to go to see two farms twelve leagues from here² which good Madame de Herse, the President's wife,³ let us have. In the meantime, pray to God for me.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

204. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL

August 29, 1635

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot express to you, Monsieur, how conscious Our Lord makes me of the infinite number of obligations I have towards you for such great affection as you have shown to Messieurs de la Salle and Brunet and for such great assistance as you have given them in all the business matters we have had there.

I am also overwhelmed by the charity you have extended and keep on extending to my poor brother.¹ Because you have done all this for the love of God, and because gratitude for so many kindnesses is beyond our power, I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to be Himself both your thanks and your reward. I assure you that there will never be a day in my life on which I do not preserve the memory of your kindness and seek opportunities to honor and serve you. Look upon us then from now on, Monsieur, as men over whom you have acquired an absolute and sovereign power, and make use of us accordingly. Grant us also the favor, in the name of Our Lord, of using our house when you come to this city in the fall.

If, in the meantime, you wish us to send back the money you furnished for us there, or to pay it here, just give the order, Monsieur, and we shall obey you in this as in all things. And if you wish to advance what my poor brother needs there for the fine imposed on him, his share of the expenses, and his return journey, I shall repay you including the amount left over. And because I have been told that he has some idea of coming to this city to see me, I beg you, Monsieur, to dissuade him from that plan, partly because of his advanced age² and also because, if he should come, I would not be able to give him anything, having nothing whatever at my disposal that I could give him.

I am speaking to good M. de Fonteneil as to the heart of my heart and as to one whom I cherish more than I can say. I am, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, his most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

205. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Mon Dieu, what a gallant woman you are to have done all that you tell me! Well now, you must not stop in mid-stream. If the objections people are raising materialize and prevent success, you may have to give up the work. There is no obligation at all under pain of mortal sin, or venial. The poor, meanwhile, will have had this relief and the individuals who have assisted them, the merit. I would gladly have us part of that blessed company and I thank you for providing us with people for it.

206. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1632 and 1650]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be the suffering Jesus Christ for restoring your health! Yes, certainly, Mademoiselle, I shall help you to do the Will of God in this, by means of His grace and the good use you will have to make of it. I think, in fact, that it will be good for you to go to the country when you are a little stronger to put the finishing touch on strengthening yourself while you are doing good.

We have thirty-five or thirty-six non-resident ordinands and retreatants here.² I hope we shall have at least one small room left in which to lodge your son, and we shall have him purged and bled on Monday; for, as far as the Bons-Enfants is concerned, there are three young men making their retreat there and they are occupying all the beds.

We have a young Lutheran girl here from Germany, dressed like a footman. She was sent to us from the mission of Gonesse³ with the consent of a gentleman who was supporting her. She wants to change her ways and her religion. . . .⁴

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

206a. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I am returning to you the rules for St-Sauveur; I had not seen them. It seems to me that the first part makes the whole confraternity dependent on the pastor. I do not know if that would be advisable. It certainly is true that the Beauvais pastors would be quite pleased with that, but it would immediately prompt them to be no longer willing for anyone to know what was going on in each confraternity. I do think, however, Monsieur, that it is necessary for the officers to inform them about the admission of the sick, at least telling them which ones they will accept.

It should be mentioned in the rules that the votes shall be collected by them for the election, and that the treasurer shall give her report in the pastor's presence, without mentioning the vicar general at all, as had been stated in the rules. There must also be a fixed number of ladies, and the vacancies shall be filled by those whom the company approves, and afterwards, they shall be presented to the pastors for their reception and blessing.

With regard to the procurator, I do not know how easy it would be to put one in each confraternity, for they will never resign themselves to having him write down the collections.

As for making out the accounts, I think the sisters¹ will be able to do that themselves. There remains nothing more for the procurator to do except to see that the legacies are executed, if there are any for the benefit of the confraternities. In that case, it is probable that a single procurator could suffice for everything. I mean that only for Beauvais, Monsieur, since for Liancourt the ordinary rule is good, especially that which recommends friendship among themselves and the larger confraternities, because of both the morning and evening exercises and the remembrance of the presence of God during the day; also vacancies should be filled in the manner mentioned above. There are good procurators everywhere.

Please let me know, Monsieur, whether you will include some special article for that officer who so earnestly asks to be admitted in order to obtain the benefit of the confraternity, and whether the rule will mention that there will be two young women named by Madame de Liancourt to nurse the sick. The young women will live in the house provided by this lady, and will be obligated to prepare and bring the medicines to the sick of Liancourt, and to La Bruyère, Cauffry, and Rantigny² as well. They will have the duty of visiting the above-mentioned sick at least twice a week, and of doing everything laid down by the establishment and foundation in this regard.

The collection is taken up in those places at the homes on Sundays, and in the churches on big feast days. The procurators keep a register and write down the amount of each collection, and the treasurer does likewise. The coffers have only two locks. I think it must be stated that these guardians shall be from the membership of the confraternity.

I believe, Monsieur, that it would be most fitting for each coffer to have a ledger in it like the one I left you, so that everything that goes on in the confraternity may be found there. In the front of the book, I think the act of establishment should be written, next the rules, then the names of the sisters and the election of the procurator and the officers. Subsequent elections could be entered after that.

Near the middle of the book, make a note that they must write down the names of the sisters who die and those who will replace them. In the other half of the book, charitable legacies and extraordinary gifts should be registered, and in another place the furnishings belonging to the poor. The book I brought is the one from La Bruyère, because the act of establishment was fully witnessed.

I think the superioress³ should keep a book in which she has someone record the names of the sick poor, the dates of their admission and death, or the date on which the Charity terminates its assistance to them.

If you had not ordered me, Monsieur, to make this report, I would not have dared to consider it. I do not know how I delayed it so long, except that I am well aware that my mind is very slow to do good, both for others and with regard to my own practices.

Good Sister Jeanne from Saint-Benoît⁴ has just brought me three young women from Colombes;⁵ they are very pleasing in appearance and have a strong desire to serve the poor wherever we wish to send them. I think they will be coming to see you one of these days.

I greatly regret having lost the day you wanted to give me; I think that is partly my fault. I really do feel the need of a few days to reflect a little on myself, in order to be renewed somewhat. I think, Monsieur, that when the time comes to inspect the Charity at Saint-Laurent, if you wish to do me the honor of using me for that purpose, I will need to spend a few days there. I could make use of that opportunity if you think it appropriate. But, for the love of God, Monsieur, ask His mercy to make my needs known to you; otherwise, I shall think that He wants to abandon me entirely since He is allowing you to feel this way.

I am sending you the report of what was done at each meeting in Beauvais. I think it would be a good idea for the rules you are drawing up to be for Saint-Sauveur. And when you send them, give instructions that they be lent to the others to have copies made.

If you wish to take the trouble to reread the letter I sent you from Liancourt, you will perhaps find more information in it than what I am sending you. Please pardon my lack of organization. I would almost like to excuse myself on account of my poor memory, but you know what I am and that I shall always be, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

September 4, [1635]⁶

The collections are being taken up every Monday in Beauvais, but I think it would be advisable to have them in church on big feasts. I think that, by making the establishment right after the mission that the Bishop of Beauvais wants to have given there, it will be easy to get all that can be desired for the good of the confraternity. I have not done anything at all about suggesting this collection.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

207. - TO CLEMENT DE BONZI, BISHOP OF BEZIERS

[September or October 1635]¹

Your Excellency,

I learned from M. Cassan, the brother of a priest from your town of Béziers, that you wanted to know three things about us. Now, since I was unable to have the honor of answering you at that time because I was leaving for the country, I decided to do so now.

I shall tell you, first of all, Your Excellency, that we are entirely under the authority of the bishops to go to any place in their diocese where they wish to send us to preach, catechize, and hear the general confessions of the poor; ten to fifteen days before ordination, to teach all about mental prayer, practical and necessary theology, and the ceremonies of the Church to those about to be ordained; and to receive the latter into our house, after they are priests, for the purpose of renewing the fervor Our Lord has given them at ordination. In a word, we are like the servants of the centurion in the Gospel² with regard to the bishops, insofar as when they say to us: go, we are obliged to go; if they say: come, we are obliged to come; do that, and we are obliged to do it. We are, moreover, subject to their visitation and correction just like country pastors and curates, although for the preservation of uniformity of spirit, there is a Superior General whom the Missionaries obey in matters of internal discipline.

That, Your Excellency, is how we conduct ourselves with the bishops. Now as to whether we can send you two priests, that, Your Excellency, is where the difficulty arises, because we are few in number and possess little virtue. You may be sure, nevertheless, Your Excellency, that if we could do this for any prelate in the kingdom, it would be for your Most Illustrious Lordship, as much because of the exemplary life you lead in the Church, as for the need that I imagine your poor mountain people have of them.

As for the third question, Your Excellency, my response is that, since we go along without taking anything from the poor or from ecclesiastics for our living expenses or clothing, we would need, I think, eight hundred to one thousand livres for the maintenance of two priests and a brother.

These, Your Excellency, are the replies I can give to your Most Illustrious Lordship regarding the things you wish to know. If I were fortunate enough to be able to render you some service, Your Excellency, I would certainly consider it a special blessing from God.³

Your Most Illustrious Lordship may make full use of me, if he so desires, as of one who is, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and most obedient servant.

207a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday, I spoke to the group of priests about what Madame Goussault had told me concerning the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu. However, in the end it was decided to postpone the matter again for a few days. It is better to let everybody talk than to expose so many people, when the objection of a single one of them could destroy the work completely. And then, they say that those good young women are not too much to be believed in this matter.

Mon Dieu! how worried I am about your poor Sister Barbe² and about the other one who is a patient at the Hôtel-Dieu, as is good Madame Mussot!. I am in no way recommending them to your care; you have enough worries. However, I am especially concerned about your telling me that you are able to do so little that it is a pity. I am afraid that you yourself are ill. Let me know about this, please, and if that is the case, do not go back to the Hôtel-Dieu. Marie³ will take

your place during your absence. If not, I think you will do well to go there tomorrow, perhaps sleep there, and come back the following day to Saint-Nicolas in order to get Marie used to those young women little by little, and them to her.

But what shall I tell you about Mademoiselle Laurent? She appears to have good judgment but her age worries me. Nevertheless, if you think it advisable to have her come to the Hôtel-Dieu, spending two or three days with her, and after that to have her come and go from one house to the other until it is the right time to go to the country, then do so. She can observe and you can observe her. But make it quite clear to her that this is just an experiment, and to your heart that I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

207b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur Holden² did not come to have dinner here; let me know why; I was expecting him.

I shall speak with your son. He must not give up the clerical state without due consideration. If he does, there might be cause for regret. However, God, Who does everything for the best, would find His glory in it. We must be resigned to His Divine Will in all things. He is more God's child than yours; He will do what is best. Therefore, be prepared for any outcome and do not readily acquiesce in this instance. If he gives up the clerical state, people will laugh, even at that collège; if he goes elsewhere, he will be lost or at least will be running a great risk.

I have spoken to Madame Goussault. She is not surprised at the suggestion. She says that Marie³ will not pray the way it has been done, nor make repetition. But never mind that. You can visit her sometimes.

In the meantime, I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

207c. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1635]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You think about yourself too much. You must go along in a simple and ordinary way. You have not said anything to me recently contrary to charity; in fact, you would have acted badly in doing otherwise, considering the person and the matter involved. Let us go along in a little more simple and ordinary way, I beg you, and do not be afraid of anything in that regard.

I received your package by way of the lady you mentioned but I did not give it back to her, judging it better that way.

I do not know what to tell you about the Charity, whether it began the same year or not. I shall find out from Madame de Chantal, who will be here within twelve days,² in what year they stopped the practice. This one, I believe, began in 1617.³ We shall settle that and talk about the matter at the first opportunity, if it is a source of edification.⁴

Madame Goussault is going to have the note written for good Madame Lagault. Oh! how ashamed I am that I have not seen her, or Madame Mussot, who is feeling better! But what are the grounds for your abjection in this work? Courage! Our Lord allows whatever feelings He chooses in His servants.

What shall I say to you about the good Mademoiselle Laurent? I do not know. I fear some encounter. Madame Mussot confided in M. Messier of Beauvais and told him the day before yesterday that she is leaning in that direction. Now then, please think about what should be done and let me know your opinion concerning the matter.

I send greetings to our good Barbe⁵ and am delighted that she is feeling better. Our meeting is about to begin; that is why I am in a hurry. Good-bye, then, Mademoiselle. I am in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

208. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]¹

I ask your pardon for not having been able to come and see you yesterday because of the straits in which I found myself; I shall come some day this week, God willing. It often happens that, at Sainte-Marie, they keep their annual confessions for me for more than a month. There is one again who has reserved hers for me for that length of time. I hope your heart will do me the same charity.

I shall look over your papers today and send them to you tomorrow. Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

Sunday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

209. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN THE CEVENNES

October 16, 1635

Monsieur,

I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to continue in you the spirit of holy meekness and also of toleration for whatever is not evil nor contrary to our little rules; in that case, meekness would be cruelty. But in order to remedy those very situations, a spirit of gentleness is needed.

The Bishop of Mende¹ has expressed great satisfaction to me for your services. The Bishop of Béziers² has written to me requesting workers like you, Messieurs, but how can I give him any? The Bishop of Viviers³ also came to see us for the same purpose. Only God can be everywhere.

The Company is getting along fine, thank God. God imparted many graces to it during the spiritual exercises,⁴ and everyone came out of them full of fervor. Since your departure, six people⁵ have joined us. O Monsieur, how I fear large numbers and expansion. What reason we have to praise God for allowing us to honor the small number of the disciples of His Son, in Whom I am. . . .

210. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for the trouble you took to let me hear from you, and I beg Our Lord to strengthen you more and more. Your letter found me still in bed with some slight fits of sweating which kept me from answering you, as did also a medicine they made me take afterwards. Likewise, the visitors who dropped in on me prevented me from answering you yesterday.

Now let me tell you with regard to your son, Mademoiselle, that I think there is no objection to his presenting theses to your closest friends and near relatives. But I am of the opinion that, in order to honor the humility of Our Lord, they should be read to few people and only so as to free him from a great deal of anxiety. When he is in theology school, it will be a different matter.

As for that good young woman you mentioned to me yesterday, please keep her if you think she has good judgment. That entering and leaving religious life indicates some instability; you will have to be careful about that. If there is reason to admit her in order to look into her vocation for a little while longer, please discuss the matter with Madame Goussault.

With regard to the young Italian woman, it would be a good thing to send her to Villers,² to the mother of Mademoiselle Poulaillon. Mon Dieu! how I wish your Sisters would make an effort

to learn to read and that they might really know the catechism you are teaching! Poor Germaine is wrong not to stay with you. She would lighten your burden a great deal in that regard. But, in the name of God, recover your health before you work around them.

My slight fevers have not yet left me; you know they last a little while. But we have poor Monsieur de la Salle seriously ill in Bordeaux. I recommend him to you, but I entreat you above all to take care of your own health.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

211. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

Although my heart, very dear Father, is indifferent to everything but sorrow, never will it forget the charity you showed it on the day of your departure; for, very dear Father, it found itself comforted in its pain and even strengthened in the circumstances which are present, which indeed arise on all sides.

I prostrate myself in spirit at your feet, asking your pardon for the pain I have given you by my immortification, from which comes the humiliation I love and dearly embrace. But to whom can I expose and make known my infirmities, if not to my only Father who will know how to put up with them? I hope your goodness will never grow weary of doing so.

212. - TO SAINT LOUISE

I praise God for this change, Mademoiselle, and beg Him with all my heart that it be lasting and that He perfect you and sanctify your soul more and more in these sufferings. Moreover, I thank you for letting me know about it; your doing so greatly relieved me, for who would not feel the pain which is weighing upon a person so active yet suffering. Certainly, it cannot be otherwise.

I wish you a good evening and am, in the love of Jesus and of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

213. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have returned in fairly good health, thank God, but I am worried about yours. I shall come to see you as soon as possible--today, if I can. In the meantime, do all you can to stay well, I beg of you. I cannot tell you how much the poor have need of your living a long time and I have never seen this more clearly than at present.

That good young woman¹ seems to have a fair amount of common sense and good will. The only problem is that she has been in a religious community. However, she told me that, although she was persuaded to enter that community, her heart was with the Charity. Therefore, I do not think there is any harm in letting her try. As for the good widow accompanying her, she strikes me as uncouth, very gloomy, and vulgar. I think we shall have to send her away very gently and tell her that we shall have to think it over for a long time.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

214. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Palm Sunday [March 16, 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

Four or five lines, no more. I have been intending each day to come and see you to talk with you, but business has prevented me from doing so. It is about your lodgings. Discuss the matter with Madame Goussault, the President's wife.

My heart is moved by the consolation I imagine Our Lord will bestow on both of you during your journey and good works. Meanwhile, until I have the happiness of seeing you tomorrow or the day after, here or at the Bons-Enfants, I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

215. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I had planned to come and see you, but not being able to do so earlier because of some difficulties, I am asking you to let me know if you have decided upon a place to live and where it is. You may perhaps think that I have some reason which involves you on account of which I think it unwise for you to live in this neighborhood.² Oh! no, that is not the case at all I assure you. The reason, rather, is this: we are among people who watch everything and pass judgment on everything. They would not see us go into your house three times without finding the opportunity to talk, to draw conclusions which they ought not to draw, and to repeat them wherever they go. It is not that we have been watching them, but only the one who has the power to do so. When I have the happiness of seeing you, I will speak to you about the matter in greater detail.

In the meantime, tell me: when will you be able to go to the country to visit a few of the Charities? Please let me know and, if you can do so conveniently, come for a walk this far one of these mornings. Meanwhile, honor the holy cheerfulness of Our Lord and that of His holy Mother. I am, in their love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

216. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You were wise to send for that good young woman. In Sucy-en-Brie,² there are four robust young women, who are older, about whom M. Renar has spoken to me. I shall show you the petition they presented to him. You must try to have them learn to read as soon as possible.

I cannot tell you anything about that good young woman's letter except that I have not been able to read it yet. I am in such a hurry that I cannot do so now in order to give you an answer about it. I am going to the Madeleine to hold the Chapter there today. Offer this action to God, I beg of you, as with all my affection, I ask God to be the heart of your heart. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

217. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The house to which Madame Goussault was referring is not the one I mentioned to you. The first is more beautiful and is priced at forty or fifty thousand livres; the second costs about seven or eight. The first one would be scandalous for poor girls and the second is too far from the Church. You will see. I find no difficulty in honoring the prudence as well as the simplicity of Our Lord but there is less harm in failing in the latter practice than in the former, especially for you.

I shall willingly do for your son as you request.

This is the young woman; take her on trial.

Do you have any money? An unexpected matter has come up for which we need fifteen hundred livres. If you have it, we shall return it to you in a short time; if you do not, please do not worry about it.

Good day, Mademoiselle, I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

218. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Shortly before May 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

I glanced over what you wrote me about M. Massé. Nevertheless, I have proposed him along with M. Caignet, M[adame] Gous[sault]'s confessor,² but I do not know whether either one will be chosen. One of those gentlemen suggested another man to me at the same time; I am talking about those gentlemen from Notre-Dame. This is confidential.³

I find your proposal concerning your son very good, provided you merely suggest it to him and leave him free to act as he sees fit.

We just have to give up those girls from Sucey. Nevertheless, the latter and her mother wanted you to extend your kindness to the girl from La Retaux until Pentecost, not so much so that she might devote herself to your Charity, in which she will, nevertheless, do whatever work you ask of her; her wish is to learn something so as to become qualified in time to teach the children in Sucey. So please extend to her the kindness of trying it, Mademoiselle, and we shall see that you are given what you need for that purpose. I forgot to mention this matter yesterday to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.⁴

If you come with your Sisters next Tuesday morning, we shall go to La Chapelle, a village nearby on the way to Saint-Denis, but you will have to remind me about it on Monday evening.

God willing, I shall not regret what I have said to the Sisters! I think you had better go visit the ones at Saint-Paul. I would also like you to be able to see those in this parish.

I am, meanwhile, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Saturday at nine o'clock

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

219. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I beg you to forgive me for not seeing you before I went off to the country for four or five days. Your son has made a very good beginning. M. de Sergis took charge of him on his return from the country and is at his service during his retreat. He told me that he has ruled out a military career; that leaves the clerical state and the bar. He will weigh the two and try to make up his mind.

I wrote Madame Goussault, the President's wife, that I think you would be wise to go and see the house in La Chapelle and find out how much rent they want for it. That will give you a diversion as well. She feels, as I do, that the country air is good for you. Meanwhile, remain cheerful and take care of your health.

Please send news of us and our apologies to good Mademoiselle Viole² and tell her that I hope to see her on our return. Oh! how consoled and edified I am by that good woman!

I bid you good-day and am your servant.

V. D.

I saw that good young woman from Sedan; she is living in our faubourg. Mon Dieu! how weak and fickle she seems to me!

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

220. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[1636]¹

I do not know whether I wrote to you about the afflictions with which God has been pleased to visit our poor little company. M. Bourel² died during the mission in Mesnil, and did so in a holy manner, just as he had lived. Everyone says that no imperfection was ever remarked in him, not even by M. Boudet,³ his Novice Master.

221. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never seen a woman such as you for feeling so guilty about certain things. Your son's choice, you say, is a proof of God's dealing with you according to your deserts. Certainly you are wrong in yielding to those thoughts and even more so in expressing them. I have already asked you at other times not to talk that way anymore. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, correct yourself of this and realize, once and for all, that these bitter thoughts come from the evil one and that those of Our Lord are sweet and gentle.

Remember also that the faults of the children are not always imputed to the parents, especially when they have had them educated and have given them good example as you have done, thank God. In His admirable Providence, Our Lord allows holy fathers and mothers to suffer anguish from their own flesh and blood. Abraham suffered because of Ishmael, Isaac because of Esau, Jacob because of the majority of his sons, David because of Absalom, Solomon because of Rehoboam, and the Son of God because of Judas. By the grace of God you have not reached that point; rather, on the contrary, you have reason to praise God for what M. Holden has told you, because he told you the truth. Your son came to see M. de Sergis yesterday, went to confession to him, and told him that he is fully determined to serve God in the ecclesiastical state, and a few other things which greatly consoled me, but I do not remember right now what they were. So thank God for that and be very cheerful.

Yesterday Madame Goussault told me that she signed the contract for the house.² You will have to see us in order to decide whom you will take there. I think it very wise for you to put off that good young woman until then. I do not know the other one you mention, who is not at your house yet.

I doubt whether I shall be able to come to your neighborhood on Sunday, and whether, when I do, I should speak to you in the chapel which is such an unhealthy place. We shall have to try to meet at Madame Goussault's home, although, however, it seems advisable for me to see you privately before then.

Courage, I wish you the peace of Our Lord and am your servant.

V. D.

We must also postpone the proposal concerning your house.³ I remember what you said about subletting it by private agreement.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

222. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1635 and 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall have an outline made of the subjects of meditation, the exercises, and the order of the day and send it to you.

You will have to have the visits in the parishes² stopped during this period³ and have them taken up again, if that young woman has the time, after it has passed. Do not let her do anything during this time. A slight fever I have will prevent me from hearing the good young woman. I shall send you someone for that purpose, if you notify me the evening before.

You certainly may write to me about your son. He was at the Bons-Enfants not long ago. I sent word to M. Pillé to have him leave calmly but promptly because M. Doignon's man had a mishap there.⁴

You were wise to send that good young woman in place of the sick one.

I am about to celebrate Holy Mass and shall pray for you and your good intentions. I commend myself likewise to your prayers and am your most humble servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

223. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It is true, I am leaving this morning for Pontoise and Beauvais, but I can well assure you that it is with regret at not having seen you or your new home. You would be much more useful in Beauvais than I and I shall give the ladies of the Charity the hope that you will be coming there, for I am not planning on assembling them.

The reason for my trip is without a justification which satisfies me; I am going to visit the Ursulines.² O Mademoiselle, how this annoys me and seems like time wasted for a man who owes all of it to the poor! But what can I do! For at least eight months the Bishop of Beauvais³ has been urging me to do this. Because I have put it off so long, he no longer comes here when going back and forth as he used to do, nor does Monsieur Messier⁴ write to me. That leaves only the Sisters,⁵ from whom I received just two letters last week concerning this matter. Let us change the subject and say: Mon Dieu! Mademoiselle, how worried I am at seeing you go for such a long time without getting out to get some air and working continuously as you do at the Hôtel-Dieu!

I have not seen the superioress of Saint-Sauveur⁶ with regard to getting the reply for Marie.⁷ However, could you not go to Grigny⁸ for a week or so and leave Marie in charge of the Sisters? She is exact and serious enough for that. Do this during my absence, please. I shall tell Madame Goussault, who is coming to Pontoise, to pick you up. Mademoiselle Poulaillon can also look after your Sisters sometimes.

If this is agreeable, it would be well for you and the President's wife⁹ to go and visit the Charity in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges in order to encourage them and to reverse the decision Madame Guérin had them make, after my departure, of not going to visit the sick when there is only one patient. Her reason is that she cannot understand how a good broth can be made with five ounces of meat. That good lady is clever and haughty in her words, and is meddling in this matter, even though she is not a member.

If, in passing through Grigny, you wanted to pick up the things you bought for that place at the Bons-Enfants, it would be well. No, rather, tell the treasurer to give someone charge of picking them up; that should be done by the boatman.

I am returning the Sisters' rules to you. They are so [good]¹⁰ that I did not want to add anything. Read them to the Sisters soon then, unless you think I should be there, in which case, I promise you that it will be one of the first things I do on my return, God willing. It would be well for the Sisters in that parish¹¹ to be present at the same time, so that they may be uniform.

Well now, I conclude by begging you to honor the peace and tranquillity of Our Lord's soul and I commend myself to your prayers being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

I am not saying anything to you about Madame de Liancourt, except that, if she takes you just for a week or so, do as you like; but since important people never know what is going to happen to them, if she has not seen you, you would be wise to take the opportunity of going to Grigny.

224. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

I am sending this messenger purposely to get news of you, in the hope that what he brings back will be good. In the name of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, do all you can to this end. You have reason to complain that I did not answer the letter you wrote me on your departure for Gournay.¹ But what can you expect? That is one of my customary faults. I hope Our Lord will grant me the grace of improving in this regard, if you will be so good as to forgive me.

Now then, let us talk about your ailment. Do you need a doctor? If so, let me know and I shall send you someone. You have one in Senlis, a very skillful man; he is the Kings's doctor and often goes to Liancourt because of the trust that His Grace and Madame de Liancourt place in him, and rightly so. Do not spare anything to get him, nor to have yourself taken care of well. Perhaps you did not take enough money with you. If that is the case, let me know and I shall send you some.

Your son spent a day here during these holidays and he went to be purged at the Bons-Enfants. He is very well, thank God. Madame Goussault has gone to Grigny and from there to visit some of the Charities recently established near Etampes.

Your Sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu are doing fine. Only Henriette² is still unwell. Marie says it is because of your absence. That has prevented her from going to Saint-Nicolas and Barbe³ to Saint-Sulpice.⁴ Isabelle⁵ is feeling better. The only thing wrong is that Mademoiselle Viole's girl, whom they placed with her, is scandalizing them because of the way she behaves with some young men who come to see her; her mistress dismissed her on account of them. She is that girl from Normandy on whose account you wrote to Mademoiselle Viole to ask Madame Goussault to take care of her; she has a troublesome and dangerous disposition. I sent for her yesterday to tell her not to bring young men into the house, but she did not take it well and told me she would rather leave. We must remain at peace after we have done all we can in such cases.

So much for the news that concerns you. But now let us ask you: when are you coming back? O Mon Dieu! I almost forgot to tell you about Madame Mussot. I am expecting her this morning to find out when she is really going to leave.

Madame de Liancourt sent word that she would come to see me,⁶ but I have found out, since I wrote the above, that there has been a misunderstanding. Since in my present difficulty I cannot undertake such a long trip, I am going to write and ask her to pass by here on her return. Madame Mussot assured me yesterday that she was leaving at the end of this week. The Prior is talking about going with her and becoming one of the Liancourt chaplains, together with another priest.⁷

Yesterday, because I was being hard pressed by Madame de Combalet⁸ to send her the Sister, and since it was for her, I spoke to Marie Denyse about it. She seemed to me better suited for the situation, but she gave me an answer worthy of a girl with a vocation from God to the Charity, which was that she had left her father and mother to give herself to the service of the poor for the love of God, and she begged me to excuse her if she could not change her intention in order to go and serve that great lady. After that, I spoke to Barbe, the older one,⁹ without telling her for whom or why, and sent her to wait for me at Madame de Combalet's house. There I told her that this good lady would employ her part-time in her service and part-time with the poor of the parish. She began to cry, but since she consented, I placed her in the hands of one of the ladies-in-waiting of that great lady. However, I was quite astonished when immediately afterwards she returned to Abbè de Loyac's¹⁰ house where I was, just opposite. She told me that she was startled to see such a grand court, that she could not live there, and begged me to take her away. She said that Our Lord had given her to the poor and she entreated me to send her back to them. It really astounded the Abbè to see such contempt for the grandeur of the world, and made me tell that fine Sister to go back to the lady's house and that, if she did not feel comfortable there, she might return to Saint-Nicolas in four or five days.

What do you think of that, Mademoiselle? Are you not delighted to see the strength of the spirit of God in those two poor young women and the contempt that He has given them for the world and its greatness? You could not believe the ardor that this has given me for the Charity, nor the desire I have for you to return soon and in good health so as to work at it in good earnest. Do all you can, therefore, to stay well, Mademoiselle, I beg of you, and bring along those good young women if you think they have a vocation and aptitude.

Well now, I conclude by begging God to restore you to perfect health, for which I hope from His goodness. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Tuesday morning, May 27, 1636

Yesterday I saw your Sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu; they are doing well. If you need my service, I shall leave everything and come; but I truly hope that you can do without it.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

225. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR IN TOUL

June 13, 1636

Urged by Charles-Chrétien de Gournay, the Bishop of Toul, to authorize priests from the house in that town to hear the confessions of the Dominican nuns who were having difficulty finding confessors because of the disturbances in Lorraine, Vincent de Paul begs the Superior of the establishment to go and cast himself at the feet of the prelate to make him understand how much this service is contrary to the ends of the Company.

226. - JEAN-JACQUES OLIER TO SAINT VINCENT

AND THE PRIESTS OF THE TUESDAY CONFERENCES

He who has God, has everything.

Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Gentlemen,

I cannot be absent from your company any longer without giving you the account I am obliged to give of my actions. Let me tell you, Gentlemen, that we spent eleven days en route to Saint-Ipize,¹ where we were to give the mission. The favor of Heaven was so great that during that time we never had two hours of sun or rain, but were always walking under the shelter of the clouds and, by the grace of God, we all arrived in good health.

We opened the mission the Sunday after the feast of the Ascension, and it lasted until the fifteenth of this month, the feast day of their Saint-Ipize. They wanted me to say good-bye in the evening in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. This was done with all reverence for the majesty of God Who was presiding, and also with so many tears and sighs that I think, Gentlemen, you would have had to be present to believe it. May God be blessed for everything!

Almost the same thing happened during the children's procession and at their Communion, which was carried out with all the reverence imaginable. The crowd then was so large, as it was on the other feast days as well, that we had to keep giving out wine in the church to the weak, one of whom had been ill for more than three weeks.

The people, at first, came as we would wish them to come, that is, as many as we could manage for confession, but they received this sacrament with such grace, Gentlemen, that on all sides it was easy to know where the priests were hearing confessions, because the penitents could be heard sighing and sobbing everywhere. May Jesus Christ be praised for all this!

However, towards the end, the people pressed upon us so eagerly and the crowd was so large, that sometimes (namely on all the feast days) we needed twelve or thirteen priests to respond to the ardor of their zeal. We would see them go from dawn to the midday heat, which was extraordinary, up to the last sermon, without eating or drinking.

Sometimes, on behalf of the outsiders, we had to give two hours or more of catechism, from which they emerged as eager as when they entered. This really overwhelmed us. We had to give the instruction from the pulpit since there was no room in the church and the area surrounding the cemetery was completely filled, the doorways blocked, and the windows jammed with people. The same thing would happen at the morning sermon and at the one in the evening, called the senior catechism.

After this I can say nothing except: Benedictus Deus! Benedictus Deus! He communicates so freely with His creatures but especially with his poor. For we have remarked, Gentlemen, that this is where He dwells, and asks the assistance of His creatures in completing that which He is not accustomed to carry out alone, namely, the instruction and total conversion of His people.

Gentlemen, do not refuse Jesus this assistance. The glory of working for Him, of contributing to the salvation of souls and to the glory He will necessarily draw from this throughout eternity is too great. You began auspiciously and your early examples drove me from Paris. Continue this divine work because there is truly nothing like it on earth.

Paris, Paris, you are detaining people who might be converting a number of worlds! Alas! how many good works without fruit, how many false conversions and holy sermons lost for want of the dispositions that God is pouring out elsewhere! Here, one word is a sermon and nothing seems useless to us. Here, the prophets have not been murdered; I mean that their preaching has not been despised as in the cities. That is why, Gentlemen, all these poor people with so little education can be seen filled with the blessings and graces of God. That is what I can hope for, since I am, Gentlemen, in His love, your most humble, most obedient and grateful confrere.

OLIER

Vieille-Brioude,² feast of Saint John,³ 1636

227. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for all you tell me about Madame Turgis.² I shall be able to come and hear her confession Saturday after dinner, God willing. Please give her the meditations on the birth and life of Our Lord between now and that time. Then continue with the Passion and some of the apparitions, and do not forget to give her [the]³ holy Beatitudes two or three times. If you cannot give her all of these, give her the ones that can be done [within]⁴ the time she is to be in her retreat.

I would not know what to tell you about those girls from Saint-Victor [or about]⁵ M[other] Gabrielle,⁶ except that I am begging God to remedy the whole situation.

I do not know if I shall be able to see that good young woman who they tell me is coming to introduce herself. I shall do so, if I can; if not, I beg you to excuse me and to remember me in your prayers. I also recommend to you the Mother Superior of Sainte-Marie in the city;⁷ she is very ill.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Thursday, at ten o'clock

228. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I find quite appropriate all that you tell me about the service of the poor, the Hôtel-Dieu, the room,² and Mademoiselle Violle; also about discussing with you at length some means of establishing perfect charity among your Sisters.

As for Madame Turgis, it will be well first of all for you to ask her to see fit to observe everything the Sisters do, to do as they do, and for you to treat her like one of them. Have her also make a novitiate of a few months: 1) both to honor the childhood of Our Lord; 2) and to give an example to these Sisters of behaving properly and to those who come hereafter, of whatever social class they may be, of acting in like manner, so that in the end the Sisters may have greater respect for her when she is given some direction³ over them. With this end in view, let her take whatever place is available among the Sisters at table. That is how Our Lord willed to adapt Himself to the poor in order to give us the example of doing likewise.

If possible, I shall come early on Saturday to hear your Sisters' confessions so as to get them into the habit of going to confession, which I have mentioned to you.

Good-day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

229. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634¹ and 1639²]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So our very dear Sister is about to depart. Blessed be God for willing to free her from so many sufferings and to reward her for all the services she has rendered Him! A little indisposition I have prevents me from coming to say a final adieu to her; I shall do so from the altar, where I hope to see her more perfectly in Our Lord than at your house.

Having considered and reconsidered your suggestion about the disposition of her body, I think it inadvisable to bury her here;³ I shall tell you why. Honor in this the difference between the sepulchres of Our Lord and the holy Virgin, and please be consoled in your submission to the adorable good pleasure of God. I admit that this is easy to say but the tears of Our Lord over Lazarus prove how difficult it is. If you weep, let it be little; but after that, be strong. I sometimes admire the unshaken composure of good religious men and women upon the death of their own. Oh! would that we be given a share in the holy Virgin's dispositions at the death of her Son! I am going to ask a share in them for you at the holy altar.

If her condition is such that the Little Company can be recommended to her prayers, I beg you to do so--I mean the Sisters' Company and our own insignificant one, myself especially, who am more in need of her prayers. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

230. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1634 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I really feel sorry that I cannot come to see you because of the people we have here and others whom I am expecting. I beg you to excuse me and not to give way to your grief. This is the good pleasure of God, Whom you love so much. O Dieu! what better motive is there than God's pleasure! And what better motive yet again than the thought that this good Sister is now enjoying the happiness of His glory! Concentrate on these thoughts, Mademoiselle, and do not depart from them, I beg of you.

I shall send you four priests to assist at the funeral and shall try to see Madame Goussault and to tell her the news in the way you pointed out to me. I hope, God willing, to come to see you tomorrow morning. You would give me great consolation if you would consent to rest in bed these two days.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

231. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

Here I am back again in better health, thank God; but here we are in the midst of the weapons being distributed in the house to the soldiers.² If someone brings those poor young women from Liancourt, I see no objection to your receiving them into your house for the time being, along

with that good widow--so you can train her. After that, Madame de Liancourt can place them somewhere else. That seems the better thing to me. What do you think?

I have no answer to your complaint about my journey and my stay in La Chapelle without seeing you, but I have recourse to your charity for the second time and hope that it will not wait for the third occasion to forgive me. I hope we shall have the honor of seeing you in two or three days. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

232. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN PEBRAC

Paris, August 15, 1636

Far from being advisable to recall Brother [Philippe]¹ here, if he were already here, he would have to be sent elsewhere, because Paris is expecting a siege by the Spaniards. They have entered Picardy and are pillaging it with a powerful army whose vanguard extends to within ten or twelve leagues from here. As a result, the people from the plains are fleeing to Paris and Paris is so terrified that many are running away to other cities. Nonetheless, the King is trying to assemble an army to fight that of the Spaniards because his own troops are either outside the kingdom or at its borders; and the place where the companies are being trained and armed is here in our house. The stables, woodshed, halls, and cloisters are full of weapons, and the courtyards filled with soldiers.

This feast of the Assumption is not exempt from the noisy commotion. The drum is beginning to roll already although it is only seven o'clock in the morning. It is in this way that, within the past week, they have been able to drill seventy-two companies here. Now, although this is the situation, our entire Little Company is continuing to make its retreat, with the exception of three or four men. They will be leaving to go and work in distant places, so that, if the siege does come, most of them will be free from the risk run in similar circumstances.

I am writing to the Abbot² that I shall be able to send him four or five priests from the Company and am asking him for alms for that purpose. I shall send another group to the Bishops of Arles and Cahors³ and hope to have them leave as soon as possible, before things get more unsettled. I have had orders from our Superior⁴ to act in this way and our friends approve of it. They could not be put to work in this area, which is in such turmoil at present. Now, make your decision and have that good brother decide from there whether it is advisable for him to return.

I agree with you and have always suspected that he is lazy by nature and is tempted by the demon of idleness; he may recall that I have told him so. I beg you to encourage him to resist, but do so with gentleness and persuasion and not with firmness as we are accustomed to do. Sick minds need to be cared for more delicately and charitably than people who are physically ill.

As for the aversion M. Le P. is exhibiting for the exercises of the Mission, you must honor the meekness, patience, and humility of Our Lord with regard to those who disliked His person and teaching, and act the same way He did.

233. - TO MONSIEUR DE SAINT-MARTIN¹

Monsieur,

I am sending you, through M. Touschard who is on his way to Dax, the little picture I asked Monsieur Brentel to paint for you.² The gift is of little consequence, but I hope you will consider it of some worth, coming from a person who has for such a long time been so obligated to your family. When you look at it, do not forget in your prayers the most humble of your servants.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 16, 1636

234. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I learned of your illness upon my return. It has saddened me. I am begging Our Lord to restore you to that perfect health which made me so happy the last time I saw you. Well, you are a daughter of the Cross. Oh! what a happiness! Please tell me if this slight relapse has you a little worried.

There is no good reason to keep yourself in that constant state of alarm. It is better for you to leave there.² That will not prevent you, if things calm down, from going back to where you are now in order to enjoy the good air. I do not fear the Spanish army but some incident similar to the one that has happened. I thank you, meanwhile, for the care you take of us and beg you to look after your own health, which I am asking God to send you, being, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

235. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN LUZARCHES¹

September 1, 1636

The Chancellor² wrote me the day before yesterday by special messenger to ask me to send twenty Missionaries to him in Senlis today or tomorrow. He said he would give us the instructions we would have to follow and that he would take care of us. I informed him that we could not supply him with such a large number of men, but rather twelve or fifteen, and that I would send someone to get his instructions and give them to the others. I plan to send M. du Coudray there the first thing tomorrow morning.³ Please write me immediately. I have been told that you are to move out tomorrow morning.

The enclosed will give you news of M. Lambert and how he acted with the Capuchin Fathers! Oh! how Christian that was and how I hope that everyone will act in the same way!

The fine people of Clichy are clamoring for their sons who are in your regiment. They are offering men or money to their captain, to whom I am writing about this. His name is M. Morin. I have made the same request to M. Piscot.

236. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[Between September and November 1636]¹

May God be glorified for the blessing He is bestowing upon your work! O Jésus! Monsieur, how great it seems to me! Just think! You personally have already procured the state of grace for three hundred soldiers who have received Holy Communion so devoutly--soldiers who are going off to death! Only one who knows the severity of God in hell or who knows the value of the blood of Jesus Christ shed for a soul can understand the grandeur of that good work. Although I have a poor realization of both one and the other, it nevertheless pleases His Goodness to grant me some small enlightenment and an infinite esteem for the good you have done for those three hundred penitents.

Last Tuesday, there were already nine hundred confessions heard in all the other army missions without counting yours, in addition to what has since been done. O Dieu! Monsieur, how far that is beyond my hopes! You must humble yourselves, praise God, continue with courage, and proceed, unless you have received some other order.

237. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Before 1645]¹

Monsieur,

Madame Traversay² asked me yesterday to notify you that the Ladies would assemble on Thursday--you know the place--and that the Chancellor's wife³ would also be there.

I was sorry I could not tell you about Father d'Attichy's⁴ proceedings during the visit he paid to the Duchesse⁵ concerning my son. He had been planning it for a very long time without my knowing anything about it. When I met him at the Carmelites, where the Comtesse de Maure⁶ had sent me on some business for her, he asked about the assets my son had and reproached me for not doing anything for him. And Madame de Maure also told me that I know Monsieur de

Noyers⁷ well enough to have already spoken to him. All I did was to write two days later to Father d'Attichy to tell him that the only maternal duty in which I was aware of having failed my son was in not having told him that my late husband had consumed everything, his time and his life, in the care of his family, entirely neglecting his own. In order to repair that fault, I was entreating him, since he was determined to exert himself on my son's behalf without my knowledge, to take the trouble to tell the above-mentioned lady that Monsieur de Noyers knew me because he had often seen me at the home of Monsieur de Marillac, the Keeper of the Seals.⁸ I also thought that you would give information about my son if anyone mentioned him to you.

Before God, that is all I have contributed to this affair. I most humbly entreat you to believe it. I would have done nothing had it not been for my meeting with those people--unexpected with regard to this matter--and my son did not even know about it. I entreat our good God to let you know His will concerning this affair and to make you realize that I would rather die than deceive you in any way, since I am, Monsieur your most grateful servant and most humble daughter.

L. DE MARILLAC

Tuesday

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

238. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1645]¹

I shall try to go the Sisters' room² on Thursday, with God's help. I do not know why you are examining what you have done for your son, as if it were not reasonable for a mother to procure the good of her child. Would to God that I were able to do it myself! His Goodness knows how wholeheartedly I would do so, I who am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

239. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL

Paris, September 20, 1636

It is impossible for us to send you so soon the Missionaries you are expecting. The ones we had prepared have been ordered to accompany the regiments that were in Luzarches, Pont,¹ Saint-Leu² and La Chapelle-Orly,³ and to live in camp with them within the army. Four thousand soldiers have already gone to Confession with much shedding of tears. I hope that God will have mercy on many through this humble assistance and that perhaps it will do no harm to the success of the King's armies.

240. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT, IN ANGERS

Madame,

Thanks be to God for the blessing He has given your mission and for your having to come back because that chance incident occurred! You will not be lacking work in these parts. Here is a job for you to do along the way: stop in at Estival,¹ that abbey about which you wrote, telling me that the abbess is on bad terms with her religious and her mother. Try to bring her to an amicable settlement. There is a priest who is leading her astray and thus causing her to get along badly with her mother. It would be desirable for her to be out of there through some exchange of posts from her abbey to another. People are ruined by lawsuits and proceeding with them would make the reform impossible. This exchange is not for you to suggest, unless she mentions it to you--just the settlement. If you could actually prevail upon her to go through with it, that would be a good deed. Madame Borrain, her aunt, spoke to me about the affair with much feeling, but you must not mention this.

I conclude, awaiting you with great affection. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, September 20, 1636
Addressed: The wife of President Goussault, in Angers

241. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Jesus Christ Our Lord be with you forever!

The President's wife, Madame Goussault, has not been in Beauvais. She has been back in Neufchâtel² and I think that she is now in Groslet³ with her mother, so that she would not be able to do what you wish with regard to Liancourt. I am ashamed that we have not yet drawn up the rules for that place. We have to work on them, with the help of God.

As for the Saint-Nicolas house,⁴ I beg of you to be patient and to pay the entire rent from the common fund; you may perhaps need it for your Sisters.

What shall I say to you about that good young woman who is with M. Lhoste,⁵ except that it is a fine act of charity. However, we must be careful not to make a practice of it. Would it not be better, since you are bound to it, to put Jeanne there along with that poor Suzanne? Two would survive better together and perhaps it will do them no harm.

I sent my apologies to Madame de Ligin,⁶ who is feeling better; so am I, thank God. And you, Mademoiselle, what was that little relapse you had? Oh! how true it is, Mademoiselle, that the world is full of misery! Courage! We must put up both with our own and with that of others as long as God pleases. Alas! good Madame Mesnard!⁷ O Dieu, how happy I believe her to be and how I beg her with all my heart to pray to God for me! Surely I can hope for this from her goodness. I beseech your heart not to be saddened on her account nor on any other, except from the pure love of God.

I am, in this same love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

242. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

There is no possibility of your making your little retreat right now. Get well first and then we shall see. Make your Jubilee,² however, but do not fast; you are ill. The pastor will give you a dispensation. You can go to confession and, if you would like it to be since your last general confession and for me to be of service to you in that regard, I do not plan to leave on a little seven or eight day trip until next week.

I have sent Jeanne de But away. I am really afraid, like you, that there is something wrong. If that were not the case, they would not have left her such a long time without sending her to visit or without letting me [know] about it. We have to make amends to her for a little while.

Madame Goussault is supposed to come back as soon as she can.. Your son talked to me last Saturday about the place where he is to study. I refused to approve distant universities for him, to which he acquiesced quite willingly because I think it corresponded to his own opinion or because you had told him that it corresponded to yours.

I saw Monsieur de Liancourt last night.

Get well and take good care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

243. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS

Monsieur du Coudray has sent me word that only one member of the Company need go to the army on horseback, with a servant, in order to be with M. Lambert in the cavalry. M. Grenu thinks that God could make use of you in this way. Please do this, Monsieur and, as soon as you get this message, leave with Brother Alexandre¹ whom I am sending you. He is bringing you some old clothes which I was told you would need. Take M. Callon's mule or our own and

take along with you the one hundred livres I told them to give you. The good God, who has ordinarily provided you with everything at the right moment, will not abandon you on this occasion. In the vanguard of the cavalry you will find M. Moulan, whom you know. He will give you good advice.

When you meet Monsieur Grenu, defer to him, speak to him about getting M. d'Argenson's² instructions, and give him the enclosed. He is living with the said Sieur d'Argenson and has about fifty livres; however, if he needs more money, give it to him and I shall send you more.

Well now, Monsieur, here you are then, called by Providence to an act of charity greater than any other, since it is a matter of assisting your neighbor in dire need. You can see how fortunate you are that Providence had you in mind for this work, and the blessing you may hope for therein. Go therefore, in nomine Domini, in the spirit in which Saint Francis Xavier went to India, and you will win, like him, the crown Jesus Christ has merited for you by His Precious Blood, and which He will give you if you honor His charity, zeal, mortification, and humility.

I embrace you wholeheartedly with what affection you can imagine. Take some linen for yourself and for M. Grenu from what is in Pont;³ it had been sent for the Company. Take also the Mass furnishings for yourself. I beseech Our Lord once again to be your consolation, your strength, your example, and your glory.

244. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN ROYE

Monsieur,

May the holy name of God be blessed, Monsieur, because His Providence detained you with the Chancellor¹ as a result of the idea he had of asking me to send someone to accompany him! O Monsieur, how adorable and admirable are the ways of God! Joseph was going to Egypt to undergo the miseries that accompany slavery and there he found his own happiness and that of his family. You were going off to war to endure its calamities and Our Lord engaged you in the service of the Chief Justice of the kingdom, one of the finest men alive. May it please Our Lord to have you find there a distaste for the things of the world through the greater knowledge you will acquire of their vanity. May you also be able to share this with us on your return, for it is certainly a good to be more esteemed than all the honors and possessions of earth! Stay there then, Monsieur, since you are not the one who put yourself there; it is plainly Providence which has arranged things in this way.

I do not quite understand what your position is, whether it is to act as his chaplain in the absence of M. Peleus or to assist the soldiers in his retinue. If it is the first, I have nothing to tell you regarding confession, Holy Mass or the saying of grace. You know what to do in the first two cases and will find out what is to be done in the third; except that, with regard to the first, what honest people tell us is sufficient without our seeking information, for, as a great man has said, *quod supra nos nihil ad nos*.²

There are a few ceremonies at the end of Mass when it is said in the presence of the great: one turns around and bows to them at the end of Mass after taking off the chasuble. I have seen our blessed Bishop of Geneva³ make this act of reverence to the General of the Galleys.⁴ Your status is far below that of this great and holy prelate. I think, moreover, that one brings them the corporal to kiss and goes to give them holy water after the Mass. I have never done this and know nothing about it, so make some inquiries. If you eat occasionally at the majordomo's table, always try, Monsieur, to have the least important place there. Majordomos never give up their place and in most localities noblemen precede chaplains at table, even in the residences of prelates.

I used to hold it as a maxim to consider the General in God and God in him, and to obey him as God, and his late wife as the Virgin, and not to put myself forward unless they called me or for some urgent and important matter.⁵ In the name of God, Monsieur, act in like manner. As for the servants, you must pay them great honor and treat them kindly, cordially, and most respectfully. Above all, you should say something to them about God now and then and take great care not to ask for information about the household or about the State.

If you are there in the second capacity, see if you can give a few catechetical instructions in the church on certain days of the week. Remember what Saint Francis Xavier used to do on the

ship during his voyage to the Indies. Try to imitate him and to do what you think before God he would do if he were in your place. Please take him as your special patron.

The pastor in the town⁶ is the one you visited at the Bons-Enfants. Write to Monsieur Grenu often to comfort him and send him about six écus. Let me know what you need and how you are getting along and I will provide for you with the help of God whom I am entreating to give you a share in His Son's humility and zeal for souls. You know the Chancellor's instructions with regard to the sick. Remember that you have never been more in need than right now.

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

September 29, 1636

It has occurred to me to send you also these two proverbs on the back of this letter; with regard to the master: *ut in igne sit cum principe*;⁷ and with regard to the servant: *nimia familiaritas parit contemptum*.⁸

Addressed: Monsieur de Sergis, priest of the Mission, in Roye

245. - ROBERT DE SERGIS

October 19, 1636

I was consoled at receiving a letter from you and likewise distressed, seeing the danger in which you feel yourself to be. In the name of God, Monsieur, take every precaution your work will allow, trusting that He Who from all eternity has chosen you to assist the poor in that area will preserve you as the apple of His eye insofar as His glory and your welfare require it. After that, who would want to live or claim anything on this earth? Who, conscious of conflicting feelings within himself, would not mortify them, realizing that our days are numbered and that we cannot add a moment of life to the last one God has determined for us? That being so, Monsieur, let us abandon ourselves to Divine Providence. It will know quite well how to procure what we need.

Speaking of Providence, are you not aware that It takes such care of you that It seems to be concerned about you in a special way? If that were not the case, why would It have chosen you from among so many holy souls in the army to give you one of the greatest employments for the glory of God and the good of the poor? We are lost in admiration, every one of us, at seeing how Providence thinks of your concerns and provides for all that you need. Please let all of this be then a motive for entrusting yourself to It entirely.

You say that the almsgiving is falling off! Oh! how that message grieves me! Grace is necessary to begin and we need more to persevere to the end. Let us beg God to give it to those who are obliged to meet so many needs. M. Desclaux,¹ the Cardinal's² confessor, can be a big help in that regard and is most benevolent in such matters. If you see him, please remember us to him and assure him of our obedience.

246. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think that you would do well, Mademoiselle, to see Madame Fieubet,¹ if she is in the group at the Hôtel-Dieu, and tell her what you told me. I am really afraid that the Sisters are a little to blame, at least indirectly. We must give our attention mainly to the poor villages, because as far as the towns are concerned, it will never be any different. We are deluding ourselves by dallying in them. I embrace and cherish these contradictions; and do not think that this is discouraging me--I mean the plans for the villages. I am in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

247. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A little dose of medicine that I took yesterday prevented me from sending you an answer. Today, then, I shall tell you that, if you take the trouble to come to your Sisters' room at Saint-Nicolas tomorrow after dinner, I shall have the happiness of seeing you there--in the event that I do not see you tomorrow morning at La Chapelle or do not send you word to the contrary. Therefore, borrow the carriage to come, if you need it. I shall let you know about that tomorrow, as early in the morning as I can. Please forgive me for speaking to you with such uncertainty; it is because of various circumstances which may come about at any moment.

I am worried about our poor Sister who is ill at Saint-Louis¹ and about what has become of the others, because they are not in their room. Please tell me what you know about them. We had a mishap almost like that at Saint-Lazare.² I still have not gone there to talk, without much ado, to a few people with whom I have business.

I just had the thought that, if you could come tomorrow around nine o'clock to your Sisters' room at Saint-Nicolas, I could see you and you could have dinner there.

In the meantime, I wish you a good day and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Collège des Bons-Enfants, October 21, 1636

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

248. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

November 2, 1636

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing to you from Fréneville on my return from Orléans. I received your letter at the house that Madame de Herse, the President's wife, gave us. It consoled me more than I can say when I read about the decision that you told me your son has made. May God be forever blessed for giving you this consolation and for giving it to me also. I was dreading in every way any other station in life for him! Let him study theology then; that is fine. I pray God to give him a share in the zeal for saving souls that He has given to his mother and in the grace He has imparted to her for that purpose, poor and weak as she is. I thank Our Lord, moreover, for having preserved for you your good Sister who was ill at Saint-Louis. You would not believe, Mademoiselle, how relieved I am.

What shall I say about M. Drouard's¹ suggestion? I certainly think that it is full of piety and that it is to be hoped it will succeed, if there are any priests to be found who have such zeal. As for the funds they need for their support, I am sure the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity will agree that what they need be taken from what little there is, while awaiting the Ladies' meeting. Please mention this² to Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I may perhaps stop by Grigny in two or three days, if I go a little out of my way. If she is there, I shall speak to her about it.

In the meantime, I conclude with a heartfelt desire that you stay well. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

With the help of God, I hope to be in Paris in eight to ten days.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

249. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN AMIENS

November 1636

All our sick men are over the fever and no mishap has occurred here since, by the grace of God. Everyone is well in the four places where missions are being given and here also, so it would seem that Our Lord will take pity on this Little Company through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. With that end in view, we have sent M. Boudet to pay a visit to her at Chartres. However, everything is in the order of Providence which perhaps will see fit to dispose of things otherwise. May His Holy Name be blessed! He is the Master and does all for the best. Let us leave the care of everything to Him.¹

I wanted to tell you this before anything else, because I think it is the news that will please you most. I confess that what you say in your letter has made me see clearly how much you have taken this mishap to heart. It seems to me I have never been more aware of the deep roots that charity towards the members of the Community has implanted in you than on this occasion, and I cannot tell you how much that has touched me.

Now then, may God be blessed for everything and for having willed to provide the cement that has bound you more closely to the Company and through it to Him. I thank Him with all my heart for the work He is giving you and for the manner in which I am convinced you are accomplishing it, especially for the way you are handling the affair of those good religious to be reformed. They can indeed be reformed through the council and the order the Cardinal² has established for that purpose in Paris. Let me say just this much to you about that. In such cases, we must be satisfied with suggesting the good to be done to those on whom it depends without persuading ourselves that, because we have undertaken it, we have to make it succeed. The good angels are satisfied with offering suggestions and leaving the rest to be done by God and by the individuals entrusted to them.

I greet M. Grenu and you as well with all the tenderness in my power. . . .

250. - TO SAINT LOUISE

How are you, Mademoiselle, after your difficulty this morning? Would you like to send someone to visit your son? If so, I shall send you a man this evening. Just let me know your wish, please, and be as lighthearted as you can in union with the cheerfulness of the Blessed Virgin in similar circumstances.

Your son is well, I hope, and I am your servant. I shall come to see you if this messenger does not tell me that you are fine.

Adieu, then, Mademoiselle. Be very cheerful in Our Lord.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

251. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Wednesday morning [1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So now, that good young woman has left without saying a word. Blessed be God! Oh! what a noble crown she is losing! We shall have to replace her. What do you think, Mademoiselle, of taking Sister Geneviève from the Hôtel-Dieu for that work, and of putting in her place Madame Pelletier² or Madame Turgis. We need someone who is respected in that spot because of the meetings that take place there on the children's³ behalf and the necessity of welcoming the ladies. I think the first, Madame Pelletier, would be more appropriate in the duty, first of all because she will be highly suited for both tasks, and also because that is Madame Turgis' neighborhood, which might be a temptation for her. If that is agreeable to you, I beg you to tell Madame Pelletier about it for me and that I, along with you, am asking her to render this service to God in that place.

I would have come to see you, were it not for a slight indisposition I have. If I can do so, I shall come to visit you after dinner. Waste no time in any case, and convey the decision to Madame Pelletier so that she can go as soon as possible to render service to God in that area. The members of the Charity are fortunate enough to resemble Our Lord by going, like Him, now to one place, now to another, to assist their neighbor. O Mademoiselle, what a happiness to have this conformity with the Son of God, and what a blessed sign of their predestination the Daughters of Charity possess in this! May Our Lord be pleased to grant to all of them the dispositions they need for it! I hope for this from His goodness and I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

252. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since you have brought your ladies to accept the loss of Geneviève, please send her then; but as for going on foot, indisposed as she is, it is to be feared that she might pick up some illness. That is why I think it advisable to have her go in the Senlis coach, which leaves tomorrow, or in the Clermont cart.² If she takes the Senlis coach, she can go from there to Verneuil,³ which is the direct route, and from there to Liancourt; she will have to walk three leagues. If she takes the Clermont cart, she can have them let her off across from Liancourt. I am sending you an écu for that purpose, and I beg you to nourish yourself well with all your own wealth because, in truth, I am convinced that your indispositions occur only from lack of food. Please do as I ask then, for the love of God.

As for those young women, I do not know what to say about them, because I have not seen them. I shall make good Marie⁴ understand the importance of preferring those who are most suitable, and I shall communicate to Mademoiselle de la Bistrade, when she returns from Burgundy, the way you are testing their ladies, provided you will forgive me for not having been able to work on our rule for Liancourt. I shall do so at the first opportunity in accordance with your report.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

253. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

That good little Marie from Péronne indicates that she would rather belong to the Charity than go to serve that good lady. She is supposed to come and see me tomorrow morning or the day after. If she perseveres and you trust that she will do well there, keep her, if you see fit.

People are only paying eight to ten sous for the grinding of a sétier of wheat.² When you notify me, I shall send you the man who has charge of the mills here in the house.

If your son has no difficulty defending theses on general philosophy, there is no harm in letting him do so. That will oblige him to study harder and to gain more confidence in debate.³

The good use you must make of your health at present is to preserve and fortify it so as to be able to do something else in time, since those are the doctor's orders.

It would be well to have that good young woman, Isabelle,⁴ eat some eggs. Mon Dieu, how sorry I feel for that fine young woman! I send her my heartfelt greetings and intend to celebrate Holy Mass for her tomorrow with God's help.

Mon Dieu, how happy I would be to see you, were I not prevented by a certain difficulty!

Rumor has it that the Hôtel-Dieu brought about Madame de Ligin's death.⁵ There is. . . .⁶

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

253a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]

Mademoiselle,

May Jesus Christ, Who is our joy in heaven and our life, be with you forever!

May God be praised because He humbles and refreshes, because He has brought you so low and because you are now in a better state of mind. I earnestly beg Him to let you feel the joy in my heart with as much tenderness as I experienced because of your letter. Certainly, it is not that any thought came to me that Our Lord intended to dispose of you with this blow, because I could not have seen you in that state and not run to you, whatever might be the condition in which a slight tertian ague has placed me. May God be praised once again! I could not say that to you enough, or tenderly enough, to my liking.

You wish then to receive Holy Communion. Very well, do so, Mademoiselle, while I celebrate the Holy Sacrifice for you and your son. As for him, I think you would do well to allow him to give the sermon being suggested to him without worrying about presenting theses to people. Let him present them only to Our Lord and the holy Virgin and have him let me know the day and I shall come or send someone.

I am grateful to you for being reluctant to leave your Sisters in that condition. I see that it is also for them Our Lord is preserving you. Strengthen yourself then to raise them to the degree of virtue He asks of them and take some nourishment. The wife of the Keeper of the Seals told me a little while ago that you do not eat enough. You shall not be in want.

As for the good young woman who is asking to go to Liesse,¹ take care that you do not let her. O Jésus! Mademoiselle, she must be made to understand that the virtue of a Daughter of Charity does not consist in that!

The meeting has been postponed because the doctor wishes me to be bled tomorrow and then purged.

I wish you, meanwhile, the joy of Our Lord in the depth of your heart, and I am, in His love, more than I can express it, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

254. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

I really wish, Mademoiselle, that you could persuade that poor Nicole to go and stay at Saint-Benoît or somewhere else. If she agrees, you will have to write to Mademoiselle Viole to accept her. Yesterday I met the young woman from that parish;² she is asking for someone else. Oh! what a good deed you would be doing if you could manage that! But I think it inadvisable for us to proceed authoritatively; that would have unfortunate consequences. To speak to her, I cannot. I am about to begin the visitation at Sainte-Marie in the faubourg.³ I have been putting it off for two years.

As for Saint-Jacques, I will let you know. I believe that the young woman from Fréneville whom I had mentioned to you will not be coming. I shall do whatever Madame Goussault desires with regard to her daughter.⁴ If the work is going to begin at the Hôtel-Dieu and you are going there, I beg God to keep you in perfect health and to bless your work.

Madame Bourdin from Villepreux has written to me two or three times and has told me through her brother, the Capuchin, that she feels inclined towards the suggestion I offered her. I did not give her any written reply, but I told her brother that she must visit us and we must see her. Please give this matter a little thought, and take care of your health.

I am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Tuesday morning

255. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Our men have urged me to go to the country on account of my slight fever. I think it is a little green to be cured so soon. We shall see what Our Lord wants. I am both deeply sorry and ashamed for leaving without seeing you. Your usual charity will forgive me and you will please take care of your health for the love of Our Lord and the work He has entrusted to you.

Your Geneviève may be ill, and your other Sisters as well. Perhaps you should send her to Hersé.² I may go there before my return or shortly after, please God. She was saying that a little wine now and then would be good for them. However, I think it would be unwise for you to get her used to that.

As for Liancourt, I have given the rule to Monsieur de la Salle³ to be drawn up. It would be good for you to see that widow from Villepreux,⁴ if you have not already done so. Aside from that, I do not know whom to send you. Look into the matter. If Barbe⁵ were set to work at it,

she might possibly make a success of it. The only thing that upsets me is the change.⁶ Make use of her as Our Lord inspires you.

As for your son, if he wants to come here because no other place suits him better, arrange for it. And be very cheerful in Our Lord.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

256. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[December 1636]¹

Monsieur,

Madame de Beaufort has notified me that now is the best time to work at establishing the Charity at Saint-Etienne.² The Pastor greatly desires it, and he thought it advisable that she and another lady take up the collection for that purpose on these holy days, which they have done.

I most humbly entreat you, Monsieur, to take the trouble of letting me know how I am to proceed. I had thought of telling her, if you think it appropriate, that the ladies who are the most eager for this holy work should go to visit the Pastor and tell him that, in order to begin well and to persevere, they need a large number of people joined together for this holy work, both of high rank and of humble circumstances. Some will contribute more; others will devote themselves more willingly to visiting the sick poor, each on her own day. And so that no one be inconvenienced, they should see whether it would be useful to divide the parish into two sections. But, in order to work effectively, it would be necessary, first of all, to entreat the said Pastor to take the trouble of having a full report drawn up by some priest who knows his parishioners and, afterwards, to have a sermon given in his church for that purpose. At the end of the sermon, all the ladies named could be assembled and an announcement also made at the Mass, that anyone of any condition of life who would like to be a member could come to the meeting. At the meeting, the rule observed in the other parishes will be proposed.

I am sending you all this, Monsieur, in order to cut short the time. These good ladies have been trying for such a long time to get the courage for this, that I think we should strike while the iron is hot. But, please tell me anything else apart from what I am suggesting to you, because you are well aware that it must be done this way.

I most humbly thank you, Monsieur, for your kindness. The good God knows well that I needed the help. That is why He has provided me with the address of a dairymaid who has been supplying us with milk for three days now.

Here we are, near the end of the year. If God grants me life to begin the next, I greatly desire that it be of a kind that is fit for His service. Please say a few good words to me in that regard. Poor people are content with little, which little I shall regard as a great deal, since I have given myself to God through you, of whom I am, Monsieur, the most humble daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

Monsieur, all your Daughters take the liberty of [recommending] themselves to you.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

257. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT¹

[December 1636]²

My most honored and dear Father,

I entreat the divine Infant of Bethlehem to fill your soul abundantly with the graces and blessing of His holy Nativity. It is a long time since I have given myself the honor of writing to you. However, I have no fear of your forgetting me before God, and beg you to grant me one of your Masses, for I am extremely poor. This life would weigh heavily upon me, if I did not see in it the good pleasure of God, which is consolation enough for me. That is all I can tell you about myself, dear Father, not knowing what else to say.

Our dear Sister Superior in the faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris³ shared with me the advice you were pleased to give us concerning our union.⁴ It is good and sound, but still, in my heart, I have not been able to accept it. I say this to you with such frankness because your goodness has

given me the confidence to do so. Our spirit could not bear any authority over us except that of our prelates, or any secret from them. If we wish to have our minds at rest, we must deal with them in complete trust and simplicity. Otherwise, we shall no longer be daughters of our blessed Father,⁵ who left us this affection engraved on our hearts. Moreover, we possess a certain inclination and reverence that lead us to our superiors. This can only proceed from His grace and makes me hope for great blessings from that way of acting. That is why, most dear Father, seeing all the means of union proposed to us running counter in a certain sense to this authority, we could not accept any one of them. I trust that God will accomplish what cannot be done by means of formalities or by human prudence.

Up to the present, His Providence has directed and maintained us in perfect union and conformity. I hope that it will lead us to persevere in them by the same means. Our bond of holy charity will have more efficacy and strength in its meekness and holy liberty than in all the laws and obligations which could be prescribed. Such is my opinion, Reverend Father. It is in complete conformity with that in which our blessed Father left this life. Tell me whether I should not remain at peace in this respect.

I am writing to our Sisters about this matter, exhorting them, as best I can, to persevere in the path on which God has placed them, and to maintain their spirits in union and conformity hereafter through the same means they have practiced until now, which have kept them united and bound together. I am thinking, dear Father, only of preserving the memory of our communication, and of alerting the Superiors to be rather careful not to change or initiate anything in our institutions and customs, and to maintain holy union in every way they can with the other houses and especially with that of Annecy, the mother and mistress of all the others. By doing so, we shall conform in everything that it received from its holy founder as has been practiced up to now.⁶ If you find this profitable, most dear Father, you could tell our Sisters to carry it out.

But please tell me your opinion of our Sisters there. I found them very much to my liking when we passed that way. May God grant them the grace to walk along their path with sincerity and simplicity and to render you their most humble obedience according to this spirit. Be always a true father and protector for us, I beg you, and, through your paternal care, see to it that the wishes of the One Whom you honor in heaven are faithfully observed on earth by His daughters. That is the only good I wish for them; and for you, dearest Father, I wish the highest degree of holiness that can be acquired in this world.

Grant me the honor of considering me always (for such I am forever) your most humble. . . .

258. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

May God bless you, Mademoiselle, for having gone to station your Sisters at the Hôtel-Dieu and for all that has ensued!¹ But, in the name of God, take care of yourself. You see the need people have of your weakness and what would become of your work without you.

I thank Our Lord, moreover, for the blessing He is granting your Sisters of being so good and generous. It seems that His goodness is making up for what you say are your deficiencies in their regard. I do not know any here who are suitable. I shall find out whether two or three young women--or any one of them--who are two leagues from here and who have been living in a most exemplary way for about a year or so, would like to dedicate themselves to that way of life.

As for what you tell me about your son, I think that you should not pay any attention at all to the suggestion about his leaving Paris. It is unimaginable how many incurable vices are contracted there by most of those who do so, unless the parents themselves send them for some special motive, as for the sake of a Jesuit relative or a doctor in the area. You must try gently and patiently to have him spend his time and do his studies industriously. However, I submit what I am telling you to your better judgment.

I beg you to take care of your health, being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Fréneville, December 30, 1636

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

259. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL

(Now 290a.)

260. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Friday, five o'clock [Around 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

Please let me know if you have any Sisters so that you may send two of them to the Pastor of Saint-Germain.² He wants them for his parish and earnestly requests that he may have them as soon as possible. I entreat Our Lord to send you some very good ones.

VINCENT DEPAUL

260a. - M. COLOMBET TO SAINT VINCENT

[1637]¹

Jesus Mary

Monsieur,

Mlle Lamy considers it inappropriate to have two servants² at the beginning. It is sufficient for us to have one good one so as not to give cause for complaint to those who thought it would ruin the Charity, insofar as there are only five or six sick people at present. However, in a little while, when the matter is well settled, we shall add a companion according to your orders. If there were some way to have her right away, it would help us a great deal. Nevertheless, it would be better for us to wait so that we might have one who is very good.

If there is need to send someone to La Villette,³ please send this messenger and tell him what you want him to do.

I wish you a good day. I recommend myself to your prayers.

Next Sunday we shall have M. Pavillon preach a sermon concerning the Charity⁴ in order to let everyone know what it is and to put an end to the rumors. I beg you most humbly to recommend the matter earnestly to God, and to let me know whether you consider this sermon appropriate. I am, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

COLOMBET

260b. - TO SAINT LOUISE

The Pastor of Saint-Germain wrote me this letter.

I gave a note to that good young woman whom you sent to me for Mme Goussault.

Your son is doing well, and I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

260c. - JEAN-JACQUES OLIER TO SAINT VINCENT¹

February 10, 1637

Two weeks ago we held the fourth of our missions, during which more than two thousand general confessions were made although there were only six of us working, and towards the end, eight. We were overwhelmed by the people who arrived from six or eight leagues away in the country, notwithstanding the severity of the cold and the inconvenience of the place, which is a real desert. Those good people brought their provisions for three or four days and retired into the barns. There one could hear them conversing together about what they had heard at the sermon and the catechism instruction. And now, one can see the peasants and their wives giving the mission themselves to their families, and the shepherds and plowmen singing God's Commandments in the fields and questioning one another about what they learned during the

mission. In fact, the nobility, for whom it seemed we were not speaking, using so coarse a language as we were, after having discharged their duty in a Christian and exemplary manner, were not able to let us leave without bursting into tears.

Five Huguenots abjured their heresy during this last mission. Four of them who had been avoiding us earlier came themselves to seek us out. And that, Gentlemen, to teach us, as you have often taught me, that the conversion of souls is the work of grace. We often place an obstacle in its way by our own spirit. God always wishes to work either in nothingness or through nothingness, that is, in those and through those who recognize and acknowledge their powerlessness and uselessness.

261. - TO SISTER MARIE-EUPHROSINE TURPIN¹

My very dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The Commander² and our dear Mother Superior in the city³ have done me the honor of proposing to me the idea Our Lord gave them of your rendering useful service to God at the Madeleine. Having considered the matter in all its details, I shall just say I think they are right [to wish] that, after you have weighed the matter before God, you might feel some inclination for it. Here are the reasons that prompt me to this opinion.

First of all, the work itself is very holy. It consists in lending a hand to souls who are being lost, who are incessantly dishonoring God and filling up hell, in order to withdraw them from the mass of perdition and help them live according to God. In a word, it consists in acting as their second redeemer, leading them, as it were by the hand, into the glory Our Lord has acquired for them by His precious Blood, a work so great before God that He considered it worthy of His Son and the only one capable of drawing Him down to earth.

Secondly, this thought occurred to a great servant of His, to whom He gave the grace for your holy Order and for the Madeleine, and to our dear Mother,⁴ whom you know, although perhaps not as well as I do, both of whom esteem you and have a singular affection for you.

Thirdly, it seems to me that Our Lord has given you a sufficient share in His spirit for you to realize the importance of this work, to have a predilection for it, and to devote yourself to it effectively.

Fourthly, I think that the work of your vocation there, as you described it to me, does not seem so important to the glory of God as the work here.

I am putting down for you only these four reasons why you should pay great attention to this proposal, although I could give you many others.

Now, I understand, I think, the contrary reasons which may make you question whether God wishes this:

Firstly, it is your Superior⁵ who is sending you to another who is requesting you. To that I reply that you are a daughter of this house⁶ and not of the faubourg, although you reside there. This house has the right, it seems to me, to recall you in its need. When an obedience from your Superior intervenes, you are obliged to come back. In the second place, the good Mother of the faubourg has told the Commander that she approved; that she would write to you about it herself--which she is doing; and that, although you are being asked for there, you are no less desired here.

Secondly, you will tell me that the work of the Madeleine seems unsuitable for the Sisters of Sainte-Marie, to which I shall reply that working for the salvation of souls is natural to the children of God. Since Our Lord judged the care of Mary Magdalen to be worthy of His goodness and that of the Blessed Virgin, there should be no question as to whether it is suitable for the Sisters of Sainte-Marie.

Thirdly, you will point out to me that maybe you are necessary in Angers. I shall respond that someone else will be provided who perhaps will not be less agreeable and useful there than you.

Fourthly, it will occur to you that perhaps you will not have enough intelligence to be of use in the direction of such a large and difficult house. My answer to that is that there will be two of you for the work, Our Lord and you, and with Him you can do all things.

Fifthly, your relatives will come to mind; perhaps they will not approve. But my reply is that we shall know how they feel before the duty is explained to you. Even though there may be some repugnance, I think you should rise above it as you did so generously with regard to your journey to Angers.

Sixthly, if the thought of the world's esteem were to choose to attack you, which I doubt, reply to it, dear Sister, that far from people's having esteemed Sainte-Marie less as an establishment, or the young women who are there to devote themselves to the care of the house, I have, on the contrary, never heard so much good about your holy Order or about the young women who are at the Madeleine, than I have since they have been taking care of those poor creatures. We should consider as honorable everything Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin did. Since both devoted themselves to the care of Mary Magdalen, you can honorably assist in the salvation of these girls in the sight of God and of the world.

Such, dear Sister, are the objections that I think flesh and blood, the world and the devil might put before you. The answers to them seem to me so reasonable and consonant with God's pleasure, that were I Sister Marie-Euphrosine and someone held for me the place I hold for you, and had as much charity for me as I have esteem and affection for you, I think I would bow my head and agree to this proposal. That, dear Sister, is what I hope you will do, unless Our Lord lets you know clearly that He wishes the contrary. In that case, I assent to whatever you do about it, as wholeheartedly as I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, dear Sister, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL
i.s.C.M.

I beg you to present our most humble regards to our dear Mother Superior of Orléans⁷ and to help me thank her for the charitable welcome she extended to me some time ago at her house. Paris, Eve of the feast of Saint Matthias,⁸ 1637

Addressed: Dear Sister Marie-Euphrosine Turpin, religious of Sainte-Marie

262. - TO SAINT LOUISE

February 24 [1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I most humbly beg your pardon for two things: first, for not having come to see you because of all the business I have; second, for not having the fireplace built for M. Le Gras, your son, through forgetfulness. See my wretchedness. If your heart did not have so much charity for me, where would I be? I hope you will forgive me. I have told Monsieur Soufliers to put him in a warm little room near one that M. Morennes,² one of the religious from this house, keeps heated. He will be able to get warm there.

Yesterday, I saw that good young woman about whom you wrote to me. I forgot to talk to her about her reading and sewing. She did not seem as rustic as the young woman who came with her. Please let me know what you said to them.

I told Mademoiselle Desbordes,³ the treasurer at Saint-Leu,⁴ that Barbe⁵ needs to have a companion, at least as long as there are so many people sick in that parish. You will have to reflect on whom you can give her, and remember the Incurables.⁶ Madame Fortia told Madame Goussault that they want the young women on condition that they be subject to you and can be changed.

I am sending the letter you misunderstood back to you. I promise to come and see you as soon as I can. Meanwhile, I bid you good day and am, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Feast of Saint Matthias

263. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

I am quite pleased about the retreat Madame de Liancourt wishes to make at your house. Mademoiselle Lamy wants to do the same. I would like her to meet Madame Goussault, the President's wife there.

264. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Madame Goussault, the President's wife, and Mademoiselle Lamy are coming to make their little retreat at your house. Please assist them in doing so. Give them the schedule I gave to you and indicate to them the subjects for their meditations. Listen to the account of their good thoughts, which they will make for you in one another's presence, and see that they have reading at table during their meals. Afterwards, they may entertain each other in a cheerful and modest way. The subject can be things that have happened to them during their retreat or that they have read in the Bible. If it is a nice day, they can go for a little walk after dinner. Except for these two times, they should observe silence.

It would be good for them to write down the principal perceptions they have had during meditation and for them to prepare their general confession for Wednesday. They can take their spiritual reading from the Imitation of Jesus Christ by Thomas a Kempis, stopping to reflect a short time on each sentence. They can take as well something from Granada relating to the subject of their meditation. They can also read a few chapters of the Gospels. But it would be well, on the day of their general confession, for you to give them the meditation from Granada's Mémorial, which is of a nature to excite contrition. For the rest, take care that they do not drive themselves too hard during these exercises. I beg Our Lord to give you His spirit for that purpose.

265. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am afraid that Madame Goussault may become ill from sleeping above the street.² I think I heard her say that she is indisposed when that happens. Furthermore, it is to be feared that her relatives, especially her mother, might take it amiss.

There is no hurry for your retreat. It has not been very long since you recovered from an illness. I would be afraid that it would be too soon to expose yourself to that work. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, let us go slowly.

I am really afraid that I cannot come to your house and I am sorry to give you the trouble of getting a carriage to come here. However, if you can come tomorrow around eight or nine o'clock, you will be most welcome. But, in the name of God, do not hurry.

As for those young women, I do not quite understand what you are telling me about them. We shall discuss the matter at our first meeting. At that time, please take the trouble of returning our rope. In the meantime, be cheerful and careful of your health. Remember that I am, in the love of Our Lord,³ your servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

266. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1642]¹

Mademoiselle,

It seems to me that you could not begin your retreat at a more suitable time. Most monks and nuns are making theirs right now. Please begin then tomorrow, Monday. Three half-quarters of an hour per day are sufficient for your mental prayer, half an hour for each meditation, two in the morning at eight and ten thirty, and another at four o'clock.²

I shall most gladly hear your confession in La Chapelle. Will you be able to get a carriage? If not, I shall try to go to Saint-Victor,³ but it will not be done without some difficulty because of

the place. End on Saturday evening; go to Mass every day. Have people told that you are busy, and put off those who need to see you until immediately after dinner and be brief. Go to Holy Communion next Thursday, drawing only on the subjects of meditation which the Bishop of Geneva⁴ puts at the beginning and the end of his Introduction.⁵ Divide them so that they will be sufficient for you and do all of them. You will be able to do some of them twice according to the attraction Our Lord may give you. Read the New Testament in addition to the other readings I suggested to you. Every other day, write to me briefly about what is taking place and about your disposition of body and spirit. Above all, try not to rush around, but do everything gently as you can imagine the good Bishop of Geneva did.

I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers, because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras,⁶ you put me in first place; not that I deserve it, but the knowledge you have of my need for prayers and the charity Our Lord has given you for me lead me to hope that you do so.

Adieu then, Mademoiselle. Take care of yourself in such a way during this retreat that you will allow us the possibility of advising you to make others.

I almost forgot to tell you not to overburden yourself with rules of devotion, but persist in doing well those you have, your daily actions, your work; in a word, let everything revolve around doing well what you are doing. And do not entertain either those thoughts of singularity that bothered you before. That is the evil spirit trying to mislead you.

Well now, I shall end here with the prayer I am offering to Our Lord that He Himself may be your guide during your retreat, and His holy Mother as well. I am, in their love, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

267. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

Mademoiselle,

May the devotion of Our Lord's disciples assembled to pray for the coming of the Holy Spirit be impressed on your heart forever!¹

I would have been quite happy to hear that good young woman from Saint-Benoît,² but how can I, considering the trip I have to make? Please assure her that I shall pray for her and recommend me to her prayers. I think it would be good for you to have her heard by an extraordinary confessor. M. Lambert or M. Soufliers could render her that service. If you send her to M. Lambert, M. Pillé could hear the confession of that good poor man from Picardy when one of the above-mentioned priests comes to hear her. May God return to you the charity you are doing her!

Isabelle³ would do well at Saint-Paul, but if that good priest has to bring the Pastor⁴ of Saint-Paul to understand what you are telling me, you must wait until I return. In any case, from what he told me, there is no hurry.

I am consoled by your charity for Marie, but please do not go and endanger yourself. Could not that good young woman Isabelle do what is necessary?

If the ordinands come to Saint-Lazare, M. de la Salle will be teaching the lesson and will be very busy; if not, he will be able to work on the establishment of the Charity in La Chapelle. In his absence, M. Lambert can give the sermon, unless you prefer to postpone it until Corpus Christi.

Govern and be quite cheerful. Be assured that everything you told me is temptation, and that I am within and without, now and for eternity, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Sunday evening, May 24, 1637

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

268. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around May 24, 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have just arrived and am about to leave for Pontoise, returning tomorrow evening and setting out again the next day for a place near Dourdan.² I hope to be back from there Thursday or Friday of next week. I commend myself, meanwhile, to your prayers.

You can recall Marie³ without saying anything about it to the Ladies. It would be wise to postpone the Saint-Paul matter. Please answer Madame Pelletier for both of us.

The pen is being taken out of my hand. Adieu, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

269. - TO ANTOINE COLEE, SUPERIOR, IN TOUL¹

1637

I have heard that your bread was not well made. Please have it done by a baker, if you can find one, for the most important thing is to have good bread. It would also be well to vary the food sometimes. . . to relieve the strain on poor nature which tires of seeing the same things all the time. You would also be wise to recommend cleanliness and neatness to the brothers, both with regard to the kitchen and to the refectory.

270. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[August 25, 1637]¹

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I just received your letter this minute. It gave me consolation because it allowed me to see the state of your health and of the mission. I thank God for both and for your willingness to add to your other good works that of welcoming M. Le Roux and Mademoiselle Le Gras. If the latter is able to come and see you, I think it will be time well spent. I shall write to her about it.

As for the office of bailiff, the Prior wants it for a nephew of his, who is a capable and upright man. You may believe that, if the matter were solely up to us, you could have anything you might want.²

M. Cuissot³ put something in his letter that makes me wonder whether the Missionaries are supplying their own food. Bon Dieu! Madame, could you have done this wrong to the Mission and could M. [Cuissot]⁴ have become negligent in that regard? I am writing to him and asking him, upon receiving my letter, to begin serving our ordinary fare. He is still new and I did not speak to him before his departure. The fault is all mine alone.

We have six or seven sick people here in the house, most of them with dysentery. Please speak to the good God about them.

I am, in His love, so long as you are quite cheerful, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, feast of Saint Louis

Addressed: Madame Goussault, the Presidents's wife.

271. - LASCARIS, GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER OF MALTA,¹

TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I was notified that the venerable Bailiff de Sillery had chosen you to assist him in making his tour of inspection of the churches and parishes dependent on the great priory. To that task you have already begun to devote effectively your care and toil for the instruction of those who were in dire need of it.² This impels me to express to you by these lines my most affectionate thanks and to ask you to continue this work, since it has no object other than the advancement of the glory of God and the honor and reputation of this Order.

With all my heart I beg the goodness of God to be pleased to reward your zeal and charity with His graces and blessings, and to give me the means of showing you how much I acknowledge myself your. . . .

Grand Master Lascaris of Malta
September 7, 1637

272. - TO CHARLES DE MONTCHAL, ARCHBISHOP OF TOULOUSE

(Now 344a.)

273. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

If you can give one of your Sisters to the Hôtel-Dieu in Henriette's² place, I think you will be doing her no small charity, for I feel that she cannot bear being denied that trip without becoming ill.³ If you do not have anyone to replace her in her absence, God's will seems to be that she wait, whatever may come of it. But I would be relieved, I think, if she could have this consolation.

Please excuse me for not having been able to see your Sisters. I shall do so at the first opportunity. You tell me nothing about your health. If you have only what you had before, I hope that it will bring you some benefit and that you will be completely cured. I have not been able either to look into that matter concerning the Duchesse de Liancourt.⁴ I shall do so this evening, which I hope will be a good one for you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday evening

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

274. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was very glad to hear from you and to learn that you are feeling better. I beg Our Lord to cure you completely and I ask you to do all you can with that end in view.

Madame Mussot told you the truth about Jeanne's mistress, but not about that good young woman, who was quite pleased with such an opportunity. Nevertheless, I think it would be wise for you to give good Madame Mussot that satisfaction with regard to Nicole and for you to take the opportunity of sending her, starting today.

But, mon Dieu, what shall we say about that poor Sister who has had a relapse? Nothing indeed, except that we must adore the all lovable Providence of God.

I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

I think you would be wise to act in the way you mentioned to me in your letter.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

275. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[November 1, 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very pleased with what you wrote to me about those good young women from Liancourt, especially about the one who knows how to make lace. She will be able to teach that to the poor

people and it will serve to draw them to spiritual things. Send them, therefore, whenever you wish.

I see no need at present for Madame Goussault to be with you when you speak to Madame Mussot or to that poor woman. If neither one profits from what you say to them, you can call her in, unless you are meeting at her house and send for them to come there. But that will cause a great deal of delay, I fear. However, if the gentleness of your spirit needs a dash of vinegar, borrow a little from Our Lord's spirit. O Mademoiselle, how well He knew how to find a bittersweet remark when it was needed!

I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

All Saint's Day, in the evening

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

276. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I can give you no reply concerning Madame de Liancourt's priests, except that I think she will not find any for the little she is offering; or, if she does, they will leave her when they find something better, unless good Monsieur Bourdoise will give her some of his men.² May God be pleased to preserve them in the style of life they now have, as I trust He shall because of His goodness. Nevertheless, in order to perpetuate the work, the income must be in securities. Otherwise, within fifty years, its fund will be reduced by half. The cost of things doubles at least every fifty years.

I think it would be wise for you to write to Madame Mussot again about that good woman, so that she can tell you how the matter was resolved. As for Henriette, I am waiting for Monsieur de Lamoignon³ so that I can talk to him about it; or else you will have done with it sooner by writing to Mademoiselle Desbordes and asking her to come and see you so that you can tell her about a matter you are reluctant to put into writing. I think it would be well for you to do this sooner rather than later, while the priest is still sick.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I saw your son yesterday. I think he is tending more to the ecclesiastical state. Please let me know if you told him what you wrote me concerning Mademoiselle Poulailon.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Last night, I found this letter that I thought I had sent to you; I wrote it three days ago. If I can do so soon, I shall have the happiness of seeing you in La Chapelle.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

277. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Monday morning, at the Bons-Enfants

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

Quite often, a number of places ask me for priests, but I know few whom I can give wholeheartedly, especially to Madame de Liancourt, because of the conditions she desires. If M. Bourdoise cannot give her any, I think she would do well to ask the Bishop of Beauvais² for some, but not the Bishop of Rouen³ for La Roche-Guyon.⁴ It is difficult to ask any bishop.

I am very sorry that I was unable to give you the time you wanted in La Chapelle, and that I shall again be unable to do so if you come to Paris on Wednesday, to the room your Sisters have at Saint-Nicolas. I am leaving this morning to go and visit Madame de Herse, the President's wife, twelve leagues from here. She is ill and is complaining about me. I shall not return perhaps for four or five days. When I get back, you can take a trip to the city, or I shall come to La Chapelle.

In the meantime, I commend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your. . . .

I praise God that you got out of that great difficulty so easily. Please take care of yourself for God's sake.

277a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was purged yesterday, which was the reason why I did not send you a reply, that and a little difficulty I had in the afternoon. I saw good Madame Goussault the day before yesterday. She was cheerful enough at the outset of her illness. I inquired about her yesterday and she sent word that she was not in great pain, but that they had bled her with her foot in water. I am going to see her in a little while.

Your indisposition prevents me from telling you that you would be doing her a charity by going to see her. I know very well that your presence would be a great consolation to her and do her good, but I am afraid you might fall ill if you went to see her. If you could stand the carriage without discomfort, fine! But, in the name of God, if you are ever so little indisposed, please do not go; it would upset her.

I am going to visit Madame de Marillac.² If she follows my advice, she will conclude the matter. It will be well suited to her piety to mortify herself in this satisfaction she desires. It will be a source of blessing in the affair on her son's³ side. That is what I plan to say to her. But please do not tell her how I feel, until I have seen her and told you the outcome of our interview today. The Bishop of Beauvais mentioned seeing the two of us together about it. We shall see.

Good day, Mademoiselle. Please recommend a matter to Our Lord. I am, in His love,
Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Sunday, at half past seven

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

278. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur du Coudray had nothing to say to you about your son, nor do I, except to find out whether he is pleased with his stay at the Bons-Enfants. The room above the door, which has a fireplace, is empty and the lady who takes care of guests asked me if we would be taking it for him. And what I am saying to you is said frankly. Let me know then what you wish. M. du Coudray was not asked to talk to you about this nor about anything else concerning him. Be assured that he is no trouble for us, but that I would be troubled if he were not satisfied with his accommodations and were to change them, unless it were for the better, which I do not believe to be the case.

A blind girl from Argenteuil,² who directs the Charity in that place, came to see me accompanied by a cousin of Barbe from Saint-Leu. She begged me to consent to her³ joining the religious order recently established there,⁴ but I held out firmly against it. Nevertheless, she went over my head. It was her trip to her brother's wedding that did it. Blessed be God! We must accept the order of His Providence and pray for the good young woman, that God may be pleased to grant her perseverance. And we must notify whomever you are sending in her place.

I really think you would do well to send Marie⁵ from Saint-Paul to Saint-Germain.⁶ In my opinion, we should not keep Nicole of Saint-Sauveur in any one place for very long. But whom will you have for Saint-Leu if Henriette is going off to Villers,⁷ as you tell me and as she asked me yesterday?

Today I am sending M. Benoît⁸ to see his good sister,⁹ whom I greet affectionately. I am a little concerned about that good young woman and about poor Madame Goussault, whom I saw last evening. Her fever persists and her stomach is bothering her. However, she was a little better than the day before, but they tell me that her condition changes frequently. They were to bleed

her in half an hour. I am not telling you to commend her to God; I am sure that you do not fail to do so. I told her that your indisposition was keeping you in bed. I beg you to stay there and not even to consider going to see her.

I am not worried about you, by the grace of God. I was thinking of coming to see you yesterday, but I was overwhelmed with company and would have had to break my appointment with two ladies in order to come to La Chapelle. However, I would be very happy to know your present state of health. Mine is better, thank God, and I am planning to go to the country as you advised. Our Tuesday meeting and M. de la Marguerie's¹⁰ retreat have prevented me from doing so up to now. Did you send me word that you would like to see me before then?

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

You could not go to Mass today without aggravating your illness. Please hear it from your bed, as the Introduction to the Devout Life teaches, and do so calmly, without protesting. Is it not at your house that Marie Bécu is ill?

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

279. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Please do not offer me any excuses for having sent your son to the collège;² you have every right to do so. I welcome him, trusting in Providence; and, should it prove necessary, please send him here to this house. It is all up to you and to him. I am very happy to see that he is worried about missing his classes. That is a step in the right direction.

I saw M. Holden yesterday. We talked a little about the spirit of martyrdom, but the next time it will be about charity which is so essential to an apostolic spirit.

If Brother Jean's sister³ is suitable, I think the poor boy will consider her fortunate to belong to the Charity. I shall discuss it with her and shall speak to your Sisters tomorrow afternoon here in our house. It would be difficult for me to go somewhere else.

If Barbe wants to enter a religious order, please invite her very calmly to make up her mind about it. She will soon tire of it, or the order of her.

As for that other young woman from the Hôtel-Dieu, it is better to dismiss her sooner rather than later. The longer you wait, the more commotion her exit will cause. Be well informed about the truth of the matter and make it clear to the others that she is not staying and that she has been quite happy to be sheltered for a time so as to enter a religious order. And if Barbe perseveres, let her thank her cousin and tell her, as she has told you, that she has given herself to God in the person of the poor. I have not been able to talk to Barbe; I am too busy.

I am quite pleased with the report and shall follow it up. I shall send for the Sisters from Saint-Laurent.

I think that the long trip is postponed completely. I shall make a short one--just four or five days--two or three days from now, if Our Lord so desires.

I am, in His love, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

280. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have an important appointment today around three o'clock, a meeting that may last until dark. I am, however, going to pass by Madame Goussault's house; I have not seen her for three days. Her fever is not so high today. Nevertheless, they bled her this morning. It is a double-tertian fever² and today is the most trying day.

I am sorry I cannot come to see good Sister Marie.³ I shall do so tomorrow, God willing. However, I am being remembered to her by her brother⁴ whom I am sending to visit her. I was afraid that, if you returned to Madame Goussault's, you might have a relapse as you did after your first visit. Increase your strength; you need it, or, in any case, the public does. Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

281. - ABBE DE SAINT-CYRAN¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Dissay, November 20, 1637

Monsieur,

For a month, since the last time I had the honor of seeing you, I have been ill with a persistent indisposition which I think I picked up from a dying person I attended one whole night.² Not knowing what might be the outcome of my illness, which I was bearing without staying in bed, various thoughts came to my mind in the event that God should be pleased to bring me to the point of death. Because the last conversation you had with me was on my mind at that time, I thought I would write and let you know that, by the grace of God, my heart was in no way burdened by those four things you came to my house to tell me; I had others in my soul of which you were unaware.³ Because of the latter I have reason to fear God's judgments, which may be mitigated in some way by my professing those Catholic truths which used to pass for lies and untruths among those who preferred the gleam and glitter rather than the light and truth of virtue. Your deep-seated disposition of humility for believing what people would have you see in Holy Scripture makes me quite aware that there was nothing easier than to make you consent, by the witness even of your own eyes, to what you now detest as errors. But, in the wake of your fraternal admonition, when I heard you find fault, and even add to the other four that fifth correction, because in the past I had told you in private that I wanted to do a favor for you and your whole house, I judged that it was not the time for self-defense nor for enlightening you, even by tangible and skillful proofs, concerning those matters you disapprove even to the point of boldly condemning them without understanding them. That is why, with the great desire and restlessness I felt inside me to talk to you and make you see the falseness of the things for which you reproached me, I held back as though suspended, so that I might excuse you for having abandoned me in the time of persecution, like a criminal, rather than for any bad opinion you may have had of me. I easily bore that on the part of a man who had long honored me with his friendship and who, in Paris, was considered a perfectly upright man, which belief could not be shaken without wounding charity. All I had left was the astonishment in my soul that you, who profess to be so gentle and reserved everywhere, had taken the opportunity of a general protest brought against me by a triple cabal⁴ and for well-known interests to say things to me that you would not have dared to think before. Thus, instead of my expecting consolation from you, because of the situation, you made so bold as to join the others in overwhelming me, adding over and above to the excesses of the others the fact that you undertook to come and say it to me in my own home, which none of the others had dared to do.

I thought I would be failing in the candor of friendship and even in the charity of the Gospel if, after I had allowed sufficient time to go by to dispel the anger which had me all worked up, I did not make this complaint to you alone, writing from the house⁵ of an eminent bishop.⁶ He will give quite different testimony of me, if need be, in all Italy where he is known, not to mention France where, by the grace of God, I have no need of it. When the faction no longer exists and when the gross interests, those springs of the intense emotions and the speeches delivered about me have passed, I shall remain in this matter as spotless and irreproachable before men as I claim to be before God. Since He is the essential Truth, He is especially opposed to all kinds of ignorance and falsehood proceeding from such situations. The Duchesse de Longueville,⁷ who had been stirred up against me, gave me reason to say this, without my being deluded by the copious reparation she offered me a month before her death in the presence of an individual of noble extraction who directs several other women who are not unknown to you. After her, Cardinal de la Valette⁸ was informed in detail of the accusations; he scoffed at them and, without my saying a word, spoke out so advantageously in my behalf

about the things that were being attributed to me, that I would be embarrassed to repeat it. Whenever you wish to know what he said, I would prefer to designate to you one of your friends to whom he said it. I daresay there is not one among the prelates who frequent your house with whom I do not remain in agreement and whom I could not bring to accept all my opinions and sanction them with his approbation whenever I might choose to speak to him about them at leisure. Brilliant men as they are and, through their predecessors, the true fount of all the discipline that must be observed with regard to souls, far from being opposed to my opinions, they would, on the contrary, be delighted with them and thank me. I am telling you this just to let you know with what assurance I speak, having no intention of disturbing the honor they render you nor the peace you enjoy in their conversation and company. For, with regard to your house, you believed you were doing it a good turn by preventing the favor I wished to do for it. Far from my being angry about the matter, I thank you warmly for saving me the trouble, without perhaps having diminished for all that the pleasure God knows I took in the willingness He had given me to serve you as much in spiritual as in temporal matters. You are well aware, however, that I offered my service without interfering in the initial steps by which you established yourself in the location where you are. I would not, for anything in the world, have wished to take part in those proceedings.⁹ That fact, more than anything else, should make you realize how little attached I am to my own opinion and how little inclined I am to bow with my friends against the judgment of my conscience which would never permit me to do such things. I upheld my convictions in a public debate to the point of bringing about a change of opinion on the part of that man to whom you are deeply obligated.¹⁰ I cite this only out of necessity and on this occasion alone to remind you of my condescension and to bring you to discount the impression others have given you of my inflexibility and severity. For I daresay that so little do I deserve that reputation in the judgment of those who know me and of the truth, that if I were to mention your four or five reproaches to that same person of distinction and his colleague, they would laugh at them and, in that way, without saying a word, they would calm all the anger I have felt because of them. I have great reason, Monsieur, to forgive you for them, and to say to you in my heart some of the words the Son of God said to those who mistreated Him. I trust, and I say it confidently, that those will not be the things that cause me to blush before His judgment. On the contrary, I expect some indulgence from His mercy because of them, if I persist in upholding and adoring in my heart what the succession of the apostolic doctrine, by which we thwart heretics and without which the Church cannot subsist, has been teaching me for twenty-five or thirty years through the medium of that same universal and Catholic Church.

Please believe that, as soon as I could and after a painful infirmity which came upon me in Cléry¹¹ and which I still have, I told you what was rankling in my mind. I wanted to treat you as a friend and a Christian and leave no bitterness in my soul that could alter ever so little the friendship I wish to maintain with you to the end of my life. I have given you evidence of this, since that painful distress, by the letter I wrote to the Bishop of Poitiers, and I would have given you even greater proof, if I had felt death approaching, by drawing up for you some articles concerning the things in your Institute with which I find fault. In that way I might have brought you to understand, at least after my death, my motives for offering you my service. You thought so little of it that you took the simple proposal I made you in that regard as a proof of the four things of which you accused me. Provided God does not accuse me of them, I am quite content. May He accept as His own the charity with which I intended to rid you of certain practices that I have always tolerated in your discipline, seeing how attached you were to them. Your determination to preserve them was even stronger because it was authorized by the advice of important people whom you were consulting.¹² After that, I am not fool enough to mention the thought I had on the matter, that God, in my opinion, does not receive them favorably. For there is only one true simplicity in which they can be done, rarer than the common grace of Christians and so rare that I would daresay of it what one of the blessed of our time¹³ has said of directors of souls today, that of ten thousand who make it their profession, people can barely single out one who can render them excusable before God. Nevertheless, I shall have the patience He Himself has in letting you act and I shall remain in the same willingness I have shown you to serve you in that regard through condescension, though I cannot do so with full

approval. I shall leave aside the quality of master to take on that of a most humble and most obedient servant. . . .¹⁴

282. - TO MONSIEUR BELIN

November 21, 1637

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Germaine wrote to me about the difficulty she is having in going back to her usual confessor. I advised her to change. Mon Dieu, Monsieur, how I pity you! O well, Our Lord will reward you for all you suffer and put up with because of her.

I have detained for seven or eight days one of the two boys who brought her letter. I shall do what I can to find a master for him. If I cannot, I shall send him back. Please let me know what kind of boy he is, whether there is reason to hope that he will do well, and do so as soon as possible.

I am sorry about the two écus I owe you, but do I not owe you more? I did not dare give them to this messenger. I shall give them to the first person I find who can be trusted.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your. . . .

283. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around November 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You must patiently put up with your son's state of mind until Our Lord chooses to have him enter the way of life suited to the one he has in mind. Who will bear with a child if not his mother, and to whom does it belong to call each one to his duty but to God? Since he is not studying and cannot decide on anything, I do not see much objection to your thinking about M. de Riez.² It is not a means to improve him, but to keep him somewhat occupied and to reduce to some extent idleness, the mother of all vices, so that it will not get the better of him. But in what capacity will it be? That is what is holding me back. We must give that some consideration and recommend it to God and we shall discuss it. I shall send Madame Moran³ word to give him that room over the main entrance. As for the rest of what you say, please do not think about it.

What you tell me about little Barbe's vow seems unnecessary. She is entering religion to assist the sick who she will be told are poor and consequently within the terms of her vow. But if she is beset by scruples, the bishop can dispense her from it. Be assured that she will often have regrets and therefore will be a cause of worry to those good nuns. And if she were to come back, I do not know whether it would be advisable to accept her.

I have seen neither Henriette nor Marie.⁴ You must pray for the Sisters and if you can get strong enough, go to the country.

I am a little worried about your patients. Please feed them well, cheer them up, and greet both of them for me.

The night before last, Madame Goussault had a serious sweating attack and has been feeling better since, so I have been told. Recover a little more of your strength and you will both be stronger when you see each other. I have told her about your indisposition at any rate. Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, with what calmness and strength she accepted the Will of God in her illness! Her disposition in health is nothing in comparison with her attitude in sickness. But who brings that about? Is it she? Is it not Our Lord? I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

284. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES¹

My most dear and Reverend Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am most unworthy to thank you as we are doing for the favors you are constantly pleased to do for us. That is why, my most dear and amiable Mother, I am asking the Holy Virgin, to whom you have given me in a special way, to obtain from her Son, that both of them may be your reward and your thanks.

I have considered several priests for your sacristy, but God has not allowed me to find what you need yet. I shall continue to be on the lookout, but I doubt that I shall do so as efficaciously as you watch over our frailty. Nevertheless, I shall do my best.

I shall also have statements drawn up for you about the venerated Monsieur Gallemant² by one of his vicars³ whom we have here in the house and by a priest whom he made use of when he was a little boy during the catechism lessons he used to give wherever he went. I shall also add what I personally know about him. I have not been able to do it since my return because of pressing business.

I am, my most dear and most amiable Mother, your most humble and most grateful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, November 28, 1637

Addressed: Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superioress of the second monastery of the Carmelites of Troyes, in Troyes

285. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[End of 1637]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God that you are feeling better. Please eat some eggs, for otherwise it is to be feared that you may have a relapse. As for that poor young woman in Madrid,² I shall have a serious talk with the Attorney General³ about the matter and about a means of assisting those poor creatures at the Foundlings.⁴ Madame Goussault may perhaps have been able to tell you about the overture made to me in that regard. We shall discuss it with you in three or four days if your health allows you to come here.

I do not know what to tell you with regard to the Sisters from Saint-Paul,⁵ except that you must not expect anything other than trouble and difficulty. We shall talk about it when you come. Do not think, however, that my heart will change in any way with regard to the service you desire of me. Only death could prevent me from being, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, Thursday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

286. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[December 1637]¹

You will see from the enclosed, Mademoiselle, how much the Pastor in Rueil² prefers the Sister from Nanterre³ to Barbe.⁴ I adore Providence in this. We must put her to work farther away and in a more useful manner. M. Lambert, who is in Richelieu,⁵ told Madame de Combalet that a Charity must be established there; two poor women without assistance had died there that week. What do you think, Mademoiselle, of sending Barbe and some other young woman?⁶ Oh! how much good there is to be done in that region! If you are a gallant woman, you could go in the spring, by coach as far as Orléans and from there by water as far as Saumur, which is eight leagues from there. Well, all for the best. We shall talk about it.

In the meantime, I send you greetings and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

287. - TO BERNARD CODOING, IN ROMANS¹

December 27, 1637

For a long time now, I have been hesitant about whether I should ask you to come and work in Richelieu. The Cardinal is founding a Mission there, both for that duchy² and for the See of Luçon, together with the work for the ordinands and the retreatants of the Poitiers diocese.³ On the one hand, I considered the needs of the good people where you are and the good use they are making of the grace Our Lord is offering them. But, on the other hand, I felt that the same need and the same good is found among the people of Poitou. People have written to me, and M. Renar, who has just returned from there, told me that they have never seen souls so touched or such crowds coming from every direction.

What has caused me to decide in favor of Richelieu is the obligation we have there, since the foundation is perpetual. That is why, Monsieur, I most humbly entreat you to leave upon receipt of this letter, if you are not on a mission. If you are, let it be immediately after you have finished, without letting it be known until your departure. We must not fail in our obligation to be in the aforesaid Richelieu by January 20 or 25. You can assure the people there that when God is pleased to send us some men to serve them in our vocation, we shall share them, but, in the meantime, absolute necessity obliges us to act in this way.

I had asked M. Grenu to go and work in Aiguillon, which is in the vicinity of Agen, but since then I have asked him to come to Troyes for a special reason. M. de Sergis informed me that all of Aiguillon has gone to Confession and that the important people were the first to begin. Only a very few people were left and they were to go the following day. M. Hopille, the Vicar General, sent him four or five pastors from the diocese. They worked with him in Aiguillon for three weeks, except on Sundays when they went to their own parishes. He also told me that crowds of people came in from the countryside to make their devotions, even from as far away as ten leagues. Judge, Monsieur, whether the prickly thorns of our human nature do not produce fine roses; they blossom as soon as the sun of justice sheds the rays of its grace upon them. Even so, I had to say this word to you for your consolation.

Let us get back to your journey. If you are ready to leave with M. Grenu, you could travel together as far as Lyons. From there he will head for Châlons and you for Roanne, where you can take a boat as far as Orléans. From there, you can go to Saumur, where you will be one day from Richelieu. You will find Messieurs Lambert and Perdu in Champigny, about one league from Richelieu.

O Monsieur, how many spiritual needs there are in that locality, where there are so many heretics⁴ for want of having heard God spoken of, so they say, in the Catholics' church! It was in that area that the heresy was first spread, diffused, and most obstinately defended. It was from there that it drew its main strength for the overthrow of our holy religion and even of the State, if it had been able to do so. Oh! what a great empire Satan had and still has there! I hope, Monsieur, that Our Lord will make use of you and of good M. Durot⁵ to give him a fair fight, certainly not in *sublimitate sermonis et humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in ostensione virtutis spiritus, in humilitate et mansuetudine, in patientia et longanimitate.*⁶

Go, therefore, Monsieur, in nomine Domini. I entreat His Divine Goodness to grant you His holy blessing together with a greater share in His spirit. I have no doubt that your heart feels as though it is being torn from that locality where you have put down roots of charity in those souls, and that you are experiencing the emotions of Saint Paul when he said his final farewell to that people who wept so much over him. Oh well, it depends only upon a truly apostolic heart to strengthen itself against such feelings, to rise above them, and to go where holy obedience reveals Our Lord calling. Certainly, Monsieur, to be in that state is to accomplish God's good pleasure and to begin one's paradise here in this world. But what am I saying to a soul who has always appeared quite ready to go to the ends of the earth for the love of God if holy obedience should require it?

I do not know why my pen has run away from me to say all this to you. I do know that it is not because I think you need to be persuaded, since perhaps you need rather to be restrained in the ardor of your zeal. That is something I have to talk to you about and shall discuss with you some day, please God. He knows, He alone, why I have rambled on without thinking.

It would be wise for you take your leave of the Bishop of Valence⁷ by a visit or in writing and to thank him for the favor of having accepted your service in his diocese. Tell him that nothing less than sheer necessity could have induced us to recall you and, if God be pleased to give us the means, we shall try to return on another occasion.

Please take leave also of good and very dear Sister Marie⁸ and recommend to her prayers this little company and the most frail and miserable of all men, myself, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble. . . .

I shall expect no other response than that of your departure. Please let it be as soon as possible. Your brother is awaiting letters from you in response to the one I sent you from him. I suppose Our Lord has cured you of too fond a love for your relatives.

288. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

Together we must see about what has to be done with regard to Saint-Leu.¹ At the last meeting,² it was the general opinion that you be asked to experiment with the foundlings to see if there is a way of feeding them with cow's milk, and to get³ two or three of them for that purpose. I am consoled that Providence is turning to you for this work. I am well aware that there are a number of things with which to find fault. We shall discuss them.⁴

Madame Goussault, the President's wife, does not seem at all strong to me. Take care of your health.

I wish you a young heart and a love in its first bloom for Him Who loves us unceasingly and as tenderly as if He were just beginning to love us. For all God's pleasures are ever new and full of variety, although He never changes.

I am, in His love, with an affection such as His Goodness desires and which I owe Him out of love for Him, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

New Year's Day [1638]⁵

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

289. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am returning your report and mine. Please insert into mine the words you are adding or changing, and please take the trouble to copy it at your convenience and send the whole thing back to me. I mean even the report you wrote which I am returning.²

I sent word asking M. de Cordes to come here to the house today and registered my report about M. de Marillac.³

I find no objection at all to your visiting Madame de Liancourt at your leisure.

Please see about those two young women. The smaller one seems to be just as you described her; if the other one is really called, her own town of Nogent might have need of her in time.⁴

The parents of the girl who died at the Hôtel-Dieu will want her clothes and rightly so. For anything further, until the matter is settled, we shall look into it. Meanwhile, it is better to leave them where they are. The law must be made before it is put into practice.

I shall most willingly warn you of your faults and shall not let a single one of them go by.

I do not quite understand what you told me about the officers and yourself. What reason do you have for saying that you are not to be mentioned in the matter? You must beware of falling into the vice of singularity because it is rooted in vanity, and vanity, in pride, the vice of all vices. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Today I am going to La Chapelle to hear Mademoiselle d'Atri's⁵ confession. I shall not be able to see M. de Cordes until Friday according to what he has just written me.

Enclosed is the Comtesse de Maure's⁶ letter.

290. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[January 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been thinking of coming to see you lately, especially today, but I find myself absolutely prevented from doing so. I shall come as soon as possible. However, let me tell you that I am worried about your fevers at night. Please take care of your health as much as you can for the sake of Our Lord and His work. Still, I think you have been less sick this winter than during others, especially while you were living in the city, and that consoles me somewhat.

Let us talk about three things. About the little foundlings--I am being pressured in an unimaginable way by M. Hardy.² He is blaming me for all the delay. Mademoiselle du Mée is in the country. Would there be any objection to your buying a goat and continuing your experiment further?

The second matter is that we are being asked for a Sister from the Charity for Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The mission is being given there and the Charity has been set up since last Sunday.³ She is to get those good women started. What do you think of sending Barbe?⁴ They have a special reason for wanting her there--because of the soldiers the King wants helped. We shall need a room for that purpose while the court is there. Oh! how I wish you could go! But then, Our Lord is receiving more glory from you as you are. Let us get back to Barbe. Will you be able to give her a companion, or will you send her alone? The first would be better. In that case, will you have someone else for Saint-Jacques?⁵

I do not know what to tell you about the Sister at Saint-Paul,⁶ except that I am afraid you may cause some grumbling. Marguerite's mind wanders sometimes. I wrote to M. de la Salle to let me know if that young woman would be good at teaching school. In any case, it is only for a time; she will be needed for Richelieu.

The third matter pertains to Marie from Saint-Laurent.⁷ Her father has earnestly entreated me to take her back. Do you think that would be a good idea? If so, send her word to speak to me. Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

My greetings to Madame Pelletier. The Chancellor's wife⁸ is working for her. Madame de Chaumont⁹ is the superior in Saint-Germain-en-Laye.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

290a. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL, IN BORDEAUX

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think I answered your last letter and rejoiced with you at the care of His goodness for you and those good missionaries of your company. I greet them with all possible affection and reverence. I thank you most humbly, Monsieur, for your kindness in having written to our Aiguillon¹ Missionaries. I am informing them that it is not yet time for them to go and see you. They will do so a few months from now. Meanwhile, Monsieur, I beg you to forward the enclosed to M. de Saint-Martin in Dax.

Good Monsieur Nevelet, the Archdeacon of Troyes, died of the plague some time ago. That has somewhat scattered their company, but I hope it will serve to unite them more closely. I made a trip to Troyes during that time, and God knows how many times good Monsieur Roté, that holy man, did me the honor of thinking it appropriate for us to speak of you.

The priests' assembly² in this city keeps on getting better and better, it seems to me. Three bishops have just been drawn from among them: M. Godeau for Grasse,³ M. Fouquet for Bayonne,⁴ M. Pavillon for Alet;⁵ and M. Barreau has just been named by the King as Coadjutor of Sarlat, without the Bishop's⁶ consent.

God has called good M. Semusse⁷ to Himself. He lived as a saint and died in the same way. And I am, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 8, 1638⁸

Addressed: Monsieur de Fonteneil, Canon of Saint-Seurin, in Bordeaux

291. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[January 17, 1638]¹

Monsieur,

Our procurator from the Charity and the sisters are doing wonders today for the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus. Of their own accord, they wanted me to send and ask you to arrange a sermon for them for Vespers, which are not said before two-thirty. They would really like Monsieur de la Salle, but if that is not possible, they would gladly have someone else. I join with them in asking this favor so that they may be encouraged to perseverance.

I think you know that Sister Barbe² is here and that both she and I are in good health right now. I think it would be very good for her to have the honor of seeing you before she leaves. Should we not be thinking about the little furnishings she will need?

Please do not worry about the wet nurse for the infants; we do not have any of them yet. The nurse we have will be quite adequate for the time you indicate and longer.

I am, in the love of Jesus, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L. DE M.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

292. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

My very dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This is Monsieur du Coudray, one of our Missionaries, who is coming to see you with the draft of the contract for the foundation of the Bishop of Troyes.¹ The Commander² thought it advisable to act in this way. This is the work of your hands. It has pleased His Divine Majesty to grant you grace for it. I hope, dear Mother, that you will obtain some for us so that we may serve Him according to His plan. O dear Mother, how many beautiful precious stones you are adding to the crown Our Lord is continually fashioning for you! Their number will certainly be as great as the number of souls who will be saved by this means. But so that the sins and wretchedness of this poor, worthless company, and especially my own, may not hinder Our Lord's work, I entreat you, dear Mother, to ask Him either to take us out of this world or to make us such that we may render Him the services His Divine Goodness expects of us. I am not going to thank you for all this. God alone is worthy of doing so and of being Himself your thanks. I say the same thing to your holy community which has prayed so fervently and done so much penance for this project. I offer to you and to it my everlasting gratitude for the favor you have done us, dear Mother, as well as my eternal submission to your wishes, which are those of Our Lord Himself.

In His love and in that of His holy Mother, I am, my very dear Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 22, 1638

Monsieur du Coudray has instructions to do whatever you, dear Mother, shall order him to do. Give your orders, therefore, dear Mother, and you shall be obeyed.

Addressed: Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superioress of the second monastery of the Carmelites of Troyes

293. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of the twenty-fourth of this month. It greatly consoled me because you are so well, thank God, and because M. Perdu has recovered from his three attacks of fever.

I was quite pleased to be enlightened about the Toul affair.¹ I have sent M. du Coudray there with authority to settle the dispute. M. Midot² is taking good care of our interests. He wants M. Colée to give a report to the chapter. If it is found that there is no abuse on our part, he hopes to have the chapter join us and to come to this town himself for the interests of their diocese.

President Faberolle, who is kindly disposed towards us, has toned down a little the intensity of the lawsuit. Had he not been obliged to leave, he might have been able to remedy the matter. I

would gladly have done with it were we not obliged to prove that we are being wrongly accused of having misused those assets. Such is the thinking of M. de Cordes and M. de Sainte-Marthe. We have requested the removal, ³ according to the wishes of the said Sieur Midot. I was told a little while ago that the Chancellor⁴ refused to place the seal on the letters.

Benedictus Deus!

I was very pleased to receive the description of that small priory. M. des Roches⁵ told me that he wanted to give it to us, but that has not yet been done. Please be so kind as to let me know whether you were told this from another source. Blessed be God for what you say about its being able to pay the expenses for the bread and wine of the house!

I would also like to know if the Loudun coaches are up to five thousand livres; they are sold for only forty-five hundred livres by the foundation. Perhaps their price has stabilized since then.

I shall see that something is done about the building,⁶ but I would really like to know whether the fault is with the materials or the workmanship, or whether you want the height increased. A word about that, please.

That huge parish frightens me.⁷ In nomine Domini!

I praise God for the mission you are giving among the prisoners. I have great compassion for them. But, please be sure not to go to them fasting.

With regard to the collège that the townspeople want, ipsi viderint.⁸ As for the nephew of that good canon, O Jésus! Monsieur, take him.

I forgot to put in an order for some altar-bread irons.

Let us talk about those who are supposed to come and see you. We are sending you three men from here and MM. [Messieurs] Codoing and Durot who are to come to you from Dauphiné, where they are now. I hope you will have them within ten days. Our Lord has greatly blessed their work in that region. The men from here are Messieurs Buissot,⁹ Benoît,¹⁰ and Gourrant.¹¹ You may keep either Messieurs Buissot or Benoît and M. Gourrant with you in Richelieu, and send one of the former to the Mission in Luçon. I think it advisable for you to use the services of Messieurs Codoing and Durot in the duchy of Richelieu.

M. Gourrant sings; M. Benoît and M. Buissot know how to intone the psalms. M. Benoît teaches catechism well. Everybody invariably agrees that the fruit of a mission stems from the catechism lessons. A person of rank, saying that recently, added that all the Missionaries took pains to preach well but did not know how to teach catechism at all. He said that in my presence and that of a good number of people. In the name of God, Monsieur, tell the Company there about this. My thinking is that one of those who are to work should teach only the catechism for the adults and the other only the children's catechism, and they should speak twice a day. Some edifying stories can be brought into the catechism lesson as a source of inspiration because, as I said, people point out that all the good results originate there.

We have given a few conferences here on how to go about teaching controversial truths. It seems to me that these men understand it fairly well, at least the first three. They have also learned M. Véron's method from him. Please, Monsieur, talk these matters over together every day and tell M. Perdu to please refresh his memory on the subject so that, when they leave Richelieu, they will know that those truths must be taught humbly and familiarly. Let them keep in mind that they are not going there for the heretics, but for the poor Catholics and that, nevertheless, if on the way the opportunity to instruct someone arises, they may do so gently and humbly, showing that what they say to them comes from deep compassion and love and not from indignation. I could not offer them a better example than your own and that of M. Soufliers. A nobleman from those parts told me that you go about it just as you should, instructing the Catholics and the Huguenots through them, and edifying both. Please, Monsieur, tell them this and especially that they should never challenge the ministers, or anyone, on any occasion whatsoever.

The men will leave tomorrow on the Poitiers coach, I think, because [it]¹² is bound to take them four leagues from Richelieu. However, I have given this letter to the Champigny messenger so that you may be advised of their departure and give them lodging.

You tell me that you do not have enough furniture. I shall send you a letter of credit so that you may draw up to one thousand livres in Tours; you can buy the furniture you need there.

If you have a feeling that people want to oblige you to things beyond our bulls, ask the Bishop of Chartres¹³ to allow you to notify me, if you are unable to take care of the matter right then. If nothing can be done after all, sit nomen Domini benedictum!

I am, in His love, for M. Perdu whom I embrace, and for you, in the love of Our Lord,
Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, January 30, 1638

God is blessing abundantly the mission being given right now in Saint-Germain,¹⁴ where the court is residing

At the bottom of the first page: M. Lambert

294. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN SOUDE, LE MESNIL, OR BERGUES

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You were quite right, Monsieur, not to accept the offers of the Vicomte de Soudé,¹ and you will do well never to accept any offer to support us. That is a fundamental rule of our Little Institute.

Well now, I suppose that you will have finished before receiving this letter and will next be going to make the visits you tell me you wish to make to the places where you have been. But when that is done, Monsieur, please go and rest in Montmirail until you have regained your strength, so that you may begin your work again in the villages which depend on Montmirail and the diocese of Troyes. Then we shall see if the Bishop of Soissons² would approve of our working in his diocese. I do not see how we can do so in the city this Lent, because he was unwilling to assign us a church.

What can I say to you about that good but irritable boy except that I am very sorry he forgot himself so far as to speak to you the way M. du Chesne³ informs me that he has, which your compassion makes you conceal. Well now, I see no other remedy than to dismiss him. But what will you do for a servant? Will you not be able to find one in Montmirail or in Champagne if you pay him? Please hire someone, Monsieur, if you find anyone; otherwise, we shall try to send you one from the house here.

I shall write, if possible, to M. du Chesne. But here comes someone to deprive me of that possibility. Please tell him in any case, that I was greatly consoled by his letter and that I shall not fail to write to him at the first opportunity.

The mission in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where the court is residing, is moving forward and God is blessing it abundantly. I just saw what M. de la Salle⁴ wrote to M. Dehorgny--who is on call at the seminary⁵--that without this assistance several thousand souls would be lost.

Please pray and have others pray for the Queen's pregnancy.⁶

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, January 30, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, presently in Soudé, Le Mesnil, or Bergues⁷

295. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Enclosed is a letter from Mother Arbiste. Monsieur de la Salle notified me of the arrival of your Sisters.² He was going to introduce them to the sisters of the Charity³ yesterday. Madame Chaumont told him that she would give them an écu so they could buy some food. I told her there was no need, that we would provide for them from another source. Give me a word of advice, please.

Mademoiselle Hardy is still urging me to call a meeting of the Ladies who promised her they would contribute. If I do not do it, I shall hurt her feelings; if I do it, it will be against my better judgment. I doubt that it will succeed the way things are. She expects those Ladies to go the

foundling home⁴ and would have everything done right there according to the order prescribed. I think it would be better to give up the capital of the established house rather than be subject to rendering so many accounts and overcoming so many difficulties, and to set up a new institution, leaving the former as it is, at least for some time. What do you think? If I thought she would agree to your suggestion of trying out a wet nurse and a goat at your house, that would be fine!

I have taken the affair of your Charity⁵ to heart and at times have some remorse about not having worked on it, but I cannot. The Temple business is taking up all my time and I shall be busy with it for a few more days.⁶ When I ponder the matter, I realize that Providence is not allowing it to no purpose. I see nothing more common than the bad results of things done hastily. Would you believe that a mishap has already occurred in the establishment for girls in Montmorency?⁷ They had already obtained the permission for enclosure; they have a house, a chapel, and all the rest of it. Nevertheless, people think that nuns should be called to take their place. And if it depended on me, I would do it. All this is said for you alone and not for anyone else.

The good Pastor of La Chapelle⁸ is supposed to come to dinner here today with his brother so as to see what he has to do about his illness, for it has now been identified as what you feared. O mon Dieu, what poor creatures we are!

The day before yesterday, Madame Goussault was running a fever which they were afraid was going to last. Take care of your health, I beg of you.

I am your servant.

V. D.

I am being compelled to rush the Temple affair which I fear will collapse in the near future. I say it and say it again, and they pass over it all the same. Humility obliges me to defer and reason makes me fear. In nomine Domini!

296. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Tuesday morning [1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am sending you back the papers.² Please return them as soon as possible and see that you receive a signed copy.

If you do not have the keys, please have them picked up here.

Madame Pelletier has just spoken to me about her furniture; she would like it put in some other small room. She makes no mention of putting it somewhere else. I told her we would discuss it and that we must aim at placing everything in common and at doing away with singularities.

Well, that language seems somewhat new to her.

That good woman from Le Mans seems insecure to me. She has done a lot of stipulating and delaying.

We must reflect a little on some way of preparing the Sisters to teach school. The latter says she has taught in this town and elsewhere. We must see whether we shall give her a try.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

297. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that your illness is not serious! Please do whatever you can to get well.

We came to a decision on your report concerning the Foundlings in two meetings with the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity. Next Sunday we shall communicate the decision, which I shall arrange in the form of a rule, to Madame Pelletier to see if she will be willing to follow it. This will take place at Madame Goussault's home in presence of the officers. The entire

company considers it essential for that house to depend on the superioress of the Daughters of Charity, as I wrote you, and for you to go and spend a week or so there, if your health permits. The Ladies are going to the Hôtel-Dieu today. Please offer their persons and their work to His Divine Majesty.

I do not expect much from the Ursulines' way of communicating with your Sisters.² Please send them there, nevertheless.

I think it is better to keep that young woman with you for some time and to have Madame Goussault see her along with the one from Nogent. There is no need to send her the one from Saint-Marceau³ since she is already on active duty.

I wish you good day and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

297a. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You had good reason to grumble and complain interiorly about me for not having answered or visited you. Your love will forgive me, please, and will attribute the blame to difficulties and not to affection. God knows that I lack neither.

I spoke to M. Pavillon about your son. I think it would be well for him to finish his theology, be ordained, and practice for some time the exercises of piety suitable for ecclesiastics. Once he has done all that, I shall make no objection to the above-mentioned Monsieur Pavillon's receiving him. Without the above, the young man would be useless to the said Monsieur Pavillon, and an unbearable burden to himself when he found himself in the mountains, at the farthest end of the kingdom,² doing nothing, unqualified for any employment.

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take my advice in this matter. I know what is involved. I hope that, if your son does what I have just said, he will never be in need of good employment. If God allows me to live, I promise you that I shall take care of him as if he were of my own blood. Be at peace then in his regard.

If he were ready for a post, I could place him tomorrow in the service of Monsieur, the King's brother³--I have been asked for someone for him--or have him given a canonry quite close to Lyons in a new chapter foundation being started by M. de Saint-Chamond.⁴ He has given me the task of providing him with people whom I judge suitable, up to the number of eight. In short, he will not have to wait long, be assured of that, provided he does what I am telling you.

We shall try then to send M. du Coudray to Liancourt⁵ on Saturday. Please see that there is a horse for him here tomorrow evening.

I am worried about that good lady's illness. I am going to celebrate Holy Mass for her intention and pray to God for you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle⁶

298. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[1638]¹

After speaking of the intrigues in which Madame Pelletier was engaging with the ecclesiastical and judicial authorities to keep Saint Vincent and the Ladies of Charity out of the administration of the Foundling Home and to remain its sole mistress, Saint Louise adds: "But I am confident that the good God will be able to derive His glory from this unpleasant experience. I implore this of Him with all my heart, asking Him also to give you good health for the same reason. I hope because of your goodness that you will make us sharers in the merit of your sufferings and holy sacrifices, since you are aware of our need."

299. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN AIGUILLON OR TOULOUSE

[Around February 21, 1638]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you the consolation I have received from the blessing Our Lord has been pleased to grant your mission in Montpezat.² But I confess that I have been and still am quite worried about your working so long and hard for three months. I am very much afraid that, if you do not take a prolonged rest, you will collapse, and so will M. Brunet. In the name of God, Monsieur, get some rest and have your bad eye and throat treated in Aiguillon or Agen, if you have not already done so. I am afraid that as soon as you arrive in Toulouse they will overburden you with work. I would really like to tell you not to go back there, but what would we say to the Archbishop?³ I wrote him that you would be coming to see him immediately after the mission in Montpezat.

We are obliged, from another quarter, to give a mission which Monsieur de la Marguerie⁴ founded in Angoumois for every five years; it is due at Easter. If your illness does not prevent you from going to Toulouse, please tell the aforesaid Archbishop that I most humbly ask his pardon for our not being able as yet to serve him on a regular basis and for being compelled to use you on occasions such as this one after Easter. At that time, entreat him to allow you to go and preach the said mission in La Marguerie⁵ and in two or three other small villages belonging to it. To do that, you will have to get off in Bordeaux via the Garonne, and go from there to Bourg,⁶ between Bordeaux and Blaye. Then, from there, you will have to go to Barbezieux, which is two days away, and to La Marguerie, two or three leagues farther. However, you will have to go as far as Angoulême to get the Vicar General's permission in the absence of the Bishop,⁷ who is with the Queen of England.⁸ He asked me to send someone to work in his diocese at the earnest request of his Vicar General, to whom you will convey my regret at our being able to work for the present only in those villages. Express to him also our great gratitude for the favor we owe him.

I am so consoled by everything you told me, that I could not refrain from mentioning it to you once again here. I sent the letter you wrote me to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon; please write to her more in detail.

I am sending you the letter--unsealed--which I wrote to the Archbishop of Toulouse. If your illness has detained you in Aiguillon, please send it to him. If it reaches you in Toulouse, please seal it and deliver it to him.

I am writing to M. Mestre to go along with some letters he received from home. Please forward them to him by some sure means. It is his old father writing to him. I shall try to do the same for M.Hopille.⁹ I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, presently in Aiguillon or Toulouse

300. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[February 1638]¹

Monsieur,

Sister Turgis is very upset because the sergeant of M. de Castillon's company came to tell her that he will be sending soldiers to lodge in the front part of the the building and in the children's quarters. They will be noisy. If you think it well, when she returns there, she can refuse to accommodate them, confident of the backing of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon or the Chancellor's wife,² until you can obtain a prohibition from the Queen. If you think something else would be better, please let her know by way of this messenger, if it is not she.

I am, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

Thursday

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

301. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

I have just written to Madame Séguier, the Chancellor's wife. I am sending her your letter and a petition I drew up in the name of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu. It is addressed to the Chancellor² and informs him that they rented a house for the Daughters of Charity and the foundlings, that the inhabitants have sent you soldiers, and that they cannot stay in your house, where there are no men, without endangering the purity of the Sisters, or without scandal. Taking these things into consideration, will he please forbid the inhabitants to send the aforesaid soldiers to your house and forbid the soldiers to go there. I am asking his wife to present this to the Chancellor. And because it may be that the matter will not move so quickly that everything can be taken care of today, it would be well to send for your Pastor and ask him to use his influence, either with the people so that they will provide other quarters for the soldiers, or with the soldiers so that they will stay elsewhere--in return for a demi-écu more or less--in order to give you two days. I am going, meanwhile, to Madame Goussault's house to ask her to send M. Grandnom³ to expedite the matter.

Your son is doing well. Did you send him the certificate? He told me that he fears the excellence of the priesthood, and that is good.

Please do something soon regarding the soldiers, through the Pastor.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am. . . .

302. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have not seen Jacqueline at all since she told me four days ago that she was bringing her to you so that you might see her. I promised her I would talk to you about it.²

I shall be on my guard with regard to that curate from Nanterre,³ with regard to the girl.

Today I shall try to see the Duchesse d'Aiguillon concerning your soldiers. The Chancellor's wife could not do anything.

You will have to talk to Madame Goussault about that house. It would be desirable for you to be in a parish other than this one for many reasons.

Since one channel does not end because of another, see whether you can accomplish anything by means of that soldier you were thinking about, using his influence with his captain, and through him with M. de Castelnau.⁴

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

303. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]¹

Tomorrow morning I shall send you Monsieur Souffliers or M. Bécu for the exhortation and Confession.

I looked at what you wrote² and am going to tell Madame Goussault about it or send it to her. The admonition not to joke about those little creatures³ seems fitting to me.

I saw the Duchesse d'Aiguillon yesterday. She told me that she had commissioned the person who guides her⁴ to go and see M. de Castelnau. I instructed the Sisters from the Charity⁵ to put pressure on the chaplain concerning the matter. If that fails, it would be better to deal with the quartermaster-sergeant. If you do not send someone to M. de Veines, I do not know whom to recommend to you with regard to this matter. I hope we shall hear from the Duchesse today, or tomorrow I shall send you a man for M. de Veines.

I really think it would be good for you to go and spend a few days in the house for the foundlings, and for the Sisters to come to La Chapelle once a month. May God be pleased to give me the time to be there.

Marie, from Saint-Sulpice, has two bed-valences made from winding-sheets, because the house is quite new and the windows do not close properly. Once the winter is over, we shall have to draw up a regulation about that. We do not have any.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

304. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here comes a job for you concerning the relocation of the foundlings and the order to be maintained in their new establishment. Please work on it tomorrow, Mademoiselle, and on Saturday send me what you have done. I told Madame Pelletier that we wish her to be subject to you with regard to the management. She told me to let her know when she was to be subject to the officers and in what instances to you. I think that, for purely temporal matters, she should be under the good Ladies; but, for spiritual matters, such as the direction of the Sisters, the wet nurses, and the little runaway children whose number will be increasing, that is when she should deal with you. To that end, she should let you know from time to time what is going on, every week for example or, at least, every two weeks.

Jacqueline came here to the house this morning without saying anything to me about her niece. She just had someone ask me for the answer to your letter of the day before yesterday. I told her that I gave it to you yesterday.

I wrote to the chaplain² of the Duchesse³ about your soldiers. He sent me word that he would speak to the Duchesse about the matter and give me an answer. But as nothing is certain concerning things that depend upon the great, I have been told that, as a last resort, we might have to rent a room and a bed and give it to them. I shall try to go there tomorrow or the day after, if I do not receive an answer tomorrow morning. I am, meanwhile, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Thursday evening

You will see in the enclosed note from Madame Goussault her wishes concerning what I wrote to you.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

305. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[February 18, 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You have not found any wet nurses at all in the country yet. That is why I think that, while waiting, you would do well to take the one being offered to you from the Hôtel-Dieu; she is so good.

It really seems to me that you need a more spacious house and that the Ladies would do well to look for another one or take the one you mentioned to me.

I cannot possibly go to the Bons-Enfants today. I hope to be there tomorrow for dinner and to come and see you from there. It would be difficult to talk to you in the midst of so many people at the collège. I shall see. If need be, I shall let you know.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Ash Wednesday

306. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, February 20, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have read and reread your letter of the ninth of this month with an extraordinary consolation, tempered a little by good M. Perdu's slight illness. I do not commend him to you, because I am sure you are doing everything you can for him. But who is taking care of your health? I am asking Our Lord to look after it Himself.

I sent on to Toul the letter you wrote to M. Dehorgny. That affair is abating somewhat. We are negotiating with M. Fleury, the nephew, who is a Doctor of the Sorbonne.¹

I am well pleased with what you told me about M. des Roches-Chamian's² little priory and about the two farms and the two houses. Since Providence has caused us to come across that good priest living there, we must allow him to take his time, to have the vines tended, and to repair that section of the surrounding wall that has fallen.

I have no doubt that the Loudun grafts cost the most. Blessed be God!

I shall be very happy to see that architect from Pontoise and the mason concerning the buildings.

You did well to give an inventory of the furniture to the Bishop of Chartres.³ You will do even better to have mugs and forks made like ours so that you can begin as soon as possible to take your meals in portions.

Oh! how moved I still am by what you told me about the kind of approbation the Bishop of Poitiers⁴ gave the contract concluded with the Cardinal,⁵ and by your telling me that you are going to Poitiers to thank that good prelate! I am also moved by what you told me concerning the goodness and gentleness with which the Bishop of Chartres has negotiated with you and with everyone. I shall thank him and tell him in good time how I thank God for the attention you have had the Company give to what I told you concerning the catechism lessons and sermons. Please remind them often of those things.

I am well satisfied with the arrangements you told me you are making for the mission: (1) in the duchy; (2) for finishing the one in Richelieu. Then you shall really have to establish the Charity. I hope to send you an excellent Daughter of Charity for that purpose.⁶ She does bloodletting, administers medicines, and gives enemas. She is the one who preferred the service of the poor to that of the great lady whom I mentioned to you.⁷ She is in Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where a Charity worthy of note is being set up. Among its members are the Lady-in-waiting, the Lady of the bedchamber, and the Queen's maids of honor, who are giving service themselves with admirable fervor. They had a little trouble at that mission because of the low necklines, but God was pleased to draw no little glory from the affair.

In the name of God, Monsieur, we must be very circumspect in explaining the sixth commandment. We shall one day be in a great deal of trouble because of that. Call this to the Company's attention often and also advise them not to do anything in the procession except that which is quite simple, as I have so often said.

As for the title you will assume for the vicarial records, how about putting down parish administrative assistant until I consult someone about it? With regard to alms, give a double⁸ to each one who asks; if he is being catechized, give him two liards more or less, according to the person's character. But for the sick, if the Bishop does not provide the necessary funds for them, you should contribute fifteen or twenty sous a week, which you can have placed in the alms-dish of the woman taking up the collection. But what will you do with regard to remuneration for acting as pastor? I am sending you two hundred livres, which will be given to the Champagne messenger tomorrow. On the next trip, we shall give him the altar-bread irons.

M. Codoing and M. Durot are now in Richelieu. O Monsieur, how God has blessed their labors! Please embrace them and the whole Company for me, as I do in spirit with all possible humility and affection.

The mission in Saint-Germain will come to a close in four days with a very special blessing, anticipated by some little occasions for practicing patience. How valuable that will be for us and what a triumph for God! M. Grenu is also receiving special assistance from God in Gascony and M. de Sergis likewise.

The Company is doing well, thank God, and sends you greetings.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Since writing this letter, I reflected that it would be well for you to take the title of parish curate of Richelieu, while awaiting the union and the way it will be formulated.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, presently in Richelieu
307. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN MONTMIRAIL

Paris, February 21, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing you these lines in a bit of a hurry, asking you please to take care of your health and M. Caignet's¹ and to get some rest after such arduous work before you begin the mission again. When you are rested, you can start working in the villages belonging to the diocese of Troyes and Montmirail.

Last Sunday, I had M. Soufliers write you a letter requesting the same thing of you at that time. I also asked you to send M. du Chesne back to us and I would send you M. Callon in his place. But, since a slight indisposition does not permit him that little satisfaction at present, he is returning to Aumale, where he will be able to do something in the surrounding area.²

I went to see your brother at the Saint-Michel bridge³ to ask him to send the man who is lodging with M. Belin to the mission. But he told me that he was not in town, that he was still in Milly,⁴ and that on his return he would send him to Rueil. I have neither heard that he did so nor that he returned.

I am sending you a letter from the Cévennes. The Company is doing fairly well, thank God.

The mission in Saint-Germain is coming to a close with a blessing although, in the beginning, they had occasion to practice the holy virtue of patience. There are very few in the King's household who have not gone to Confession with the people, and with a devotion worthy of giving edification. The firm stand taken against low-necked dresses gave rise to that practice of patience. The King told M. Pavillon that he was greatly pleased with all the exercises of the mission, that that was the way one should work, and that he would give this testimony everywhere. I had great difficulty sending men to that place while the court was in residence but, since His Majesty had done me the honor of informing me that he wanted it that way, we had to surmount our difficulties. The ladies who had the hardest time in the beginning are now so fervent that they have become members of the Charity and serve the poor on their day. They also went out in four groups to collect money in the town. They are the Queen's maids of honor. Messieurs Lambert, Perdu, Buissot, Codoing, Benoît,⁵ and Gourrant are in Richelieu; Messieurs Grenu and Savinier in the duchy of Aiguillon, in Gascony, where God is blessing them greatly, as He did M. de Sergis and M. Brunet. M. de Sergis is returning to Toulouse where the Archbishop is waiting for him with great impatience.

I close, recommending myself to the prayers of Messieurs Caignet and du Chesne. Please, Monsieur, convey our news and recommendations to Messieurs Mouton⁶ and Boucher.⁷ I hope to write to them Wednesday and to send you M. Boudet in M. du Chesne's place.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please pay M. Octobre⁸ the postage punctually.

Addressed: Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

308. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

My very dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here again is someone's pen thanking you because you are ever giving us new reasons to do so by so many acts of kindness which the Holy Spirit continually suggests to you from day to day for our good and that of the souls in your diocese. You were not content, dear Mother, with suggesting, guiding, and bringing our establishment to completion with such care, solicitude, and almost continual labors. You added to that the offer of your house as a lodging for us and for the ordinands' retreat.

O my dear Mother! how that touches my heart, making me see the state of a truly Christian and religious soul that has reached the highest point of perfection to which either of those states can raise a soul in the practice of true charity! To God be the glory, my dear Mother, for having been pleased to lift you up to a state of such great goodness; to us, eternal gratitude for the great good you incessantly do for us; and to you, dear Mother, a degree of glory in heaven which corresponds to the goodness Our Lord has placed in your dear soul! Here are the gratitude and the wishes that can be offered to you by the soul who is the most obliged to you in the world, my dear Mother, and who considers you his dearest and most amiable Mother.

Yesterday I saw one of the two small apartments in the front part of the Bishop's house.¹ It is true, it would be advantageous to have both of them because of the windows and other legal rights. However, I think the lodging we need in Troyes is still more urgent. How would we manage in regard to that one without the assistance of what the Bishop wishes to give us! If it were being sold only at the price it is worth, that would be fine! But it is being offered for six thousand livres, although I fear it will be hard to get two hundred for it in rent; for it is not being rented. A Capuchin Father had taken it and had placed a devout woman there to make a home for a few poor people who had recently been converted. But I do not know how it is that there is no longer anyone there except that good woman and two poor girls who are leaving. On the other hand, to bargain with our benefactor, O Jésus! dear Mother, we must not do that. That is why, with all due deference, I think, dear Mother, that we should leave matters as they are.²

The Commander has not deemed it necessary to ratify the Bishop's foundation, since the said gentleman wanted that only because of the private agreement previously signed between that good gentleman and myself. He says that by his returning the original of the contract which he had, my sending ours back, and both being torn up, there is no need to ratify anything. That, dear Mother, is what I most humbly entreat you to communicate to the Bishop. I have never seen anyone give evidence of feeling more satisfaction over the action he has taken for the good of his diocese than his nephew, M. Bault. Certainly, dear Mother, the kindness with which he received me and negotiated with us is unimaginable.

Our mission at court will soon be closing. The poor Missionaries have worked at it incessantly from morning till night, preaching, catechizing, hearing general confessions from morning till night, and they are so tired that they can do no more.

We shall have those destined for Troyes rest and recuperate a little in order to go there on the eve of Passion Sunday.³ The Bishop thought it would be well for them to begin their work at that time with the ordinands' retreat. And I, who trouble my dear, good Mother too much, shall close by most humbly imploring her to offer us to God asking Him to forgive the many faults we incessantly commit in the project He has entrusted to us. I am for my dearest Mother's holy community and in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Mother, your most humble, and most grateful and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The good doctor, whom M. Gallemant had appointed his successor in the parish of Aumale,⁴ is working on the memoirs or the life of that blessed man and another priest or two.

Paris, February 25, 1638

Addressed: Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Prioress of the Carmelite monastery in the faubourg of Troyes, in Troyes

309. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638, around February]¹

Blessed be God for taking that little soul in a state of readiness, so that we have good reason to believe she is most happy! I am going to send you M. Bécu and someone else.

It will be hard for me to see M. Laisné.² If he approves the marriage, we must not be upset. He will show his secretary what is required, if he does not already know.

I think the painting of the Virgin and Saint Joseph holding the Child Jesus by the hand is best for the little foundlings.³

Madame Goussault sent me word that she would be going to your house today to begin her retreat. If that is so, will you be away? I think it would be well for you to write her a note to find out what she intends.

I saw Madame de Herse, the President's wife, yesterday and told her what I have told you. I forgot to write Madame Goussault to tell her to take the meditation on death and the particular judgment after the first one. Please tell her that, and also that it would be better for her to recall the sins I mentioned to her so as to meditate on the ones she considers appropriate. The matter of housing is often on my mind. Good day, Mademoiselle. Possess your heart in peace. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

310. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638, around February]¹

Mademoiselle,

I think you would do well to have that little child buried in the cemetery and to send someone to ask the Pastor to come and see you. State the matter as it is until we find out how things will be handled. What comes to my mind now is that we should give something to the Pastor and the grave-digger annually to bury all of them. For today, you will have to ask him to send his curate to get the body and instruct the grave-digger to prepare the little grave. Ask him also to tell each of them how the matter stands, and that this is an experiment we would like to try.

I feel urged more than ever to conclude the business concerning the Charity.² Ask God to give me some time to work at it. My situation is pitiful; I have no time at all. God grant me eternity!

When you are able to go to Rueil, the Pastor has informed me that he will accept the Sister I send him.

I am your servant.

V. D.

I am not saying anything to you about Madame Pelletier. I just wrote to Mademoiselle³ about the child's death. She informed me yesterday that she would send you another one today, if it is convenient. Her letter is enclosed.

311. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have instructed our good Brother Nicolas¹ to pass by Richelieu on his way to visit M. Grenu in Gascony. Please do not delay his going there more than a day and, if you can, write to the said M. Grenu and have everyone in the Company who can do so write to him.

I think this messenger will find you about to begin the mission in Richelieu again. I entreat you, Monsieur, to recommend prudence more than ever when explaining the sixth commandment and handling the questions people ask about it. If we are not careful, the Company will suffer for it some day.

Conduct the processions without a lot of ceremony; I would even say without having the children dressed up in anything but the surplices found on the premises. People have greatly criticized both the one and the other, although the Bishop of Alet² has done the first, and with regard to the second there were only a few children dressed in albs. It is God's wish that, in this way, we be brought to practice patience a little and that this proceed from a desire to bring about the memorable conversion of some outstanding souls.

I did not have the honor of seeing the Bishop of Chartres³ at all, and it was not desirable. I shall do so, please God, when it is time.

It would be well for you to set up the Charity and to let the Bishop of Chartres know about it so that he can find out from His Eminence⁴ if he approves of it. It would also be well for you to offer him that Daughter of Charity.⁵

I close, recommending myself as well as the present state of the Mission to your holy prayers. I greet the Company most humbly and most affectionately, being, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Vallegrand, March 3, 1638

312. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Jeanne, the Daughter of Charity in this parish, has committed many faults, on account of which the Pastor,² the officers, and M. de Vincy decided today that she must be changed. I entreat you, Mademoiselle, to send us another who has a more gentle and more accommodating disposition, and do this by tomorrow morning so that she will not have the time to put together an intrigue like the others; it is inconceivable how apt she is at it. Now I think, nevertheless, that we must take her back for the Hôtel-Dieu or somewhere else, so that justice may be accompanied by mercy. Would you believe that she gave Jacqueline a slap in the face, and that she does anything she pleases, and a number of things without saying anything about them, such as treating a patient without permission? And what is worse, she informed the Lenten preacher of some of the faults of the Ladies and began to have them preached about. Well now, whom will you be able to give us without inconveniencing yourself? Take care of it.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

313. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]¹

I returned from Pontoise last night. Here is the answer to your last letter. We shall really have to see about the Foundlings. A meeting is being held today at the home of Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I would like you to attend and to write to the said lady, asking her to send her carriage for you. It is true that I think you will be asked by Madame de Beaufort, the superior, to attend the meeting at Saint-Etienne. If so, I think it would be advisable for you to go there and to let me know how you feel about M. Dieu's suggestion, and that of M. Foucauld, to the gentlemen of the chapter. In addition, please let me know if what Madame Goussault has told me is true, that you know of a few simple, devout young women who are willing to devote themselves to the spiritual needs of the women in the Légat,² in the place of the fourteen Ladies.³ I think it would be better that way; otherwise we shall always be filled with apprehension lest the aforesaid Ladies catch some disease there. Please send me your answer at Madame Goussault's house around three o'clock.

It is true that I have been told things are going badly at the Hôtel-Dieu. It is to be hoped that your health will allow you to go and spend two or three days there. Look into it.

I sent word to Jeanne, from Saint-Laurent, to go to La Chapelle.

The Ladies of Saint-Sulpice are extraordinarily fond of their Sister Jeanne. We shall hurt their feelings if we take her away from them. She will have to be warned of her faults.

I hope that your son's illness is nothing but an upset and that his health will be better after that little fever.

You are right in choosing Marie-Denise⁴ for Saint-Etienne.⁵ I have no confidence in that Charity because of the frame of mind of the people who have a hand in it and because there are some men interfering with it.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

314. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[March 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have been back at the Collège des Bons-Enfants since the day before yesterday, and I intend to go to Saint-Lazare today to spend the night, God willing.

Enclosed is a letter from Mademoiselle Poulaillon which I just received this minute. What do you think of her suggestion, Mademoiselle?

I have not heard anything at all about that matter of which you are aware. I shall soon have the happiness of seeing that individual's confessor.

I find your son a little pale--that sore hand is somewhat painful. He promised M. Pavillon that he would work on the resolution he is supposed to take. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday, ten o'clock, at the Collège des Bons-Enfants

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

315. - TO SAINT LOUISE

(Now 277a.)

316. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, March 15, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of the fourth of this month yesterday, but I have not yet received the one from the King's advocate in Loudun. I am very glad that you are furnishing your house little by little. There is not time to talk about hurrying the church. I shall not lose the opportunity to do so, because I am very sorry to see you suffering¹ in that little place.

May God be blessed for the success of your mission and that of Messieurs Buissot and Durot! Oh! how useful the success of the latter ought to be for some of us!

I am a little worried about M. Gourrant's illness and that of Bastien.² Although I have perfect confidence in your care, in the name of Our Lord, Monsieur, allow me to recommend them to you.

As for what you say about M. Codoing's making a big point of explaining the sixth commandment, I beg you, Monsieur, to tell him that I ask him most humbly not to speak about it any more, in Richelieu or anywhere else, except in a very moderate way,³ for several reasons I shall enumerate for him, which are of the greatest importance.⁴

I am going to Rueil and shall have someone speak to His Eminence⁵ about the Charity,⁶ so that he may decide whether he would like to establish it while the people are well disposed. Let me know, meanwhile,⁷ how many sick people there are in Richelieu⁸ ordinarily--I do not mean in August, but now.⁹

I see that you have met our little Brother Nicolas¹⁰ and received my letter. He is the nephew of M. de la Quin (?) and is presenting a very fine young man from Poitou to be a brother here. He is going to see his mother whose health is in danger and, once that is done, he will come and pay you a visit.

Once again, please give the Company to understand from me that they must be extremely prudent about the explanation and any questions concerning the sixth commandment, and must not dress the children up for the procession in any way whatsoever, not even in surplices, except for those who usually wear them. We are in trouble because of those things and it will be a long time before we come to the end of it. Blessed be God that there was no complaint about the mission¹¹ that recently gave rise to people's¹² talking about us!

What you see so scratched out, I wrote to you last night when I was half asleep. Pray to God and have others pray for the Company.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, in Richelieu

317. - TO JEAN BECU, IN SAINT-VICTOR

[February or March 1638]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

So you are about to depart. We are longing to see you again in good health. Meanwhile, please find out from the Pastor of Saint-Victor² (if you judge him to be of good character and sufficient ability), whether he intends to become a religious of the Order of Malta, as the statutes require of those who have their parishes. If you find him uncertain, give him to understand that this is the Commander's³ wish and that it must be carried out.⁴ Therefore, let him reflect on the matter and inform him of his final decision within a month because, if he does not want to do it, the Commander is determined to follow the statute and give the parish to someone else. And if he wants to do it, the said Commander would like to see him and have him understand his desire concerning some preparation he wants him to make before beginning the novitiate. Please tell him this gently and prudently, and convey his intent to the Commander. Also, please go on to Champagne,⁵ near Houdan,⁶ and find out from some of the people how they feel about the priest the Commander sent them a little while ago. But if you must take the coach to Dreux, then do so; the Commander will get this information elsewhere. I send greetings to the Pastor of Saint-Victor and to M. Cuissot, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Saint-Victor.

318. - TO LEONARD BOUCHER, IN MONTMIRAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last Sunday, as I was leaving for the city and from there for the country, I received your letter of the tenth of this month. As I returned the evening before last somewhat exhausted, my mind was not functioning well enough to take care of sending someone to assist good M. Mouton. I am doing so this morning and sending you Mathieu,¹ who is filled with zeal and charity, as you know. I beg you, Monsieur, not to spare anything for him. There are apothecaries in Montmirail and good surgeons. As for the doctor, you must send to Château-Thierry for one. There is one named M. Fournier, who is a good doctor and a friend of ours. You can use his services if you have not already called in someone else. And because he would be more comfortable in Montmirail, please have him taken there. I am writing to M. Octobre, the concierge, to have him find an apartment for him. I entreat you, Monsieur, not to leave him unless he is better, in which case you can complete the mission you have begun or join M. Lucas while M. Mouton is resting.

I most humbly greet the said M. Mouton and embrace him in spirit with a heart full of sorrow and tenderness. We shall not fail to pray to God for him, as you may suppose.

I am not going to say anything to you about the rest of your letter concerning the Charities, except that I can see quite well that this is not the time to reestablish them. Our Lord will give us a more opportune and peaceful moment, if He wishes.

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, March 17, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur Boucher, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail.

319. - TO SAINT LOUISE.

[March 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Enclosed is a letter from Barbe.² I did not send her the one you wrote to her until this morning. I kept forgetting it when I wrote to Saint-Germain.³

But how are you, Mademoiselle? I have been told that you are better. I praise God for that and ask Him to restore as much of your strength as you need to go to the country this Spring.

Last night I visited Madame Goussault, the President's wife. I had not seen her at all since the beginning of her illness ten days ago. She is better and wants to see good weather again and a little more strength so as to go for a ride in the country. She did not have the fever she was expecting yesterday.

Our Brother Alexandre⁴ is coming to see you today.

How are your little children? A word about them, please; not in writing, do not go to that trouble, but just by word of mouth.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

320. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, March 22, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

These few lines are to tell you two things: first, that young man from Poitou asked to join the Company after a trip he is making home to see his good mother. If you need him, it does not matter to him whether he is with you or here.¹ Therefore, make use of him as you wish.

The second thing is to let you know that the Cardinal has instructed me to tell you to set up the Charity in Richelieu. He will give it something annually until it can support itself by means of ordinary collections. According to that, while waiting, it would be appropriate for you to give it eight or ten écus immediately, if you can.

The King's advocate in Loudun told me that the Mission's method with regard to heretics is excellent, in that it establishes the divine truths without arguing controversial points. The Huguenots are delighted with this. Therefore, please continue.

The Cardinal is of the opinion that a day of rest should be taken each week during the mission, Saturday, for example. He ordered me to see that this is done everywhere. I am asking you, Monsieur, to begin in Richelieu.²

I shall send you the Daughter of Charity.³ Perhaps Madame Goussault will bring her to you as soon as possible after Easter.

The hurry I am in does not allow me to tell you any more, except that I shall answer those who wrote to us by the first messenger. I embrace them all, meanwhile, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, in Richelieu.

321. - TO THE DUC D'ATRI¹

[Around March 1638]²

Monseigneur,

The Comte de Bourlemont³ and his son, the abbé,⁴ have done me the honor of telling me that Your Lordship would like me to give you an account of the condition of Mademoiselle d'Atri, your daughter,⁵ so that Your Lordship may determine what will be best for her. I promised them that I would do so, all the more willingly, Monseigneur, because I am indebted to a special blessing from God for the opportunity to serve Your Lordship.

Three or four months ago, I received an order from the ecclesiastical judge in Paris to visit your daughter. The Comte de Maure⁶ had asked permission to have her exorcised, according to the advice given him by several persons of deep piety. They feared that the good child was being tormented by some evil possession or obsession. The reason they had for believing this was the aversion the good child had for the things of God. It had reached such a point that she had not prayed at all for three years, from the time of her childhood when she was living in Ville-l'Evêque⁷ with Mademoiselle de Longueville,⁸ and for about two years she had been kept locked up in a room at Port-Royal⁹ without hearing Holy Mass. Therefore, that was why those good souls held that opinion and the reason why I had the happiness of visiting her. She

immediately expressed her state to me with good judgment and candor, for she has a good, solid mind, far beyond that of the majority of young women, but a little melancholic. It was my opinion at once that it was just that melancholy depression tormenting her. Nevertheless, the respect I owed to those who held the opinion that there was some evil obsession caused me to submit my judgment to theirs. Therefore, when I was making my report to the ecclesiastical judge, I told him that I thought there was no objection to M. Charpentier's--he is a priest of renowned holiness in this city¹⁰--performing a few cautious exorcisms, gently and without calling the evil spirit out, by prayer rather than by cursing. Such was the advice of the Reverend Father General of the Oratory.¹¹ It was not carried out because of the said Sieur Charpentier's illness. In the meantime, God chose to send your daughter a rather serious and dangerous illness, during which she opened her heart. The Comte¹² and Comtesse de Maure,¹³ fearing for her salvation, persuaded her to go to Confession to me. She did this by a general confession of her entire past life, with the greatest exactitude that I have ever seen; she spent three or four hours confessing on separate occasions. It was this action that confirmed the opinion I had beforehand. Since the illness had been a little drawn out and was some sort of languor, I thought she had gone back into the torment of the same depression. Now since she was cured, nonetheless, she found herself completely freed from it so that she asked to go to Confession to me again and to receive Holy Communion which she had not done during her illness. She performed these actions with freedom of spirit as any other person would have done.

Some time later, she asked to be a religious and to be received at Port-Royal. As soon as she told me about it, I replied that it was not the time. She needed at least a year with her aunt,¹⁴ who should take her to get some country air before she thought of carrying out that plan. I told her the same thing as often as she and the Comte and Comtesse de Maure did me the honor of speaking to me about it. However, that did not prevent her from secretly proceeding with her entrance into religious life nor from putting forward a number of reasons, some based on the judgments of God and some on the fact that she could not stand the world's manner of acting.

When the Messieurs de Bourlemont learned of this and informed the Comte and Comtesse de Maure that it was Your Lordship's wish that she enter religious life, after some objection on the part of both, they agreed to it, although with great reluctance, fearing lest the good child go back into the same depression. After I had represented to the said Sieurs de Bourlemont the danger in which the good young woman was being placed, they passed over all the aforesaid objections, judging that such was your desire, and they placed her, not at Port-Royal, but in a monastery of the Jacobines.¹⁵

That, Monseigneur, is what has happened in this affair. The Messieurs de Bourlemont thought it fitting for me to write to Your Lordship about it. It will be up to you, Monseigneur, to decide now what would be best with regard to the good young woman's direction. It is difficult for me to speak to you about this matter, but I thought I was obliged to do so in conscience and that you would not be offended since your daughter's salvation is in danger. If God were pleased to make me worthy of rendering you some more agreeable service, His Divine Goodness knows that I have a great desire to do so and that there is no one in the world over whom Our Lord has given you more power than over me. I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

322. - TO ANTOINE PORTAIL, IN FRENEVILLE

Paris, April 28, 1638

. . . Well now, Monsieur, that is a great deal with regard to temporal matters. May it please the goodness of God that according to your desire, they may not divert you from spiritual ones. May He share with us the eternal thought He has of Himself while continuously giving His full attention to the direction of the world and to providing for the needs of all His creatures, even down to a tiny gnat! O Monsieur, how we must work at acquiring a share in that spirit!

I am, in the same spirit, Monsieur. . . .

322a. - TO FRANCOIS DUFESTEL,¹ IN SANCEY²

Saint-Lazare, May 8, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of May 3 and understand from it: (1) the difficulty of continuing the mission to the soldiers; (2) the rumor going around concerning Saint-Lazare; (3) that fault is being found because no one wrote to anyone in the city to recommend the Company.

Now I shall tell you with regard to the first, that the unsettled state of the poor people would probably hinder them from reaping any benefit from the mission. We must patiently await the time of the ordinands in order to give the retreat there, if the Bishop of Troyes³ approves. If not, it would be well to go and give the mission in the other places belonging to the Commander.⁴ If indeed you do work with the ordinands, I shall send you M. Baudet,⁵ whom I have purposely detained here for that work, but you must notify me ahead of time.

As for the rumor going around about Saint-Lazare, what shall we do about it? We must put up with such rumors patiently. Our Lord will bring about their disappearance since they have no foundation.

I wrote to tell you how the Commander and Father de Gondi feel about the third point. It is better to be at fault with the advice of those two good men than to take on the matter ourselves. I shall talk to them about it again and shall send them your letter.

It would be well for you to notify me of all that has to do with us and to do so by every messenger. Please write to the Bishop of Troyes concerning the ordinands, not as though you are questioning the matter, but to find out from him if there will be many ordinands.

Since the young man he sent us has no desire at all to be a member of the Company, and because it is to be feared that there might be some danger of his causing dissatisfaction on the part of the other students, all of whom wish to join the Company, we decided to place him at the Collège du Cardinal.⁶ We shall willingly pay his board there and hear his lessons sometimes, so that it will be as though he were with us, there being only a wall between that Collège and ours. Please inform the Bishop of Troyes of this, Monsieur. Tell him also that we shall take special care of him and shall see to the payment of his board without there being need for him to pay anything else. It will be sufficient that he be provided with clothing.

I am to leave this morning for Brie-Comte-Robert.⁷ From there I shall be able to go and pay a visit in Fréneville,⁸ so that I can be back on the eve of the Ascension.

I send heartfelt greetings to MM. du Chesne, Savary, and our Brother René,⁹ and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Dufestel, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey⁹

323. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MARCHAIS¹

[May 20 or 21, 1638]²

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since you are having so much difficulty in the country, I entreat you, Monsieur, to go and give the mission in Montmirail. You will have to give the morning sermon. M. Abeline,³ who is with the Bishop of Bayonne,⁴ will teach the adult catechism, and M. Le Breton,⁵ who is also with him, will perhaps teach the children's. He has never been on a mission, but he is learned, quite devout, and has very good sense nonetheless, which makes us think that he will do well. I shall discuss it with him. If he does not do it, then M. Boucher or M. Cuissot will. Inform M. Lucas of this. They can leave tomorrow in order to be in Montmirail by Saturday. It would be well for you to go and arrange some accommodations. I am writing a note about this to M. Octobre, the concierge.⁶ If it is necessary at times, you can have M. Lucas help you with the morning sermon. If the Bishop of Soissons⁷ sends someone for the octave of the Blessed Sacrament, take a rest. You will have to attend to the arrangements to be made and call a meeting of the Ladies of Charity. I shall send you a brother to serve in Montmirail--Gallemant⁸ or someone else--but you will have to give some attention to the food.

I most humbly send greetings to the Company. M. Abeline is a very good man, very prudent and discreet, and M. Le Breton, very fervent. I entreat the Company, for the love of Jesus Christ, to give them good example and show them great charity and respect. One of them is

soon to be the Vicar General of Bayonne. In the name of God, Monsieur, may they leave the Company edified. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please be sure to give the postage fee for the letters to M. Octobre and to arrive in Montmirail early on Saturday so as to have the accommodations arranged and to welcome M. Abeline and M. Le Breton.

Addressed: Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, presently in Marchais

324. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around May 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The proposal you made about Madame de Herse seemed complicated to me at first. However, we shall have to look into it.

I am going to the city and hope to see you in La Chapelle tomorrow. However, if the carriage is going to pick you up, do not fail to go, and arrange things at your house as you think best.

I praise God for what you told me about Madame Turgis and beg Him to increase His grace in her.

I do not understand what you told me about Isabelle² and Barbe;³ explain it to me. There was one word I was not able to read concerning the matter.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

325. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May 24, 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You will see before God, I hope, that you did the right thing in sending away that good young woman. You will do well to be satisfied with the payment of two hundred livres for her board and to allow Isabelle² to go to Argenteuil.

My little fever will not permit me to speak to your Sisters this week.

Enclosed is a note with a gift of the Holy Spirit, sent to you from Sainte-Marie.³

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take care of your health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Monday

You can send Barbe to Saint-Germain⁴ whenever you wish. Mademoiselle de Chaumont feels that she is necessary there and Madame Goussault does not think there is any need to send her to Richelieu. But without, however, asking for it, she would like us to be able to send three to the hospital in Angers.⁵ I sent her word that we would talk about it when she comes back.

The officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Ladies are coming here to the house tomorrow. See if you have any advice to give me.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras.

326. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MONTMIRAIL

Paris, June 2 [1638]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God for all that you wrote to me! I shall inquire about a schoolteacher, if there are none to be found there and if you let me know what her salary will amount to. It is very dangerous for girls and boys to go to school together.

The direction of the Charity belongs to the Prior.² If there are any funds, there will be no harm in using them to have the chapel set up.

I am a little suspicious about that poor woman's fondness for arranging her hair. You must try to make her change. If she is unwilling to do so, in nomine Domini. What you are suggesting to her seems reasonable to me.

I wrote to the Bishop of Soissons³ about the two gentlemen Abeline and Breton.

It would be well to have some restitution made or an alms given for the release of that prisoner.

Please tell M. Cuisot that his good brother has come to see me several times and that he is living and working with a goldsmith. Tell him also that I have forgotten his name and do not know how to send him the letter he intends to write to him. He seems good-natured to me.

We had sixty ordinands or thereabouts. They did very well, thank God. The Archbishop⁴ came to see them and went away quite satisfied, thank God; and with good reason, by the mercy of God.

M. Mouton no longer has a fever. Everyone is well. Only good M. Fouquet, the father,⁵ is worse and in critical condition. Please pray and have others pray to God for him. He is one of the most upright men I know. I am, for M. Abeline and M. Le Breton and for the entire Company, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail

327. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I shall try to go and serve² that good young woman Saturday at the usual time.

I am stunned by the death of so many of those little creatures; I think there may be something to what you say. Please let me know what Madame de Herse told you about it. We shall really have to think seriously about what we should do in this situation.

I already wrote to Madame Goussault, I believe, that I was praising God for letting her think of inviting you to go to Grigny. I say the same thing to you. You will find there M. Pavillon and two priests from the house here; one of them has just left the seminary and the other is still in it. There is also a nephew of the Pastor of Saint-Gervais,³ who lives at Saint-Nicolas.⁴ I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Thursday, at four o'clock

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras.

328. - TO NICOLAS MARCEILLE¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you most humbly for taking care to send us so promptly all that I asked of you in my last letter and I entreat you, in the name of Our Lord, to take care of your health. M. de la Salle wrote me that you seemed a little unwell. I beseech you, Monsieur, to get some rest and have yourself purged and bled.

I shall be upset if you did not allow the Prior² to have his say in the lease executed for the farmer from Le Bourget.³

You must not have the hay cut while this rainy weather lasts, no matter what the workers tell you. It would be well to write to Bertrand Denise in Villepreux for me and ask him to send you that good man he sent to Saint-Lazare to toss and separate the hay. Send him here, giving him some money for that purpose. Jourdain⁴ knows where the people in Villepreux live and will be able to send the letter with a trustworthy person. The owner of the meadow opposite the church in La Chapelle knows how to take care of it. When you find out that he is having his own cut, you can have ours cut, and not any sooner. Bertrand Denise is Father de Gondi's farmer on his

Villepreux farm. It would be well for you to contract by the day with the good man he sends you and send him here to us.

My little illness is still with me; nonetheless, I think I glimpse some slight improvement. I intend, with God's help, to be purged, unless something absolutely requires my return.

Well now, I close, recommending myself to your prayers and in spirit to that good and holy man, your father. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Fréneville, octave day of the Blessed Sacrament⁵

If you need little Pasquier, you may keep him; we shall do without him here. Pierre is doing what he used to do. Please have M. Boudet bled and purged, unless he has had it done since his return. I send him my humble greetings. Please send our Brother Louistre's⁶ letters to the place they are addressed in the direction of Mantes on Saturday morning. The messenger leaves Paris that day.

Addressed: Monsieur de Marceille, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

329. - TO JEAN BECU, IN MONTMIRAIL

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night, in Fréneville, I received the letter you wrote me on the fifth of this month. I am rather worried about your little indisposition and am asking Our Lord to restore you to complete health.

You would do well to give twenty sous to the vergers and half an écu to the gardener.

You can do only what you have done, which was to send those two adulterers away secretly, unless one of them comes back. In that case, it would be wise to do what you can to persuade them to separate. The woman will perhaps be more disposed to do so.

The matter of the schoolteacher is to be handled by Father de Gondi,¹ since he is right there. He will also handle the reimbursement of the Charity's funds.

I do not doubt that the mission is moving slowly, with the present confusion of minds due to the way things are nowadays. The division with the Prior² is probably a contributing factor as well. You must not take sides in the matter; only neutral people can reconcile minds.

Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during octaves is not customary everywhere. When in Rome, you must do as the Romans do and accept the local customs, if they are not immoral.

The notary, who wrote as the parties directed him to do, did his duty by warning them before writing and, although he was aware of the contrary, he was, nevertheless, obliged to believe the contracting parties. He is there as a judge who must give more credence to what the parties prove to him than to what he has seen to the contrary. So much for the first case.

As for the second, I doubt that the person who bought the meadow, with the possibility of its being repurchased within three years, is in good faith, because it was not sold for a fair price. There is a loss of about sixty livres. The man would do well to release the seller from the obligation of the clause stating that it cannot be bought back for three years, or else give him sixty livres over and above the hundred for an unconditional sale. That way he will be buying the meadow at five percent, which is the fair price for a commoner's property. Also, that type of contract, which carries the obligation of the clause above, is contrary to good morals when the just price is not given.

There you have, Monsieur, what I can tell you from Fréneville, where I am with my little fever by Alexandre's³ order. Many people here are asking about you. Brother Hubert⁴ is doing incomparably well. Madame de la Grange is critically ill; she is hemorrhaging from the lung. She will be a great loss to this parish. I recommend her to your prayers and send most humble greetings to M. Abeline, M. Le Breton, and the rest of the Company. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL.

Fréneville, octave day of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament,⁵ 1638

Addressed: Monsieur Octobre, concierge of the Château de Montmirail, to be given, please, to Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Montmirail.

330. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY

[June 1638]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am sending this messenger expressly to tell you that that good man from Osny, about one league beyond Pontoise, never arrived. I do not know whether it is his fault or the doorkeeper's. Please send someone tomorrow morning to the Courcelles² farmer to tell him that I am asking him to send me one of his sons-in-law. He can leave late that same day, spend the night at Saint-Lazare, and set out early the next morning so as to be here Tuesday evening. The season for sowing the farmer's oats is growing short. He only has fifteen more acres left to do.

Also, please send for the farmer's eldest son, the married one in La Chapelle. Find out from him how M. Bienvenu, our farmer in Gonesse,³ had him harrow twice at the same time the wheat-field in which the Prior⁴ had his sainfoin sown--the one behind the barn. It seems to me that the first time the harrow was turned over on one end, and the other time through the field the harrow was not turned over but used in the usual way. I entreat you, Monsieur, to find out about this from that young man or, if he does not remember, from the said Sieur Bienvenu, and write and let me know.

I did not go on to Limouiron⁵ because, in addition to finding enough to keep me busy, I was not feeling too well the first day and neither was Jean Besson.⁶ We signed a contract for the repairs to be made and for the garden wall for about one hundred écus. This morning we are to conclude the contract for the farmer's sheep; he wanted us to have them present.

If I can, I shall leave for Limouiron soon. That place belongs entirely to God. O Monsieur, how admirable is the effect of His goodness on those people!

I doubt that I can be back in Paris before Thursday or Friday. Please send the messenger back with the man who is coming to do the sowing. Assure the latter that we shall remunerate him. Meanwhile, I send greetings to all of you, to the Prior, and to the whole house. I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Dehorgny, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare

331. - TO JEAN DE LA SALLE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I came back from Limouiron quite late yesterday and have as yet been able to read only your letter and M. Marceille's. I am sending you that good young man from Mespuits;¹ I found him here because M. Portail failed to send him to you. Have him make his retreat at once, please. I am keeping little Jean until tomorrow.

By the grace of God, I am in good health since my journey. It is astonishing that while I have been here without doing anything, I have found myself as I was in Paris and the great number of concerns has almost taken away my illness entirely. If I continue to be as fit as I am, I shall return around the end of the week, God willing.

Meanwhile, what can I tell you concerning the Prior?² If there is some reason for going to see him, either you or M. de Marceille should do so. However, I do not know if he spoke up at the latest leasing of Le Bourget. I was surprised by someone's telling me that I had said to have it concluded during my absence, because I think I did not make myself clearly understood. It seems to me that I had said to put off the farmer until my return, for I was well aware that there was something I had to get approved by the Prior. Doubtless M. de Marceille understood otherwise. I know, however, that I spoke to the Prior about the farmer's offer the day before my departure. He told me that it would be better to accept his offer rather than the one being made by someone else.

I beg you, Monsieur, never to allow one of our doorkeepers to leave the door for any reason whatsoever and see that there are always two of them.

You did not tell me who is taking care of the prisons and who has the keys to them.

What shall I say to you about those individuals who are asking to become members of the Company? Nothing, except that I shall abide by your decision in their regard. The young man from Caen, who is fearful of his father's affection, must be under consideration for a longer time, especially if his father is poor and the boy has nothing really worthy of commendation.

I am writing this just after getting out of bed. This letter can serve for M. de Marceille as well. I ask him to give eight hundred livres to Alexandre for the fabric and to try to stretch out what he has left. On my return, we shall see what can be done in order for us to have enough to live on. I earnestly entreat him to take care of his health--and Alexandre of his--and to send Henri to Saint-Denis to get the fabric.

If he is hard up, M. de Marceille could tell M. de Vincy that I shall consider the request he made for a boy. But as for our Brother Besson, we must not even think of him. I greet him most humbly. Also, assure the Prior of my obedience if you go to see him and give my regards to M. Cosin.

Good day, Monsieur, I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

A butcher from around Limouren, who is the brother of the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Charity at the Place Royale,³ will be bringing his flock of sheep to spend the night at Saint-Lazare. Please make arrangements with the farmer to lend him the stables. Lodge the gentleman and his servants in our house and treat them cordially on their way both to and from the Saint-Denis fair.

I shall send little Jean back to you tomorrow. M. de Marceille will make an agreement with the haymaker from Villepreux and will send him here only when we notify him.

June 14, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur de la Salle, Priest of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare, in Paris

332. - TO DENIS DE CORDES

[1638]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am leaving for Rueil. We have some urgent business. I most humbly entreat you to offer our apologies to M. Guillotin of Etampes who is supposed to come and see you this afternoon about the farm in Fréneville and conclude, or rather sign the contract, if you find it acceptable. M. de Marceille will bring you the money and specify the conditions if need be. The price is twelve hundred livres out of which the sum of fifty livres revenue at eight and one third per cent must be retained on the one hand and ten livres on the other. It would be wise to withdraw the letters he has and to have the number of acres of land specified. There are said to be one hundred fifty, a great number of which are lying fallow.

Pardon such great importunity, Monsieur. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

Addressed: Monsieur de Marceille to be given to Monsieur de Cordes, Counselor of the Châtelet

333. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I have just been told that there is contagion in the house where the Sisters from the Hôtel-Dieu are living. Please let me know whether we should take them out of there or whether, while allowing them to stay, we should advise the ladies not to go there. And should we ourselves go there--I mean the Sisters from here? Is there any harm in our taking them some preserves for the Hôtel-Dieu?

You have forgotten the critical situation that I told you I had to discuss with you. I do not know what our good God is trying to make me understand, but I hope you will enlighten me, since I am, Monsieur, your most humble daughter and most grateful servant.

L. DE M.

I am not saying a thing to you about my acting so amiss with regard to the Sisters. I await whatever directions you may choose to give me.

July 2 [Probably 1638]¹

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

334. - TO JEAN DE FONTENEIL, IN BORDEAUX

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank you a thousand times for the act of charity you did for poor Beyrie¹ and I beg God to be his patience and your reward.

I sent your package to Châlons and have received no answer concerning it to send to you. If you wish to write another letter, I shall give the woman who owns the coach, who is a friend of mine, the special responsibility of delivering it.

I am, moreover, infinitely consoled by the blessing God has been pleased to give your holy community and I am asking Him to bless it more and more. It seems to me that you should in no way be sorry for having spent so much time honoring the hidden life of Our Lord nor should you have any scruples, in the spirit of humility which I think Our Lord has shared with you, about beginning to manifest the dawn of that day on the horizon of events.

You are a source of help for us in Bordeaux on every occasion that arises. I beg you, Monsieur, to forgive me if I make use of it too freely.

We are bringing M. Grenu back here. Perhaps he will stop at your house and be able to meet with Messieurs de Sergis and Brunet or even with M. Boudet, who is going from Brittany to Toulouse. If any of them need exchange money, please give them some, Monsieur, and I shall repay you at the appointed time.

I send regards to the gentlemen of your company with all the humility and respect in my power, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, July 20, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur de Fonteneil, Canon of the Chapter of Saint-Seurin, in Bordeaux

335. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Would you take a foundling brought here yesterday by some well-to-do people who found him in a field belonging to our house? He is only two or three days old and was baptized yesterday evening at Saint-Laurent. Since he is a foundling, there is nothing to be said against this, unless it be that you are not taking him from the Couche or from the Hôtel-Dieu.² If it is thought necessary to take care of that formality, we shall do so. In the meantime, I beg you, Mademoiselle, to take him in and entrust him to a wet nurse.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Tuesday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

336. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[1638]¹

Monsieur,

Enclosed is a letter. I feel that it is necessary to do something about this poor young woman immediately. She has so won the hearts of the inhabitants that rumor has it that, if she is removed, no other Sister will be accepted. For a long time now, she has been recommending

herself to everyone, especially to some old bachelors named Messieurs de la Noue. She has been obtaining little delicacies from them and has been living well, receiving bottles of wine and pâtés. I most humbly entreat you, for the love of God, to consider the consequences of this unfortunate situation of which I feel I am the cause. Please ask our good God to pardon me, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

Tuesday

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

337. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]¹

Do not be astonished at seeing the rebellion of that poor creature. We shall see many more like her, if we live on; and should we not suffer as much from our own as Our Lord did from His? Let us be truly submissive to His good pleasure in the situation of the moment. We must try to get her to come here, either by my writing to her myself, or by sending the founding Lady or a priest from this house, for we really must withdraw her. You shall see the letter she wrote me. O bon Dieu, how that poor creature deceived me!

Please let me know your thoughts on the matter. Would Barbe² be more apt to win her over, or would your health permit you to take little Jeanne³ there and settle her in the place?

If it is in Nogent that she wishes to live, Madame de Brou,⁴ M. de Vincy's cousin, is in charge there.

VINCENT DEPAUL

338. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638 or 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have had M. de la Salle write again to the Pastor in Saint-Germain, requesting him to send that Sister back. Madame de Chaumont just wrote to me about the matter at the request of Mademoiselle Chemerault² who told her about it last night. We shall have to do what we can about the case but, in the end, we shall have to yield to the pressure if influential people get involved.

Madame Goussault is satisfied with Barbe's sister.³ I think you would be wise to hold on to her. Her brother is about to return home.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

I instructed Madame Goussault to send you Madame Chaumont's letter which I just sent to her.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

339. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN ANGOULEME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received the letter you wrote to me partly in Plassac¹ and partly in Angoulême on the feast of Saint Martha.² I understand from it, I think, that the difficulties people had put in your mind have subsided; I always believed that would be the case. All I have to ask you on that point, Monsieur, is that you work at ridding yourself of the esteem you have had up to now for the glitter and sparkle of virtue and the vain applause of the world, which Our Lord so assiduously avoided and so often recommends us to shun, and that you labor in earnest to acquire true and solid virtues.

I am a little upset that M. Brunet left without you, contrary to the rule which obliges us not to separate. In the name of God, Monsieur, let us be very exact in observing all that has been prescribed for us, and Our Lord will bless us. The contrary leaves everything to be feared.

I am very glad that you are pleased to have M. Boudet, and indeed you have good reason to be, for he is a holy soul. I hope you will consider him as such. However, that will not prevent you from continuing as director until you receive an order to the contrary. I have written to the Archbishop of Toulouse³ about that.

I would be very happy if you would visit the Charities in Saintonge and take with you that good priest from Plassac, until you meet M. Boudet in Bordeaux. He has been told to go there as soon as possible.

Moreover, I am very glad about the opportunity you have of getting some money in Agen. I shall have it returned here by a bill of exchange. There are still one hundred livres left to pay according to the account and your receipts, which the Vicar General sent me yesterday. I shall have the money dispatched to him today. He has received seven hundred livres from us, and you, eight hundred from there. Is that correct?

I think it would also be well for you to visit the Charities established in the diocese of Bordeaux. M. Fonteneil will give you the names of the places. When you pass through Bourg,⁴ however, visit the one there; it is on your way back to Bordeaux. Bourg is on the Garonne between Blaye and Bordeaux. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL.

Paris, August 14, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, presently in the service of the Bishop of Angoulême, in Angoulême

340. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Around 1638]¹

Monsieur,

I am going to send your answer to Madame Pelletier by Sister Turgis. I am so wicked as to have wished that those instructions about her returning soon had not been in it.

Monsieur de Liancourt stopped here yesterday. I did not see him, but he left word that his wife was very upset about my return.

My little bloodletting yesterday helped me to perspire all night, giving me great relief, thank God. As a result, I have gotten out of bed. Since I do not have sufficient strength or health to come and visit you, considering the bad weather, and since I need to talk to you, I had sent word to the brother at the door, asking you to take the trouble to come here. I am taking this liberty because of the confidence you have given me in this regard before, since I believe myself always to be, Monsieur, your most humble and most grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

Sunday

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

341. - TO NOEL BRULART DE SILLERY

[Between 1634 and 1640]¹

Monsieur,

I have never experienced such an amiable goodness as yours and, if I had as many graces as you, I would offer you one of the most beautiful thank you's that you have every received. Since Our Lord has not given me that ability, may He Himself be my power to thank you and to reveal to your good heart the esteem that our whole Congregation and I myself in particular have for you, and the constant and most tender affection it has pleased His Divine Majesty to give me for your worthy person.

I wish I had the words to express my gratitude for the charity and gifts this poor Little Company is continually receiving from your generosity. May Our Lord be your reward and may He enhance the crown He has prepared for you in Heaven while you do your utmost to establish His empire in souls on earth.

342. - TO JEAN BECU, IN AMIENS

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am more consoled than I can tell you by the news I learned from your letter, which I have just received. I thank God and good M. Pecoul. O mon Dieu, how obligated we are to that great servant of God! Please give him my most humble regards and assure him of my gratitude.

I think that you should not even consider suing the King's attorney. You would only make him twice as antagonistic and you do not need that.

Starting tomorrow, I shall work on obtaining the letters necessary for your nephew. There is no need for you to stay there, nor to commission any friend to attend to the confirmation of the letters. It will be a long, drawn out affair and I do not know whether it is advisable to pursue it hastily at the present time. Criminal affairs need to mature so that they can be resolved more easily. Present all the written statements from here that you can. It would be well for you to seek the advice of one or two well-known lawyers in Amiens to see how you are to proceed, and meet with both of them together for that purpose. When you come here, we shall do the same thing here. Please bring their advice in writing.

We shall be most happy to send what you mentioned to the good niece of your benefactor. I send him my regards and am for him, for M. Leleu, and for you, Monsieur, a most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, August 29, 1638

Since receiving your letter, I reread the previous one and noticed that we need some documents from there in order to obtain the royal letters. We shall postpone working on this until your return. In fact, right now we would not know what to go on.

Addressed: Monsieur Antoine, organist-chaplain of Notre-Dame, residing near Saint-Remy,¹ to be delivered to Monsieur Bécu, Priest of the Mission, in Amiens

343. - TO BERNARD CODOING,¹ IN RICHELIEU.

August 29, 1638

I praise God, Monsieur, for the grace He has given you to overcome yourself as you did when you were requested to go to the country. I beg Him to make you absolute master of yourself so that you have only one and the same will with God always and in all things, which is indeed the perfect state for anyone in our vocation.

But the consolation my soul has received in that regard has been tinged with sorrow because of your illness. In the name of Our Lord, Monsieur, do all you can to regain your health and take good care of it so that you can serve God and the poor for a longer time. This moderate care does not preclude the obligation we have of generously risking our lives when the salvation of our neighbor is concerned. O Monsieur, how earnestly I beg God to animate all of us with such generosity!

344. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

I shall try to come to La Chapelle or to send for your Sisters on Saturday. I no longer have my slight fever, it seems to me, or very little. Be assured, Mademoiselle, that I shall take greater care of my health, if anything can be added to the care I am taking, because you bid me to do so.

I beg Our Lord to bless your trip and you yourself, and to multiply His blessings on your soul and that of Madame Goussault. Please be very cheerful with her, even though you should have to lessen a bit that somewhat serious disposition which nature has bestowed on you and which grace is tempering by the mercy of God. I am, in His love...

Paris, August 30, 1638

344a. - TO CHARLES DE MONTCHAL, ARCHBISHOP OF TOULOUSE

[September 1638]¹

Your Excellency,

I most humbly beg your pardon, if I do not have the honor of seeing you this afternoon. I promised the Bishop of Grasse,² the Bishop of Bayonne,³ and Monsieur Pavillon that I would spend this afternoon with them, even though I am in retreat. I also promised Commander de Sillery that I would speak with him late today. I am ashamed, Your Excellency, that I am obliged to treat you in this way. Your charity, which has no limits in our regard, so it seems, will forgive me.

I just wrote to the Bishop of Beauvais⁴ this minute, and I assure you, Your Excellency, that at least half the letter is about you and what Our Lord is accomplishing through you.

I am, in the love of the same Lord, Your Excellency, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: The Most Reverend Archbishop of Toulouse

345. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am late in answering you; the difficulties I have had since your letter are the reason for it. I praise God for the satisfaction you must have received from your son and beg Him to grant him the grace of carrying out his resolutions.

As for the young man, I have no fault to find, if you have spoken to him about it, except that I cannot help but be afraid that, by doing more than you are able, something may happen. Nevertheless, please pay no attention at all to what I say about the matter.

I have been to Saint-Germain.² Madame de Liancourt is feeling better. I told her about your offering to come and take care of her, to which she replied: "O mon Dieu, that would be just like her!" She spoke about you several times and about how satisfied she is with her schoolteacher for the girls.

The Charity in Richelieu really needs Sister Barbe now because of the great number of sick people. What do you think, Mademoiselle, of sending her to help those good people in this necessity? Their illnesses are not contagious. In that event, could you not give us Sister Louise for here?³

Madame de Chaumont thinks it advisable for you to go to Saint-Germain to see the company⁴ in a body and for Madame Goussault to go with you. It is true that people are now in the midst of the grape-harvest. We shall have to see about it in a little while.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

346. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

Saint-Lazare. [Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Madame,

I would have been consoled to see you today, Madame, but it will have to be some other time. Mademoiselle Le Gras spoke to me about hearing her confession tomorrow morning along with those of her Sisters in La Chapelle. She would very much like you to be able to lend her your carriage for that purpose, but I do not know how you can do so since you have so many concerns at present.

I entreat you, Madame, to send her word not to come, in case you have to come here tomorrow morning. What I wanted to tell you does not require you to hurry on my account. In the meantime, I wish you good day and am, in Our Lord. . . .

347. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

If you think that Henriette² can teach school, fine; try her at it. The experiment would have been better somewhere else; however, do as God inspires you to do. I do not feel that Perrette³ has a good mind for that sort of work.

It would really be good for you to assemble the Ladies of the Charity, if the Pastor approves; I mean the ones from the town.⁴ Madame de Chaumont will be hurt if you and Madame Goussault do not visit her. Ask her not to talk about it to the Queen's⁵ maids of honor.

If your health allows you to stay there seven or eight days, do so, and longer if need be. Meanwhile, put Madame Pelletier in charge of the house⁶ and give her the regulations she is to maintain. Madame Goussault can return two or three days later and come to get you.

Please tell Madame Goussault that it would be advisable for her to see Madame Souscarrière⁷ or Madame Traversay in order to let the Hôtel Dieu know that the snack⁸ will be discontinued. Tell her also that I forgot to mention the house and that I shall speak to Father Sirmond⁹ at the first opportunity.

Courage now! I beg Our Lord, meanwhile, to bless your trip and I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D. P.

Sunday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

348. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

Early tomorrow, therefore, we shall have to send for Sister Barbe and, today, we must send for Henriette² and put Nicole in her place. But it would be wise for you to get her word that she will come back every time that she is recalled. The trip to Notre-Dame-des-Vertus³ may enable her to obtain some grace from God.

I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

349. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

That good young woman arouses my compassion, as she does yours, but what can we do? No religious community will take on that financial burden. Would it not be better to send her back to her native place? If you think it advisable to talk the matter over seriously with Mademoiselle Musnier and to keep her for two weeks, that is fine.

This morning I wrote to Madame Traversay and told her to fill up to seven of the little children's vacancies, taking some from the Hôtel-Dieu and some from the Couche, until you have another wet nurse, a goat, and a cow.

Barbe² could never come so early in the morning that I would not be able to talk with her.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

350. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[September 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very glad that your son has returned and is at the collège.² He is better off there than here³ because the majority are in retreat and the others either ill or at the seminary. I would be quite pleased, however, for him to come and spend a couple of days here after they come out of retreat, around Wednesday of next week.

I am writing to you hurriedly. You would ease my mind by sending me word concerning the condition of your health, the state of your Sisters, and the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu. You knew that M. Lavocat⁴ felt that we should not begin again until after the feast of Saint Denis,⁵ and someday you shall know that I am more than I tell you, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

351. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1, 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I had told you I would come to see you today and I expected to do so, but a little indisposition has come upon me and is depriving me of that possibility. I beg you to excuse me, Mademoiselle, and because of this difficulty to send word to the Sisters not to come to your house today.

I am sending you fifty livres; please give them to Barbe and Louise for their trip. It would be well for them to take the coach to Tours and there to inquire about a man who usually escorts those who wish to go to Richelieu. They should engage him and hire a donkey or a little cart to go to Richelieu which is ten leagues away. There they shall do what they can for the sick poor according to the orders of M. Lambert or whoever takes his place. Enclosed is a letter I wrote to him.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The price of the coach to Tours is twelve livres per person. I shall tell one of our people to reserve a place for them on the first one to leave.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

352. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, IN RICHELIEU

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are two Daughters of Charity¹ coming to see you about relieving the Ladies of the Charity and assisting the sick poor. Both of them know how to teach little girls. We shall be able to leave you one of them for that purpose when there are fewer sick people, and the other one will return home. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon sent me word that she would write to M. de Grandpré² about arranging lodgings for them. I hope that she, or else His Eminence,³ will also give orders regarding their maintenance. I beg you, however, to provide them with what they need as far as food is concerned.

I am worried about your illness and about that of Messieurs Codoing, Durot, and Buissot. If M. Codoing has quartan fever, as he told me he suspected, we shall have to find a way of bringing him back here, by cart as far as Tours and from there by coach, if his attacks are not too violent.

In the name of God, Monsieur, do all you can and spare nothing for the sake of your health. I am praying to God and having others pray that He restore you completely.

In ten days or two weeks, I shall send you two or three men from the Company and perhaps M. Boudet will come to Richelieu from Bordeaux. He is in Bordeaux a little indisposed. M. de Sergis left him there for treatment because he had to leave for Toulouse. If he comes to Richelieu, I commend him to you. If Abbé Olier is correct, good M. Boudet is a saint. He was in Brittany with him where he recognized his virtue. He wrote to me about him in terms expressing quite well the opinion he has of him. I am the only one who is a miserable sinner, who does only harm on earth. I must hope that God will be pleased to take me from it soon, as I trust from His goodness, and that He will be merciful to me.

I was arranging the time schedule for my trip so that I could come and see you when the Archbishop gave me a mandate to visit a religious house in the city. It will take me a rather long time.⁴ I had asked him to excuse me from doing it, and he had in fact done so; but, as he was leaving for Anjou, he sent me word that he had to take back the dispensation he had been pleased to grant me for some special and important reasons which he would tell me on his return. Well now, I am a child of obedience. I think that if he ordered me to go to the ends of his diocese and stay there all my life, I would do it as if Our Lord were giving me the order. The solitude or the work would be an anticipated paradise since I would be carrying out the good pleasure of God.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saint-Lazare, October 1, 1638

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Richelieu

353. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 2, 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am not writing to you with my own hand; I had a bloodletting this morning for a slight ailment which is preventing me from going to see good Madame de Liancourt. I think that you are not able to bear the fatigue of being around her and that would upset her.

There is no harm in allowing Sister Louise to go and visit Monsieur de Bezay,² or in your telling her to defer settling her affairs. I gave orders today for two places to be reserved and for a deposit to be put down on the coach for Tours. This evening I shall know the day, the time, and the place of its departure. I think it would be wise to give the role of superior to Sister Barbe³ until other arrangements can be made. It seems to me that it would be very good for them indeed to avail themselves of their little work when there are not longer many sick people.

I praise God for the greater satisfaction you are receiving from your son.

I forgot to write to Monsieur Dehorgny⁴ about the little boy. Just send him a note by the boy himself, in case I forget.

Sister Elisabeth⁵ can make her confession to anyone else you consider suitable. As for Jacqueline, you have no choice but to send her back.

I am very glad that you kept Sister Marguerite and are having her make a retreat.

Do you think Mademoiselle, that the two Sisters in this parish can assist the sick while teaching school? If so, which I doubt, it would be well to send Sister Jacqueline to Saint-Jacques parish in Sister Marguerite's place. But, if you do that, you will have to say something beforehand to the Pastor and the officers of the Charity in the parish.

I wrote you the enclosed letter yesterday, but was not able to send it to you.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday, at eleven o'clock

354. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Most willingly do I pray Our Lord to give His holy blessing to our dear Sisters and to grant them a share in the spirit He gave to the holy women who accompanied and cooperated with Him in assisting the sick poor and instructing children. Bon Dieu, Mademoiselle, what happiness for those good Sisters to be about to continue the charity Our Lord exercised on earth in the place where they are going! And who would think, seeing them together, those two headpieces,² in the coach, that they are departing for a work so admirable in the eyes of God and the angels that the God-Man found it worthy of Himself and of His holy Mother?

Oh! how Heaven will rejoice at seeing that and how admirable will be the praises they will receive in the next world! They will go to judgment day with their heads held high! Surely, it seems to me that crowns and empires are as mud in comparison with the diadems with which they shall be crowned.

All that remains is to advise them to comport themselves in the spirit of the Blessed Virgin on their journey and in their actions. Let them often see her as though before their eyes, in front of or beside them, and act as they imagine the Blessed Virgin would have acted. Let them contemplate her charity and humility and be very humble before God, cordial among themselves, charitable to everyone, and a source of disedification to no one. Let them carry out their little spiritual exercises every morning, either before the coach sets out or along the way. Let them take along some small book to read now and again or, at other times, recite their chaplet.

Let them share in the conversations pertaining to God, but by no means in those concerning the world, and still less, in indecent talk. Let them be rocks against any familiarity that men might wish to take with them. They shall sleep in a separate room which they shall first request at the inns, or in a room with some upright women, if there are any on the coach. If there are no separate rooms in the coach inns, let them lodge nearby, if they can find such accommodation.

When they arrive in Richelieu, they shall first go to greet the Blessed Sacrament and visit M. Lambert, receiving his orders, which they shall try to carry out with regard to the sick and the children who will attend the school. They shall observe the little daily exercises they now practice and go to confession only once a week if there is no special feast during the week. They shall try to do good to the souls of the poor while taking care of their bodies, and they shall honor and obey the officers of the Charity and have great respect for the others, encouraging them to love their holy occupation. If they continue in this way, God will judge that they have led a very holy life and, from being poor young women, they shall become great queens in Heaven. This is what I ask of God, in Whose love I am, for them and for their dear Superioress, a most humble servant.

V. D.

Please let me know if the little boy gave you the fifty livres I sent you by him, and pray to God for good Madame de Liancourt who has grown much worse.³

355. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around October 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

When I have the pleasure of seeing you, I shall tell you about your son's state of mind with regard to Orders. I do not know if I shall be coming to La Chapelle soon. If I do not come, comply with the wishes of Madame de Marillac² and her son.³ Send for the carriage whenever you wish. It would be better to do it tomorrow, Sunday, since you will have to sleep there because of the fast day. But what is the trouble with that good gentleman and with his wife's pregnancy? I do not know what makes me worry about them, but that family seems to move my heart with tenderness.

I am awaiting the safe-conduct for which the Chancellor⁴ gave us reason to hope. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, you most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Saturday morning

This morning, after writing the present letter, I received your note. In response, I shall tell you that your son told Monsieur de la Salle that he was entering into that state of life only because you wished it, that he wished he were dead⁵ because of it, and that, in order to please you, he would take the Minor Orders. Now, is that a vocation? I think he would rather die than wish your death. Be that as it may, whether it springs from nature or from the devil, his will is not free to make a decision in a matter of such importance and you must not wish him to do so. Some time ago, a good young man in this city took the [sub-diaconate]⁶ in a similar state of mind and was not able to go on to the other orders. Do you want to expose your son to the same danger? Allow God to lead him; He is more his Father than you are his mother and loves him

more than you do. Allow Him to guide him. He will be quite capable of calling him some other time, if He wants him, or of giving him the occupation which is proper for his salvation. I remember a priest, formerly in this house, who took Holy Orders in a troubled state of mind such as that. God knows where he is now!

Good day, Mademoiselle. Belong wholly to Our Lord and conform yourself to His good pleasure. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Please make your meditation on Zebedee[*'s wife*] and her sons. As she was ardently seeking the establishment of her children Our Lord said to them: "You do not know what you are asking."⁷

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

356. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Before 1640]¹

I most humbly entreat you, Mademoiselle, to let me know whether you think I should come and see you this afternoon to talk to your Sisters or whether I should wait until tomorrow morning. Let me know also if there will be any others besides your own.

In the meantime, I wish you a good day and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. DEPAUL

Sunday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

357. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank God a thousand times that you look so well and beg Him to keep you in perfect health. I agree with your good pastor that you should receive Communion at home. It does not matter that you do not feel so great a desire to do so. Our Lord is doing this purposely, I trust, so that you may have the merit of obedience joined to that of the love for which you will do it, and which I hope His goodness will grant you.

I did indeed see your son yesterday and I love him more dearly than I can tell you, but I do not like you to allow the overaffectionate thoughts you have in his regard. They are contrary to reason and consequently to God. He wants mothers to share their goods with their children but not to deprive themselves of everything. Courage, we shall talk about it as soon as I can come to see you, which will be after the feast.

Oh! how I would like to be able to tell you everything that was said here yesterday at the conference concerning the reasons we have for worthily celebrating this feast and the means for doing so! To be sure, I am quite consoled by it and ask Our Lord to impart it to you Himself.

I am sending you the book on condition that you read or have read from it only two or three sonnets a day, at different times spaced far apart; you would become too engrossed in it.

I am angry with M. Dehorgny for going off to the country without sending you any money. Let me know if you need some. I have the key to the safe but not the spare time to go and get it.

I have never been more busy, or more your servant, in the love of Our Lord.

V. D.

Please take that young woman from Lorraine in order to try her out while waiting.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

358. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU

November 1, 1638

. . . M. Fouquet, the President,¹ has been cured of dropsy by using half a glass of chervil² juice mixed well with an equal amount of white wine and strained through a cloth. It is taken fasting, without eating for two hours afterwards, and without drinking any more than half a pint of

liquid at each meal. One of our brothers at the seminary was cured of the same illness by the same means. Please have N. make use of it and continue it for some time. It is a very efficacious and easy remedy.

359. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received two of your letters or rather one in two parts, and saw and spoke to your son afterwards, without letting him be aware that I knew anything about what happened yesterday. Now, he told me very calmly and soberly that he had seen you and that you had been feeling somewhat ill.

After that, I spoke to him about his vocation and whether he was persevering in it. He told me quite emphatically yes, that he was going to the Sorbonne² for that purpose, and that he was determined to do well. That is why I thought there was no need to talk to him, nor even suspect what you fear. Therefore, please be at peace about it. And what is more, even though the things you fear come about, you should still adore God's Providence in his regard and believe that the journey or the change of state would contribute to his salvation and perhaps to his greater perfection.

Alas! Mademoiselle, if all those who have left their parents were in danger of being lost, where would I be? O well, remember that everything helps the predestined to reach their goal and that I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Collège des Bons-Enfants, at eleven o'clock

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

360. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1633¹ and 1639²]

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for looking after me and please take care of your own health and do not do so much.

As for the matter you mention, assure those good religious that I shall talk to the Dean about the preservation of their community, but I do not feel that you should speak to the ladies in favor of keeping that individual. It would be useless and harmful, as would recourse to the Cardinal.³ But with regard to the former, it is up to them to take the required steps; they will not take your advice in any case.

As for your Sisters, after this we shall be at your service and theirs. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your servant.

V. D.

Saturday morning

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

361. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A warm welcome to you and praise to Our Lord for the health He has given you. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, take care of it. If I can, I shall come and see you tomorrow, or at least the day after.

Enclosed is the reply to the Duchesse de Liancourt. Please send it to her.

Your son has just left here. He seems to have changed his mind or to be willing to change it, although I said only two words to him.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

362. - TO MADAME GOUSSAULT

[November 1638]¹

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Thank you for taking care of me and my journey and for the prayers you will offer for those intentions. Please excuse me if I do not wait for you; I promised to leave this morning.

You must recommend those new proposals to God with the gratitude and courtesy customarily extended to people in such cases. Is it not well for you to know definitely your daughter's² intentions? The last one mentioned to you is a fine man with an excellent mind and exceptional judgment for his age. But, considering what you know, Lotin³ seems preferable, I think, although less well off. However, you will need marvelous courtesy to act that way towards the last man proposed. Under the circumstances, you can cite the family's wishes and the long negotiation. I shall recommend the matter, your health, and your whole family to Notre-Dame-des-Ardilliers⁴ with a very special affection and a like tenderness. God knows to what extent He has filled my heart with this fondness for you and how much I feel it now as I speak to you, I who am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Monday morning

I am on my way to say good-bye to Mademoiselle Le Gras and shall tell her about this.

Addressed: Madame Goussault, the President's wife

362a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Around December 1638]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You never tire of doing good things for us and do, I am afraid, more than you are able. I thank you most humbly, Mademoiselle, and beg you not to act in that way any more. It is enough for us and we shall always be indebted to you, no matter what we do to serve your son. Allow us then to serve him without any consideration other than our indebtedness to you and our eagerness to serve you and him as well.

Your letter seems fine to me and you would do well to send it to him. I pray Our Lord that it will be effective in causing him to make up his mind once and for all. I am sending his letter back to you with the one you wrote to him and shall try as soon as possible to have a little fireplace built for him in one of the small rooms. From now on we shall be having the ordinands at the Bons-Enfants and the room in which he now lives is needed for them.

If the weather is good and you can do so without any inconvenience, you may hear Holy Mass every day of your retreat. If not, honor the solitude of Our Lord completely, as Saint Magdalen did.

Please read the small [book], the Imitation of Christ, the book On the Love of God by the Bishop of Geneva²--around the sixth, seventh, or eighth book, at your choice--and some life of a saint according to your devotion.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

(On the reverse Saint Louise wrote: From Monsieur Vincent speaking of a retreat and of my son.)

363. - TO BERNARD CODOING, IN RICHELIEU

December 12, 1638

I am quite consoled on seeing the goodness of your heart in accepting the Luçon proposal against your own liking.¹ O Monsieur, that is what being a good Christian and a good

missionary is, overcoming one's own inclinations in that way! God has granted me today a very particular fondness for requesting of Him that same virtue of ever choosing the worst and that which is contrary to my own liking. But alas! Monsieur, how unfaithful I am to that practice! Please ask God to make me more exact to it in the future.

364. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS, IN JOIGNY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here I am, back from Richelieu. I received one of your letters in that district and another here. Both of them reveal to me the blessing of God on your labors and the last one mentions the illness of Messieurs Renar and Mouton and how you were leaving for Joigny. I thank God for all that and pray that He will restore those gentlemen to perfect health.

We need Monsieur Mouton here. If his health allows, please send him back to us after the feast.

I saw the letter you wrote to the Commander,¹ which was also a great consolation to me, but I am not sure whether you have completed the mission in Cerisé.² The Commander is complaining that you have not. Please let me know how matters stand. The letter you wrote to Monsieur de la Salle also gave me great comfort, especially what you told him about continuing the discipline he maintained with the seminary during the mission they gave recently. That is where the backbone of the mission lies. I pray to God, Monsieur, that He will grant you the grace to act the same way.

But mon Dieu! Monsieur, how are Messieurs Pavillon, Renar, and Perrochel? Please take good care of them and of the health of the whole Company. You must not fail on Thursdays to give them some rest and some pleasant recreation, as far as can be done inter privatos parietes.³ I most humbly greet those gentlemen and the whole Company and I am forwarding to M. Perrochel a package which was sent here for him. Please tell him that on his return we shall discuss what the nun who writes to him has told him.

Father de Gondi told me that all is not well with the Charity in Joigny. I entreat you, Monsieur, to ask Monsieur Pavillon to try to restore it to the best possible condition. He is experienced in the proper way to go about making a success of it, and he possesses the grace of God.

We have about seventy retreatants, five or six of whom have degrees and are very learned men, although in the Sorbonne complaints have been made about the method prescribed and the obligation for people of such status to take part in the exercises.⁴ M. Hopille explains the Pontifical⁵ and M. Hobier⁶ gives the morning talk. Messieurs de la Salle, Dehorgny, Soufliers, Cuissot, and some of our young theologians are helping with the retreat. It is being held at the Bons-Enfants where things are working out better than we had dared to hope.

The rest of the house is well with the exception of M. Portail and M. de Rien who are beginning, however, to feel better.

The same thing is being done in Richelieu where I was greatly consoled on seeing the good which has come about in the town. I have never seen a people more attentive and devout at Holy Mass and they receive the sacraments often. There is no one leading a scandalous life. The townspeople seem to be living in peace and without division as they were before. The taverns are less frequented, almost not at all, especially during services and on Sundays and feast days. The Charity is doing very well. It has treated sixty sick people since Easter without any of them dying except one young woman, while before, there was no escaping it. The two sister servants of the poor whom we sent from here are working wonders there, one with the sick and the other, teaching the girls.

I do not know whether we could station two of them in Joigny. Is Marie of the poor, who used to serve the poor of the Charity, still alive? Do all the little girls go to the school of the Sisters of Notre-Dame? What makes things more remarkable in Richelieu is that the people form a new group, the majority having been banished from their localities because of misconduct.⁷

There you have, Monsieur, all that I can tell you for the present, except that I ask you to write me every week concerning the state of the Company and its works. My most humble greetings to the pastors and to all who do me the honor of remembering me. I am in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, Feast of Saint Lucy,⁸ 1638

Addressed: Monsieur Lucas, Priest of the Mission, in Joigny

365. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Paris, December 17, 1638

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The day before yesterday I received your letter of the seventh of this month in which you informed me: (1) of M. Durot's arrival; (2) that you are afraid you displeased me; (3) that I should answer everything you ask me in your letters; (4) that they want you to give the examination in Saint-Michel;¹ (5) that they had you hear confessions in the suburbs; (6) that you are to be sent those who have dimissorial letters;² (7) that you want a small piece of the true cross which you left here; and (8) you told me you had bought an alarm clock. Here are the answers to all that in the order presented.

(1) I thank God for M. Durot's arrival, and ask you to take care of his health and help him by word and example to arrive at the perfection of a Missionary. With that end in view, I ask both of you to observe the Little Rule without departing from it for any reason or under any pretext whatsoever. A prelate did me the honor of telling me that he saw you, with a larger collar than ours and a coat with big buttons, acting in a spirit of self-sufficiency and with less humility than the other Missionaries. If that is so, Monsieur, please adapt yourself in all things to the Little Rule, to our little observances, and to our manner of dressing, and honor more than ever the humility of Our Lord. Everyone says that the Missionary spirit is one of humility and simplicity; take hold of it. The spirit of meekness, simplicity, and humility is the spirit of Our Lord; that of pride will not last long in the Mission.

(2) Have no fear of having displeased me. I know you well. I am sure that you will never return a second time to the failings about which I have warned you and shall warn you hereafter. You are neither infallible nor incorrigible. You will fail less if you abide by what I have told you and shun the splendor and spirit of the world. *Nemo potest duobus dominis servire.*³ I would like you to see the humility and simplicity Our Lord is diffusing among our seminarians and how shocking anything contrary to that spirit is to them.

(3) I promise you what you request in the third point, that from now on I shall answer all your questions, which you will please put down in list form.

Here are the answers to the fourth and fifth points. More perceptive people often tell me that we must hold to the practice of not preaching, catechizing, or hearing confessions in the cities and suburbs where there is an archbishopric or a presidial.⁴ Besides, you know that our Bull is quite explicit about that point.⁵ Those who might have some inclination to the contrary, seeing that they wish to do it, will be more edified in the course of time.

I do not find any difficulty at all in your seeing those whom the Bishop⁶ will send to you about dimissorial letters when you are in Toulouse, and I think you did well to buy an alarm clock.

A mishap which occurred in the Company has made it clear to me that I need to examine the accounts of expenses and receipts. I examined and closed them in Richelieu, from which I have just come. Please send me yours, Monsieur, or if you have not kept any account of your expenses and receipts, begin to do so for the future, so that one and the same order will be observed everywhere. You may be assured that I recognize your fidelity and distrust my own more than yours.

I am on my way to tell M. de Marceille to look for and send to you the relic of the true cross you requested, if it can be found.

Well now, Monsieur, that is all. It remains for me to tell you that I would have taken good care to come and see you in Toulouse, or to ask you to come to Bordeaux, if I had gone there. O Jésus! Monsieur, I am most anxious to have the consolation of seeing you. You know how much my heart treasures your own which is so dearly lovable. I promised M. Pavillon that I would come to Alet immediately after his arrival there.⁷ If Our Lord grants me the grace of seeing him, it will be then that I shall have that consolation. But if an opportunity that I foresee does not induce me to make a trip to Gascogne,⁸ I shall have the pleasure of seeing you sooner.

In the meantime, I greet you with all the affection in my power. I am, in the love of Our Lord,
Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, in Toulouse

365a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

Since I cannot come to Paris, please give the six . . . owed to me by reason of the scholarship received as a favor from cousin Etienne Pluyette; they fell due on Christmas Day. I shall be much obliged, I who am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, December 25, 1638

366. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY¹

[January 8, 1639]²

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you how much the consolation which your letter gave me has allayed the pain of hearing about good Monsieur Dufestel's illness. I thank God for both pieces of news, certainly not without rebuking my miserable feelings which are revolting against the acceptance I wish to give God's adorable Will. I am writing to him and asking him to do all he can and to spare nothing for his medical care. I entreat you, Monsieur, to be sure that he does so and, for that purpose, see that the doctor visits him every day and that he lacks no remedy or nourishment. Oh! how I hope the Company will provide for his needs with a holy extravagance! I would be delighted if word were sent to me from somewhere that someone in the Company had sold chalices for that purpose.

And what shall I tell you about the mission in Saint-Lyé?³ Postpone it, with the Bishop's⁴ consent, until he is entirely cured and restored to his former health. There will be no harm, however, in your going to visit the people and having them approve the delay until the mission can be given conveniently.

Well now, so you are worried like Martha, on account of the love you have for Monsieur Dufestel and the whole Company. I pray Our Lord to watch over and work with you in recovering the health of this servant of His.

I send my regards to good Monsieur Savary⁵ and our Brother René,⁶ and I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

367. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night I received your most recent letter in which you told me about the state of Monsieur Dufestel's illness and what orders the doctor gave for him. I thank you most humbly for being so mindful to let me know about it so promptly and exactly, and for all the care you are giving him. I beg Our Lord to be your reward and the perfect healing of our patient whose illness is not serious, I hope. Buy I entreat you, Monsieur, as always, to spare nothing for him. That type of illness does not need remedies so much as patience, gentleness, and cheerfulness of mind. I hope Our Lord will give him a share in all those virtues and that he will make good use of them.

If the doctor thinks it might be necessary to give him some remedies that would require his presence more frequently than he can give them to him in Sancey, could you not get him a room in the suburbs? And that being the case, would he be better cared for there? I do not think his type of sickness is that kind at all. In any case, look into it and confer with the doctor with

whom M. Dufestel thinks it would be proper. Finally, Monsieur, please do for him what you would want to do for Our Lord. In fact, the goodness and charity you have in his regard, you are showing to Our Lord and, at the same time, to our whole Little Company and to me in particular, who am suffering in him as Our Lord knows. I embrace him in spirit with all the affection in my power and most humbly greet good Monsieur Savary. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, [January 28, 1639]¹

Addressed: Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

368. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here is the answer to three of your letters, one dated the fourth, another the ninth, and another the seventeenth, which I received two or three days ago. The first did not give me any indication that you wanted an answer so quickly, nor it seems did the second; the third undoubtedly did.

I shall begin then by telling you, with regard to your good relatives, that I sent someone purposely to visit them; they are all well and recommend themselves to you and your prayers. Therefore, please be at peace in that regard.

The prelate I mentioned to you¹ did not tell me anything else except the three things about which I wrote to you and of which I have forgotten the third: about your collar, the buttons on your coat, and, if I am not mistaken, the third was your way of acting, which was not quite in keeping with the simplicity and humility of a Missionary. I am sending you a collar; you can have yours altered to match it. However little we may wish to follow the world as regards our clothing, such things show that we have some small fragment of this desire in our hearts and, if we are not careful, we shall let ourselves be carried away by the spirit of the world. To say that we shall be taken for others--it is pride and vanity of spirit to change our appearance because of that. O Monsieur, those who would truly know Jesus Christ crucified would be very glad to pass, as He did, for the least of men, indeed for the worst, not only as regards personal actions, but even with respect to those of our state! Why, what good will it do us to possess humility with regard to our person if we take pride in our state! O Monsieur, who will grant us the grace to put ourselves in the last place among men and to keep ourselves there according to the condition of our person and our vocation! If we wish to prefer ourselves to others and to have things which distinguish us from them, be assured, Monsieur, that Our Lord will allow us to fall into such confusion that we shall be a subject of contempt both for them and for everyone. I believe this truth just as I believe that I shall have to die.

I am telling you this in answer to something you wrote me shortly after your return to Toulouse. I have perfect confidence that you will think well of it and hold firm to the little practices and maxims you have seen here. I take care not to ask anyone whomsoever how you act or what you look like. I want everyone to know I still have the good opinion of you that I had when you were assigned to the duty Providence has given you. And what is more I believe, as I told you above, that, even though you thought differently than we about some little matter, the same angel who made Saint Francis Xavier so exact in the observance of what he had seen in the Company and so careful about learning anything new that was introduced here, so as to do the same thing there, the same angel, I repeat, will do the same for you. Oh! I consider that as beyond doubt.

What you told me, Monsieur, about good Monsieur Durot is true but, since he has a good heart and sound judgement, I trust he will be a very fine Missionary someday. He has a gentle spirit. Please, Monsieur, treat him the same way. I made a journey with three discalced Carmelites without being able to tell which one was the Superior, until I asked about it after being with them for three days, because the Superior so truly lived with the others in goodness, gentleness, condescension, and humility, and the others lived with him in confidence and simplicity. O Monsieur! who will grant us such a spirit!

As for the confessions in the suburbs, I think that, although we are not permitted to hear confessions there, we could do so a quarter of a league from there if there were a chapel, even though the penitents were from the parish in the suburb.

You may be assured, Monsieur, as regards the expenses, that it has never entered my mind that there was any fault to be found with you. O Jésus! never has that thought occurred to me, much less become part of me. What I said to you about it was said to preserve order and assure the Company's carrying out of the practice for centuries to come. The method, as M. Durot can tell you, will be the one M. Codoing used to follow. If you think it is too time consuming, put down fewer details. Moreover, I think a superior does well to have a companion relieve him of temporal matters.

As for the journey to Toulouse, I am committed to making it when the Bishop of Alet goes there, but he is not ready to do so. Neither he, nor fifteen or eighteen other appointed Bishops have received their Bulls as yet. As soon as he receives them, however, he intends to leave.

It will soon be three months that I have been working at the mission in Joigny with M. Perrochel. Monsieur Renar was there, too. He came back ill with M. Mouton.

I praise God that the end of the mission in Vernon² was more to your liking than the beginning, and I pray that He will grant you the grace to hold to the spirit of gentleness and humility Our Lord has given you. Bitterness has never served any purpose but to embitter. Saint Vincent Ferrer says that there is no means of profiting by preaching if one does not preach from the depths of compassion. Eh! Bon Dieu! and what a way to conquer spirits such as you describe--by the same spirit! If we combat the devil with a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, we shall never overcome him, for he has more pride and self-sufficiency than we. But if we act against him with humility, we shall conquer him, because he has none of those weapons nor would he know how to defend himself from them. That is what Saint Dominic told some doctors from Spain who had come to his assistance against the Albigenses,³ with whom they were behaving in a spirit of self-sufficiency. I truly pray to God that He will grant you the grace to act in that spirit in Muret where you are going. As for the Charity you intend to set up there, here is the rule customarily used in the parishes of Paris; you can give it to the towns. For the villages, please hold on to the one that has been used up to the present. I set aside the one you sent me; its author has withdrawn and is now the Pastor in Etiolles.⁴

M. Codoing is on a mission; he would not be able to have his sermons copied for you. You will have to wait for the summer when he comes home, at which time you can have them copied and perhaps printed just for the Company.

The Penitentiary⁵ feels that neither case of conscience which you submitted is permissible and Father Rebardeau is of the same opinion with regard to hearing the confessions of penitents from the dioceses surrounding the mission area. I do not remember the second case at all; I submitted it only to the Penitentiary whose judgment, as I told you, was in the negative.

Here is my answer to your last letter. You may give an écu or two to the Charity in Muret if you establish it. As for the manner of conferring with the priest in Muret according to the Archbishop's intention, M. Durot can tell you the method M. Codoing followed for the meetings in Dauphiné. As for the topics of the conferences, you could suggest none more useful than those for the ordinands--which you have--for example, with regard to censures: (1) say that it is important for priests to know the teaching concerning censures; (2) what the teaching is on censures; and (3) the means to be used to release people who have incurred the said censures. Now, you could divide the second point into several conferences as, for example, censures in general and then each one in particular. But in order to do that effectively, the person who presides, or you, should state the teaching and the others should repeat what you have said or, at least, some of them in turn. True, to do it well, it would be advisable for each one at the meeting to have your writings or, at least, every two. That not being the case, you will have to let them study the topics you present and give back as best they can what they remember--unless you have some better method.

That is really it this time; I have written this letter in three or four different sittings.

Our little news is: first, that M. Dufestel and his family in Troyes are working with great blessings, but he recently became ill. Messieurs Pavillon, Renar, Perrochel, and six men from the Company [have been working] in Joigny since Advent. They are now in the villages where it will take them about another month. Three or four men are about to leave for the parishes

belonging to Malta in the grand priory of France. Commander de Sillery has given a fund of three thousand livres income for them and one thousand for Troyes. Messieurs du Coudray⁶ and Boucher have forty poor people, some sick, some others who are healthy, to whom they minister in their house, although it is small, because they have no hospital. They also attend to 150 outside the city, all of whom they feed and assist with a charity that brings tears to the eyes of those who hear of it. However, it is greatly to be feared they will collapse. The former enjoined me, after I had sent him word to take care of his body and the little bit of money we sent him, either to help him, recall him, or let him die with those poor people. If I can, I shall send you the letter M. Boucher, in his simplicity, wrote to me about the situation.

Our young men are asking to do what you and I did. I think the seminary is made up of more than twenty, although we withdrew ten or twelve of them either to study Theology at the Bons-Enfants or to work on the missions. Our good Brother Alméras,⁷ who is an outstanding subject, has done as we did and is about to go to the Bons-Enfants to study.

Such is the news from us at present. I hope to have some from you often [and] more time to write to you; I shall do so as often as I can. In spirit I embrace good Monsieur Durot, whom I ask to forgive me in case I cannot send him an answer. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, February 3, 1639

God has taken M. Durot's mother. Please take an opportune moment to tell him. I just ordered some Masses said for her intention. I beg Our Lord to be the solace for his heart's suffering. I thought it would be better for you to tell him and for me not to mention it to him at all in my letter.

Addressed: Monsieur de Sergis, Priest of the Mission, in Toulouse

369. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN SANCEY

[Around February 1639]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You cannot give more consolation to my soul by anything in this world than by the charity you exercise toward good Monsieur Dufestel. I thank you most humbly for the frequent news you give me of him and beg you to continue for the love of Jesus Christ Who impels you. Well, we must wait, Monsieur, for nature to free itself slowly of the disturbance oppressing it. I must confess that I agree with the doctor attending him. That type of illness cannot be hurried. I trust that the Divine Doctor Himself will be his cure, if not overnight, at least little by little. I embrace him in spirit with heartfelt tenderness.

I am writing Monsieur Gouault² that, according to the wish of the Bishop of Troyes,³ I am trying to sell his houses and shall lose no time.

I wrote to Messieurs Lucas and Perceval⁴ asking them to go and see you as I told you I would.

The Bishop of Beauvais,⁵ realizing the importance of the ordinands' retreat, has requested the neighboring bishops who will be conferring orders to send back to Paris those from the other archbishoprics who studied there, so that they might profit by the retreat here. Accordingly, I think the Bishop of Troyes would do them good were he to act likewise with regard to the externs. In that case, if he were notified, perhaps he would do the same. Act as you and Monsieur Dufestel judge proper and send us that good woodcutter and vinedresser,⁶ if he has completely made up his mind. The men from Champagne give us great cause for satisfaction. I embrace good Monsieur Dufestel and I am for Monsieur Savary, René,⁷ and him the most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur du Chesne, Priest of the Mission, in Sancey

370. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know if I told you the day before yesterday that the Bishop of Beauvais is supposed to come and get me this morning. I am going to Beauvais for a week or so. I commend myself, meanwhile, to your prayers. Please take care of your health and preserve it for His holy service. I am going to pray to Him that it may be thus until you are ready to send your Sisters to work at the Charity in the country.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

371. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Here are three poor people from Lorraine who arrive yesterday evening. One woman has a child. We shall have to try to get her placed at the Refuge² and perhaps the old woman, too. Please send them to Madame de Herse after you have seen them, if she approves of their staying at the Foundlings in Saint-Victor in the meantime. I am a little rushed and cannot write to her about it.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Tuesday, at ten o'clock

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, close to N[otre-] D[ame]

372. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God for everything you told me about Saint-Nicolas.² I shall submit the matter concerning the galley slaves³ to the wife of the Keeper of the Seals,⁴ and to Madame Goussault the business concerning the house, and I shall give you an answer about them.

As for Catherine,⁵ I feel you do not know her well yet. We shall talk about it.

Today is the day I am going to La Chapelle after dinner with Mademoiselle Poulailion and three or four other people. It is better to wait until next Saturday when I have to go there for the wife of the Keeper of the Seals.

May God be blessed that you have a great deal of money. He will give us other young women when He chooses.

Marguerite from Saint-Paul came here yesterday to tell me that her pastor⁶ sent for her and asked how they live, what their spiritual exercises are, and who directs them. He wants to direct them, wishing them to depend entirely on him. She added that she is nonetheless quite ready to leave everything whenever we wish. I told her to tell him everything, to conceal nothing from him, and then we shall see.

It will be very difficult to keep these individuals in the state necessary for things to go well. The ones at Saint-Sauveur, since their rebellion, are no longer as zealous and complain a great deal. In time they will realize the harm they are doing.

I see the evils I do and do not mend my ways. Please pray for that intention.

I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

373. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]¹

I got ready to come and see you this morning and shall do so if I can, but in case I cannot and you can get the carriage you mentioned to me, please stop by here tomorrow morning around

eight o'clock, if your health permits. If not, send me word and I shall come to visit you at your house.

I see very well that Madame Goussault did not make clear to you what I told her about your son. I told her that the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas² received him without a title,³ which is an exceptional favor, and for fear that some difficulty might arise on that account, it is wise for you to have him ready. However, your son has in no way changed his mind, as far as I know. We really need to meet as soon as possible about the Sisters at Saint-Sulpice.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

374. - TO THE COMMUNITY OF SAINT-NICOLAS-DU-CHARDONNET

Saint-Lazare, April 29, 1639

Monsieur,

The Missionaries accept Monsieur Bourdoise's proposal with all possible humility and respect and offer him what he requests,¹ on the one hand, with great embarrassment because they are unworthy of the grace Monsieur Bourdoise is conferring on them by his presence and, on the other, with confidence that he will bear with their faults and be of infinite benefit to them by his good example. They also ask him, for the love of Our Lord, to receive one of their Company into the Community of Saint-Nicolas for a period of time, under whatever condition he chooses.

VINCENT DEPAUL

374a. - GUILLAUME COMPAING TO SAINT VINCENT

[May 5, 1639]¹

The priests of the Community of Saint-Nicolas, having seriously examined the proposal and concession² above and considered the whole of it maturely, praised M. Bourdoise for his fervor and great desire to advance in virtue, indeed, to render himself more suitable for the establishment of the seminary and of the community. In the same way, they also recognize the continuation of the benefits, favors, and kindnesses which the gentlemen of the Mission have bestowed on them at all times, for which they are most grateful. In return for this, they accept the man or men whom the gentlemen of the Mission choose to send to Saint-Nicolas and to whom the Community may be of use in any way whatever. And moreover, they offer them anything they feel the Community can do for their good.

As for the carrying out of the aforesaid proposal, the priests of the Community have humbly requested M. Bourdoise, their dear confrere and honored treasurer, to be content with making a visit to Saint-Lazare, be it for one or several days, without its being apparent or serving as a precedent for M. N. or others, and to communicate from there with the said seminary, according as the gentlemen of the Mission will be pleased to permit.

Drawn up in the assembly Room of the Community, the. . .

GUILLAUME COMPAING³

Priest and Secretary of the same

375. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Wednesday, at noon

[Between September 1638 and September 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We acted upon your judgment concerning the Foundlings: the work will be joined to that of the Hôtel-Dieu, if the Ladies approve. Consequently, we shall have the same officers we need for each of the works, with the exception of a treasurer.

I cannot understand what you told me about the little girls.

Since you think Nicole may have mended her ways, fine; try her again, and try Henriette in Saint-Germain.² However, I think you should allow a few days to go by before you do it.

M. de Cordes has not yet come back from the country. When he does, I shall speak to him about that good married woman.

I am going to Grigny to see Madame Goussault, The President's wife, and Madame Le Roux at her retreat. I hope to be here next Saturday for a little meeting on Sunday.

Please do what you can to stay well, for the love of Our Lord.

I am in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

The Chancellor's wife³ gave me three écus for a goat. I seem to remember that Mademoiselle du Mée is the one to whom we are supposed to give them. It is for the Foundlings.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

376. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON,¹ IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday evening I received your letters of the fourth and twelfth of last month. The first relieved me of the great anxiety I was suffering lest my package, whose receipt you acknowledged in your letter of the fourth, had been lost. May God be blessed that it has not and may He also be blessed for what you told me in your letters! Here is the reply to all your points.

(1) I praise God for the permission you obtained to hear confessions and for the use you are making of it with regard to the poor, the prisoners, and the people of the countryside.

(2) I admire that Congregation's² care for the missions and I pray the sovereign Shepherd and Master of the missions to draw glory from it. Is there any harm in your just simply telling them about the one here? Could you not by that means get an establishment for that purpose? I wrote to you about the little chapel outside the Vatican. It is more tempting to me than the parish.

What if you were to offer to scour the countryside for His Holiness or some bishop? I would send you someone from the Company to go with you. I spoke to you about Cardinal Bagni,³ because I consider him one of the greatest prelates in the Church. I have a very deep affection for him and for serving him. He told me long ago that he would do us the honor of making use of us. I have never had a picture of any prelate except of him. His wisdom, his goodness, and the affection with which he honored our Little Company here have been for me the image of God's wisdom, His goodness, and the regard with which His divine Majesty so kindly honors our Little Company.

(3) What shall I say to you about the way to act with those priests on the mission, except that charity and candor should always hold the upper hand and that the mentality of the country calls for caution.

(4) You are right in not eating out and in accepting remuneration for the Mass. In the meantime, there is humility in acting thus and prudence in living that way until you are known, but I think you would do well to distribute the remuneration to the poor.

(5) I am waiting anxiously, not to say impatiently, for the reactions to your mission and the way it is accepted on your return.

(6) Guillard⁴ was born of a Catholic father and mother. He is the one who fell into heresy and remained in it for three years. Now he is one of the most fervent men in the Company. We have sent him to Lorraine to assist the poor corporally and spiritually; he is the sixth one. He is not yet forty years old and is neither a doctor nor a nobleman. Does not the work he is doing in Lorraine merit an extra tempora?⁵ Monsieur Parisos

obtained one for Lescar who has none of these three qualifications.

(7) The church in Richelieu has Notre-Dame as its title or patron.⁶

(8) I shall repay the one hundred livres and the exchange for Monsieur Marchand's⁷ security here or I shall send it by Monsieur Lumague⁸ if I do not receive instructions as to whom to give it here.

(9) As for the Toul affair, we are in the midst of a lawsuit⁹ here. I shall try to send you the documents you requested; we need them for evidence. I shall see if I can have a copy of them put together.

(10) With regard to the Saint-Lazare matter, we were established by a decree of the Parlement.¹⁰ The Archbishop of Paris always had the power of appointment. At the last vacancy, there was one person who received a commission from the King and another from the Archbishop; he is the Prior today, but that stopped with him. True, it is by agreement with President Janin who requested it of the King, and Monsieur Le Bret, the State Councillor,¹¹ who obtained it for the Prior¹² from the Archbishop of Paris. Since then, to strengthen himself against his commission or the ad nutum dismissal provision, the Prior has had a letter of appointment sent from Rome. Outside of that, no other person has ever held a letter of appointment that I know of, except some bishops of Paris. Moreover, those were commissions ad nutum, and the Prior used to give an account to the Bishop of Paris every year.

What if you wrote to Monsieur Gilioli to apologize if you have not gone to see him? I told you I would be very happy if you would stop in Ferrara to see him, to assure him that he still holds the same place of esteem and affection in the Company's heart as before, and to give him news of us.

It is considered doubtful here that the privileged altar His Holiness so kindly granted us for Saint-Lazare is valid, because it sometimes happens, though rarely, that only three or four Masses are said there in one day. I repeat, rarely. Nevertheless, we think it would be well for His Holiness to be so kind as to decrease the number from seven Masses a day to three or four. Please discuss this.

I sent your indulgences to Jouy. I shall say nothing about your business for now, I mean the one for which you went, except that, all things carefully thought out and weighed, I think you should aim at complete establishment, for reasons that I shall tell you. Here is a very urgent one. I have just now seen a member of the Company, one of the best of all, among the most devoted, and a very gentle spirit. Nevertheless, he has been determined for about a week now to leave. He has not given me any particular reason for it, no matter what remonstrance, entreaty, or humiliation I have been able to use with him. And what is the most strange is that his vocation seems to come entirely from God. He is an excellent example to the Company and has confirmed his membership in it the way several individuals and older members have done, as you know, that is, by vows.¹³

After that example, I do not know anyone of whom we could be sure. I am not giving you his name, because I have not yet told this to anyone here.

With the help of Our lord, we have undertaken the assistance of the poor people in Lorraine¹⁴ and have sent Messieurs Bécu and Rondet,¹⁵ and Brothers Guillard, Aulent,¹⁶ Baptiste,¹⁷ and Bourdet¹⁸ there, two to each town: Toul, Metz, Verdun, and Nancy. I hope to provide them with two thousand livres a month.

Yesterday we completed the mission we gave in La Chapelle, near Saint-Lazare. We gathered together there all the poor from Lorraine who are in the city and gave a loaf of bread to each one every day for a week. There were about three hundred of them.¹⁹

Well now, that is all. I conclude by recommending myself to your Holy Sacrifices in those holy places. I hope to write to you from now on by each mail and I trust that our Lord will made use of you in many good works, if you take care of your health, as I beg you to do. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.
Paris, May 10, 1639

Addressed: Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

377. - TO ROBERT DE SERGIS, IN TOULOUSE

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter four days ago, but I lost it and cannot remember everything you wrote. Here is what I do recall: (1) that your work is being blessed; (2) that I failed to answer two points in your next to last letter; (3) that you judged it wise [not]¹ to suggest to the Archbishop² what I wrote you about renting the house and about the ordinands who will be directed to you by the Archbishop; about going to Saintonge.

Now, I shall say in response to the first point, that I praise God for the blessing He is bestowing on your missions and I beg Him to strengthen your body more and more for your work, and your soul so that you may love Him better.

(2) I am very sorry for having forgotten those two points in my next to last letter. I most humbly beg your pardon and hope that Our Lord will grant me the grace to mend my ways.

(3) All the reasons you sent me for not having made the suggestions concerning the lodging and the ordinands should not have prevented you from making them. They are only natural products of the human mind which usually reasons according to its predispositions. The matter in question here is not a desire to establish ourselves, as you say, but to do the good I proposed to you,³ which the adorable Providence of God suggested to a good soul who wishes to be responsible for the expenses. We should not expect fewer blessings there than the goodness of God is bestowing on the ordinands here, even though they are high-minded and usually scorn ordinary things. It would have been good for the Archbishop to decide and for us to respect his judgment and wishes and submit ourselves to it, as I am submitting in this matter to yours. However, I tell you quite frankly, Monsieur, that no one in the Company has ever raised objections about anything I have written to him. One man who did write his objections still did what I had told him. Another, who in his own opinion had an objection to signing an agreement I had made, sent me a number of reasons and excuses and had others write to me about it. Because of that, we are involved in a serious lawsuit at the Council, which we can pursue only at the risk of losing an establishment⁴ and with shame.

O Monsieur de Sergis, how important a matter is submission of spirit to a superior! I admit that the knowledge you have of my miseries and the gravity of my sins destroys your confidence; but He who said: *quaecumque dixerint vobis facite*,⁵ no doubt obliged Himself by that to offer sufficient light to those whom He requires to obey. I think that I have never seen or heard that the subject failed by obeying the superior in matters which are not evil, but that is indeed the usual result for those who disobey them. You intended to take Saint Francis Xavier as your patron. In the name of God, Monsieur, do so particularly with regard to obedience. Do not imagine that Our Lord is less pleased with the obedience you render to a poor miserable sinner than that which he rendered to a saint. Do it, as he did, for the love of God Who is happy when things go that way and Who is displeased with the contrary.

We shall discuss this in greater detail when I have the happiness of seeing you there. I hope to come soon with the Bishop of Alet⁶ who is waiting for his Bulls and expects to leave shortly afterwards. That is why I am asking you not to leave the Archdiocese of Toulouse to go to Saintonge or anywhere else, which is the last point in your letter.

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, May 13, 1639

377a. - TO PIERRE DU CHESNE, IN JOIGNY

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday evening I received your letter of the twenty-fourth of this month, consoled that it was from you and sorry about the state of our good Monsieur Lucas's illness. I had been told that he was quite well. O Monsieur, how that touched my heart! I willingly commended him to our Little Company three days in a row and, of course, I think that each one has fulfilled his duty in that regard. I am sending him good Monsieur Chiroye,¹ who is quite fond of him and will take very special care of him, while you, Monsieur, you will go back to Troyes for the ordinands' retreat. I beg you, Monsieur, to embrace Monsieur Lucas in spirit for me. I enfold him in my arms with the same love Our Lord alone would manifest and, from his embrace, I shall come to you and do the same. I cannot tell you what a good account I have had of both of you. Courage, in nomine Domini, Who will bring about in you and through both of you what He wishes you to do for His glory and for the salvation of souls. What else can we do? We must keep going: *caritas Christi urget nos*.²

I am afraid that good Monsieur Lucas has not been bled enough. I beg you, Monsieur, to make known quite gently to the doctor that, from a lack of bleeding during a serious illness I had in

Joigny, I had some difficulties which are still with me. The people from that region do not need bleedings as much as those from Paris where we are formed to them from long habit. I approve; I also think that good doctor from Troyes is right when he says: "qui bene purgat bene sanat."³ I hope our Missionaries, to whom I am asking you to tell this for me with all the respect and. . .⁴ that you can, will pay attention to it.

I sent a letter to Monsieur Lucas--it will be a week ago tomorrow, Tuesday. I do not know if he received my letter. I am being forced to end this one, but nothing in the world will ever make me lessen the tender affection I have for good Monsieur Lucas and for you. I am for both of you and shall be all my life, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL
Saint-Lazare, May 30, 1639

378. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1635 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was not able to give you a reply yesterday because I had been bled, or this morning because I had taken some medicine.

I shall tell you quite briefly, with regard to your son's lodging, that I am thinking, all things considered, of placing him with M. Rebours,² if he remains and does not change his room. But if he does change, I see nothing better than M. Coqueret. Being with other priests would be difficult or useless for him. I know you have many things against the latter, which I have taken into consideration. Nevertheless, this is my thinking. M. Rebours will not leave his room so soon. Even though he should leave it, enjoy the time there is; then we shall see about later. It would be wise, in the meantime, for you to allow him to come back to you, if you wish the correction you gave him these past few days to do him any good.

I am sending you Madame Goussault's letter which I just received. Let me know what you think about the situation of your Sisters, both with regard to that area and to the Auvergne region.

If you were a strong woman, you would lay aside your little distractions and maternal affections and you would strengthen your body and mind at the sight of so many opportunities of doing good. Do so, in the name of God, Mademoiselle. God knows what I am for you and what you are for me. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Please answer me this evening.

379. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

[Between 1635 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that you are over your serious illness and that you took care of yourself today and did not go to Mass! I entreat you for the love of Our Lord to look after your health and spare nothing in that regard.

If you need any money, send me word; perhaps we even owe you some. I shall find out from M. Dehorgny and from you, please.

I saw that young woman and do not know what to tell you, except that I think your plan to see her three or four days before she enters is a good one. With that in view, I gave her half an écu to live on.

Your husband's cousin, M. Rebours, came here yesterday. We still agree that your son's happiness lies in the ecclesiastical state and, secondly, that his temperament seems more inclined to that than to the world. Thirdly, perhaps that young man got his mind all confused about the matter, which in turn revived his little aversions for the Saint-Nicolas² community. However, when matters have been set before him clearly, he will come to his senses. There is danger of encouraging his whim by giving him a short suit, unless it is for going to the country;

even then it will have to be modest. If after all that, he perseveres, in nomine Domini, we shall have to consent. But I do not judge it advisable to go and consent easily to the reversal of the dispositions he has shown all his life towards being a priest, on account of the change that young libertine³ has brought about in his mind. Therefore, please be at rest on that point, Mademoiselle. Our Lord will take care of the whole affair. Do not be afraid and let us not be in a hurry.

I am well enough, thank God, and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

380. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am delighted that Our Lord is strengthening you in retreat but, in the name of God, let us not tempt him. Finish this evening and add to your confession what has happened since, and do so briefly. You take a little too long at it; I hope you are teaching your Sisters to confess more quickly. It is sufficient for them to accuse themselves of three or four faults which cause them the greatest shame. I imagine the poor young women are not committing any mortal sin, thank God, and it is enough to accuse oneself of two or three venial sins, or even of one, because that is sufficient and not necessary matter for confession.

I did not receive your package until yesterday evening because I slept at the Bons-Enfants the night before and I have not been able to look over your meditations as yet. I shall do so with pleasure as soon as possible. As for your confession, I shall come to La Chapelle next Saturday, if I can.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I wish you a heart entirely filled with that of Our Lord and I am, in the love of the same Jesus Christ, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Thursday morning

I think you would do well to wait until after the retreat to see about the faults of your Sisters and admonish them for them. We must think about a chapter.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

381. - TO SAINT LOUISE¹

I cannot give you any reason for your illness other than God's good pleasure. Adore it then, that good pleasure, without asking why God is pleased to see you in a state of suffering. He is sovereignly glorified by our abandonment to His direction, without our discussing the reason for His Will, except to say that His Will is His reason itself and His reason is His Will.

Therefore, let us take refuge in it as did Isaac in the will of Abraham and Jesus Christ in the Will of His Father.

382. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN LA CHAPELLE

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot tell you how sorry I am to hear about the pain you are again suffering from the return of your headache. Mon Dieu, Mademoiselle, could it be the air in La Chapelle that is causing your illness? Please consult a doctor and, if that is the case, leave there as soon as possible and get a house in our faubourg, if there are any for rent--or in the city. If you cannot find any for rent at present and if Mademoiselle Poulailon's is still in good condition, see if she would be willing to lend it to you for a time while you look for another. Please see to this as soon as possible, Mademoiselle, and do all you can to get well.

Mon Dieu, how reluctant I was to leave without seeing you and how sorry I am to be staying longer than I expected.¹ Oh well! you will forgive me this fault as you are accustomed to bear

with so many others. In the meantime, be as cheerful as you can and neglect nothing whatever for the good of your health, out of love for Him Who loves you so much that He gave His life for you.

I shall be here another week or so, after which I hope to be in Paris² as soon as possible. I am going to celebrate Holy Mass so that, please God, I may find you completely cured and in very good spirits, so that you may serve Him for a long time in the work to which His goodness has called you.

I am a little worried about the health of Madame Goussault, the President's wife. Please write me a few lines to tell me how both of you are.³ I am in His love, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Troyes, July 4, 1639

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, in La Chapelle

383. - TO SAINT JANE FRANCES, IN ANNECY

Troyes, July 14, 1639

Most dear and most worthy Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Having come to this city of Troyes with the Commander de Sillery to visit the little family we have here in this diocese, I saw, in the letter he received from you, the answer you gave him concerning his proposal for an endowment fund for two men from our Little Company to work among the poor country people in your diocese.¹ Now, I shall tell you, most worthy Mother, that I received with inexpressible consolation the Commander's proposal to me concerning that foundation. It will give us the means of working in the diocese of the saints and it is under the protection and direction of our worthy Mother. Therefore, we have reason to hope that Our Lord will bless the holy intentions of the good Commander and the humble labors of His Missionaries.

And because you wish to know what constitutes our humble way of life, I shall tell you then, most worthy Mother, that our Little Company is established to go from village to village at its own expense, preaching, catechizing, and having the poor people make general confessions of their entire past life. We try to settle the disagreements we find among them and do all we can to see that the sick poor are assisted corporally and spiritually by the Confraternity of the Charity, composed of women, which we set up in the places where we give the mission and which desire it.

To this work, which is our principal one, and in order to perform it better, the Providence of God has added that of taking into our houses ten days before ordination those who are to take orders. We feed and support them and during that time teach them practical Theology, the ceremonies of the Church, and how to make and practice mental prayer according to the method of our blessed Father, the Bishop of Geneva.² We do this for those who belong to the diocese in which we are established.

We live in the spirit of the servants of the Gospel with regard to the bishops. When they tell us: "Go there," we go; "Come here," we come; "Do that," we do it; and that is how we act in what concerns the functions mentioned above. As for the internal discipline of the Company, that depends on a superior general.

Most of us have made the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a fourth to devote ourselves all our life to the assistance of the poor common people. We are seeking to have them approved by His Holiness³ and are asking permission to make a fifth vow, that of obedience to the bishops in whose dioceses we are established, in what concerns the aforesaid functions.⁴

We practice poverty and obedience and try to live in a religious manner, even though we are not religious. We get up at four o'clock in the morning and take half an hour to get dressed and make our bed. We make an hour of mental prayer together in the church and recite Prime, Terce, Sext, and None together. We then celebrate our Masses, each in his own place. When that is done, everyone retires to his room to study. At ten-thirty, we make a particular examen on the virtue we are trying to acquire. We then go to the refectory where we have dinner with

individual portions and reading at table. After that, we go to adore the Blessed Sacrament together and say the Angelus Domini Nuntiavit Mariae, etc. Next we have an hour of recreation together, after which everyone returns to his room until two o'clock when we recite Vespers and Compline together. We then return to our rooms to study until five o'clock, at which time Matins and Lauds are recited together. Another particular examen is made at that time. We have supper next and then spend an hour in recreation. When that is over, we go to the church to make the general examen, say evening prayers, and read the points for the next morning's prayer. After that, we retire to our rooms and go to bed at nine o'clock.

When we are on mission in the country, we do the same, except that we go to the church at six o'clock in the morning to celebrate Holy Mass and to hear confessions after the sermon which a man from the Company has just given following the Holy Mass he has said beforehand. We hear confessions until eleven o'clock, then go to eat dinner and return to the church at two o'clock to hear confessions there until five o'clock. Following that, one man teaches catechism and the others go off to say Matins and Lauds so as to have supper at six o'clock.

It is our maxim not to preach, catechize, or hear confessions in cities where there is a bishopric and not to leave a village until all the people have been instructed in the matters necessary for salvation and until everyone has made his general confession. We go to few places where there is anyone left who fails to do so. When we have finished in one village, we go to another where we do the same thing. We work from around the feast of All Saints until that of Saint John; we leave the months of July, August, September, and a part of October to the people so that they can take care of the harvest and the vintage. And when we have worked twenty days or thereabouts, we rest for a week or so and then go back to work. It is not possible to continue such labor for a longer time without that respite and without a day off each week.

We have our days of solitude every year. We hold chapter every Friday morning, during which each one accuses himself of his failings, receives a penance from the Superior, and is obliged to carry it out. Two priests and two brothers ask the Company for the charity of being warned of their failings and, after them others do so, each in turn. In the evening of the same day we have a conference on our rules and the practice of the virtues. Everyone there shares the thoughts Our Lord gave him in prayer on the topic being discussed.

We never go out without permission and always two by two. Upon returning, everyone goes to see the Superior and gives him an account of what he has done. We neither write nor receive letters unless the Superior has seen and approved them. Everyone is obliged to agree to having his faults charitably reported to his Superior and to try to accept from and give to others the admonitions needed. Silence is observed from evening until the end of dinner the next day and from after the morning recreation until the one in the evening.

We spend two years in the seminary, that is, in the novitiate. The training there is rather strict, by the mercy of God, so that for a number of reasons the seminarians do not communicate with the priests without permission.

The said Congregation is approved by His Holiness and established in the city and in the faubourg of Saint-Denis in Paris, and in the dioceses of Poitiers, Luçon, Toul, Agen, and Troyes.

There you have our humble way of life, most dear and most worthy Mother. Please do us the charity, for the love of Our Lord, of telling us your reactions to it. You may be assured, dear Mother, that I shall accept them as coming from God, from Whose love I request this charity of you. . . .⁵

I shall not say anything to you about your dear daughters in Paris except that I think they are advancing more and more in the love of their Divine Savior. I have a great pardon to ask of you because I have not visited them for a long time. The Sisters here⁶ also have a good reputation and live fervently, and certainly with good reason. You could not believe, dear Mother, how greatly the spirit of Our Lord is evident in both the Mother⁷ and the déposée,⁸ or how well the rest of the house is doing, considering the difficulties it has had in the past.

Well now, dear Mother, permit me to ask if your unparalleled goodness still reserves for me the happiness of enjoying the place it gave me in your dear and most lovable heart? Certainly, I choose to hope so, even though my miseries render me most unworthy of it. In the name of God, dear [Mother],⁹ please continue to grant me that favor. Trusting that you will, I am your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Most worthy Mother de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation Sainte-Marie, in Annecy

383a. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Troyes, July 18, 1639

Mademoiselle,

Blessed be God that you are better! O mon Dieu! how that consoles me! Please continue now to strengthen yourself and spare nothing in that regard.

MonDieu! Mademoiselle, how difficult it is for me to be away so long! But who can hurry or delay the order of adorable Providence!

Here is a letter from the Duchesse d'Aiguillon with regard to replacing little Jeanne.¹ Please do so as soon as possible and send her a stronger girl; I could not tell you whom. God will make known to you the one he has chosen for that purpose, if He so desires.

I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, Mademoiselle, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

384. - TO LEONARD BOUCHER, IN TOUL

Troyes, July 20, 1639

Monsieur,

I have received two of your letters since I have been here, one by way of Paris and the other from the bearer on the first trip he made to see you.¹ The last letter says very little; the first shows me your diligence in sending my letters. I thank you equally for both of them, as also for what you told me about the difficulty we are having with good Monsieur Fleury.² I have nothing to say about that other than what I wrote to the President,³ except that it is to be hoped that you and I might have a little more regard for the maxims of the Gospel than we do. Please make your meditation one day on these words: "To him who takes away your cassock, give also your cloak";⁴ and on these: *Inquire pacem et persequere eam*;⁵ and another on these words: *quaecumque dixerint vobis facite*;⁶ and on these: *qui vos audit me audit, et qui vos spernit me spernit*.⁷ Please send me the thoughts Our Lord gives you concerning them, followed by the resolutions you will take. I shall be consoled to see them.⁸

I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, Monsieur, your. . . .

385. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Troyes, July 28, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was worried; they had sent me word that you were a little worse. Yesterday, Monsieur Portail wrote me the opposite and your letter proves it to me. I praise God and pray that He will restore you to perfect health. Please do all you can to get well, Mademoiselle, for the love of Our Lord.

What steps can be taken to prevent the reduction of your revenue to the rate of five and a half percent? . . . With regard to M. Arnaud, I do not see any at all since the Prince has so ordained it. You could also, by similar means and opportunity, increase it by buying some stock in salt; but you know the risk. . . . Honest people will pay you well. I see no possibility of supplementing it otherwise.

When I return, I shall be most pleased to hear what you have to tell me about your thoughts with regard to Providence. I am likewise pleased that you sent the honor of your remembrance to Saint-Sulpice.

Thank you for the news you gave me about Madame Goussault. I hope to see both of you around the end of this coming week and I am forever, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

386. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]¹

. . . Jeanne, dismiss her and tell her it is because she struck her companion. Give her something and let tomorrow's feast go by. She will be all right with the Sisters at Saint-Sauveur until she can find work. Tell the others that this is not the first time she has hit someone, that we had forgiven her the rest, but that the scandal would be too great if it were said of the Daughters of Charity that they fight like cats and dogs. Say a word about it to Madame Goussault, the President's wife, and give some thought as to whether it would be advisable to mention it to the other officers.

I shall try to notify M. Renar without mentioning your name. You are right about the medals. Please use them the way you mentioned to me.

If I do not remember to send Saint Bridget² back to you some day this week, please remind me. Please receive Communion tomorrow for a serious matter, so that, please God, two people do not get into an argument over the Charity in which Our Lord has bound them together.

I bid you and also your little patient a good day. I am not telling you that you must take care of her, because you [will not neglect to do so, since you see Our Lord in her. In His love] and in that of His holy Mother, I am your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

387. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1639]¹

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You seem depressed. You are afraid that God is angry and wants none of the service you are rendering Him, because He is taking your Daughters away from you. Far from it, Mademoiselle, His acting that way is a sign that He cherishes it, for He is treating you as His dear spouse, the Church. At its beginning, He not only had the majority die by natural deaths, but also from torture and torments. Who would not have said on seeing that, that He was angry with those holy young plants? Therefore, do not believe that any longer, but rather the contrary.

Since you agree, I shall send for that young woman, Jeanne, or, if you know where she is, please send her to me. I told Madame de Herse² who she is.

Hubert³ did not go to Picardy. I doubt whether I shall send him there so soon. He will visit his sister⁴ before he leaves.

I shall get nowhere with that priest; you will do more with him than I.

It is strange that you fear my departure as you do. Set your mind at ease; my journey is broken up. The longest part I can foresee is the trip to Pontoise tomorrow.

In the name of God, Mademoiselle, love your poverty and be at peace. It is the greatest honor you can render right now to Our Lord, Who is tranquillity itself.

Could you not go to the home of Madame Goussault, the President's wife, today? I would be very happy if you could. It would give you a little relaxation from your continuous work. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

388. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Thursday morning [1636]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not know who told your Sisters that I am not well. By God's mercy, I am feeling fine. May it please His goodness to grant me the grace of making good use of the health He is giving me!

I think you would do well to write and tell that good Sister we are consoled that Our Lord has allowed her to recognize her fault in having listened to that temptation. She must make good use of the grace God has given her. She should be well convinced that all good people are obliged by God to suffer temptation and that neither this one nor others can ever weaken her, if she is faithful to God. No matter where she is or what she is doing, she will always be tempted and distressed; that is her cross. If she wishes to follow Jesus Christ, she must carry it.

The meeting² could not take place tomorrow. We scheduled the one concerning the Foundlings³ for tomorrow at Mademoiselle Virole's house.

Last night I informed the stout Jeanne that she must leave and that I gave you the fifty livres she sent me by way of Madame Forest. I think there were fifty-two livres; she said eighteen écus.⁴ We shall have the remainder given to her. She thought Madame de Herse had given me one hundred francs belonging to her, which she says that good lady is holding. I told her to ask her for them. I think it is well for you to act cautiously in this matter, but firmly and effectively. Your waters will come today.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

388a. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

[End of July 1639]¹

Most honored and dear Father,

From the letters and reports the Commander has sent us, we have learned his feelings, those of the Bishops of Sens² and of Bourges,³ your thoughts, dearest Father, and those of Father Binet⁴ concerning an extraordinary visitor. I am quite certain that, if our blessed Father⁵ were in the world, he would receive them with respect and acquiescence.

I proposed them to the Bishop of Geneva⁶ and to our spiritual Father,⁷ both individuals of great piety and prudence. They likewise received them with honor; they see how useful the plan would be for maintaining conformity and holding each to its obligations, especially several monasteries which are neglected for want of prelates and which, in the end, might decline. But, dearest Father, we see clearly that, if the request for a visitor⁸ were to be made in the name of our Institute, our prelates and the majority of our monasteries would greatly object for the reasons which I wrote at length to the Commander. I think he will pass them on to you with the report, therefore, I shall not repeat them here. But I entreat you, dearest Father, to devote your prayers and reflections before God to knowing His Divine Will concerning the direction and carrying out of this plan. May it be for His glory and the good of our Institute and may things be done with all possible gentleness and so as to preserve the respect due to our prelates. The Bishop of Sens possesses the spirit of God; he is the one whom Our Lord has inspired with this thought, as you told our most virtuous and dear Father, the Commander, who wrote it to me.

I think it would be well to meet one more time to consider every aspect of the affair. The question is very important and demands great secrecy until it is settled. Dearest Father, please take this matter to heart a little. I say that to you, certainly not with any shadow of distrust regarding your affection, but because I fear your continual and important occupations do not allow you the leisure to take the time required for this one. But, dearest Father, make an effort in that regard, I entreat you, because God inspires in me a very special sense of support and peace regarding your judgment. Weigh everything well, I beg you once again.

389. - SAINT JANE FRANCES TO SAINT VINCENT

Live Jesus!

[Annecy, 1639]¹

. . . Moreover, dearest Father, it is a boundless consolation for me to hope to have your dear sons here as our good and dear father, Commander de Sillery, has promised. Is he not incomparable in his charity and we deeply obligated to Divine Providence for having given us

such a support? May He be blessed eternally! Let us know, dearest Father, all that will have to be done and known for the consolation of that good servant of God.

I beg His infinite tenderness to preserve you for a long time for His glory and the service of Holy Church. Keep me in mind before God and in your paternal affection, since I am with all my heart, although unworthy, etc.

Dear Father, when I consider the fruits those two good workers will bear in this large and populous diocese, I am delighted. I am also sure that, because of your piety and zeal for the Divine Glory, you will have this establishment founded on so solid a basis that it can never decline through any shortage either of men or of resources which might come about in your Congregation. Let us know also what the beds and other necessary furnishings for your priests should be like.

390. - TO SAINT JANE FRANCES, IN ANNECY

Paris, August 15, 1639

Dearest and worthy Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your undated letter which the Commander delivered to me, without a date, and you can imagine, most worthy Mother, with what reverence and affection I did so, since it was a letter from my excellent Mother and was filled with the fragrance and sweetness of her spirit. Jésus! dear Mother, it has filled my poor heart with that fragrance! Well now, blessed be the One for love of Whom your goodness has offered to receive us and find and furnish a house for us!¹ I am not thanking you for that, dear Mother, because I am unworthy to do so, but I pray to God that He Himself will be your thanks and your reward. . . .²

As for what you told me about the mission's being established in such a way that it might not fail hereafter for lack of men or money, well, allow me to tell you that as far as men are concerned, dear Mother, the consolidation of the Company which we are negotiating in Rome--as I wrote to you from Troyes--is consolidation in the particular places where it will be established with the help of God, which I beg you to ask of Him for that purpose. As for assets, the Commander did me the honor of telling me that, if he sells some property, he will give us the capital of the revenue he has given us. We shall invest in your area as much of the inherited capital as is necessary for the support of the two Missionaries and a brother. That being the case, if Our Lord is pleased to grant His blessing to that good work, it will not fail for lack of men or want of money. The Commander seems unwilling to stop at that number.³ May the Holy Name of God be blessed for that!

I have told you a great number of favorable things about this Little Company.⁴ Indeed, dear Mother, that frightens me. Therefore, I beg you to discount many of them and not repeat what I said to anyone. Too good a reputation is very harmful and, by a just judgment of God, that is usually why results do not meet expectations, either because we become conceited or because the public attributes to men what is due to God alone. Therefore, I most humbly entreat you once again not to entertain the ideas that what the Commander tells you about us might give you and, still less, to talk about them to others. Alas! worthy Mother, if you knew our ignorance and the little virtue we have, you would greatly pity us! However, you will see that in reality in the two men we are sending.⁵ That consoles me, because you will pray to God for us with greater compassion for our misery. Because I am saying this to you with tears in my eyes, in view of the truth of what I am telling you and the abominations of my poor soul, I beg you, dear Mother, to offer to God my embarrassment and the confession I am making of it in the presence of His Divine Majesty. Forgive me if I am abusing your patience by telling you my poor feelings this way. I am for my most worthy and excellent Mother, in the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, most worthy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

i.s.C.M.

Worthy Mother, the Commander has requested me to send you a list of the humble furnishings we need, which he is supposed to provide for us.

Addressed: Reverend Mother de Chantal, Foundress of the Order of the Visitation and Superior of the Annecy Monastery, in Annecy

391. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[August or September 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I just saw Madame Goussault; she is not critical, but seriously ill. She realizes it and told me so. We must pray to God for her. Her heart is still rooted in the Will of God. I left the Chancellor's wife² there. She told me she would send you her carriage tomorrow. I shall give you a paper before you leave.

If there were sufficient housing, we would have to settle that matter, but since there is not, we need to think it over; we shall talk about it. In the meantime, I wish you a good evening and I am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, at her house

392. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE, IN TROYES

Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, August 28, 1639

Dearest Mother,

May the spirit of union by which the Son of God united mankind to His Father be always with you forever!

I offer you a million thanks, dear Mother, for the ardent charity with which you do me the kindness of writing to me. And because it is God who moved your dear heart to do so and inspired you with all that you told me, I embrace it with all the affection and reverence I can. I promise you, excellent Mother, that I shall accomplish exactly everything you chose to recommend to me. It is true, dear Mother, that I am rather afraid my wretchedness has given our very dear and most amiable Commander¹ much cause for pain. But what else can come from a miserable sinner except failures and faults in every matter? However, it is certainly completely unintentional because, since I have had the honor of being acquainted with him, and for a very long time before that, I have never had any other intention than to honor and respect him as a great servant of God, whom I am unworthy to approach. And because I have no other way of making reparation than by having recourse to his goodness, I am doing so, dear Mother, through your own goodness. I most humbly beg his pardon, prostrate in spirit at his feet and yours and, indeed, with streams of tears brought to my eyes by the warm affection of my heart.

And because he is so good as to comply with my request concerning the Bishop of T[royes]² and to approve of his having a room in the house, I most humbly thank him. I also entreat him, in the name of Our Lord, to bear once more with my weakness on the other point pertaining to the consent of the town, and to be so kind as to discuss it with them himself since you do not judge it advisable to write to them about it, for, dear Mother, they will not tolerate us there without objection.³ I have been told that the wife of a magistrate said to someone:⁴ "They had better not try to establish the Priests of the Mission in the faubourg; they will not be tolerated there!" How displeased the Commander would be, dear Mother, if he were to see himself thwarted in the work of his hands! If we are rejected while doing in simplicity what depends on us, fine, the Will of God will be known to us; we shall settle down as best we can on the outskirts of the town and its faubourgs. If they approve, as I hope they will, if the Commander himself talks to them about it, it will be a great consolation to us to have entered that establishment through the door of deference, submission, humility, simplicity, candor, and charity. If this shocks your sensibilities, dear Mother, or those of the Commander, I most humbly ask your pardon and his also and beg you once again, in the name of Our Lord, to bear with me in this wretchedness. To say that his presence will prevent any violence being done--I would like to believe that, but I have no doubt that as soon as he turns his back, people will act otherwise.

I realize quite well, dear Mother, that Saint Teresa acted differently in some of her foundations, but then, she was a saint inspired by God for that purpose. But also, dear Mother, I do not know if she would have acted that way with regard to people who had an aversion for new

establishments and had shown it on several occasions. That is why I once again entreat your boundless charity to accept what I am suggesting to you with all possible humility and respect and to propose it to the Commander. Tell him also that I most willingly approve of his taking the forty-five hundred livres which are in the hands of our dear Sisters of Sainte-Marie⁵ where the good Bishop of Troyes suggested we place them. I am writing to Monsieur Dufestel to that effect, telling him to have the said sum handed over to the Commander upon his request.

Concerning the increase of the Geneva foundation,⁶ indeed, dear Mother, I cannot tell you how grateful Our Lord has made me. Because I am so ungracious that I cannot express it well when I meet people, I most humbly beg you, dear Mother, to help me thank him for it and assure him of my obedience. And in your regard, dear Mother, since I am not worthy to give you proper thanks either for all the benefits we incessantly receive from you, I beg Our Lord, dear Mother, to do so Himself and to be our thanks. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, dearest Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Reverend Mother de la Trinité, Superior of the Carmelites in the faubourg of Troyes, in Troyes

392a. - TO N.

[August 29, 1639]

. . . A grain of charity suffices to calm many anxieties and ease many differences. . . .

393. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Wednesday morning [1639]¹

I was consoled to see the letter from Angers and feel we should not put off sending the Sisters, although the contract is not drawn up. In any case, we shall still be on our feet. But I am worried about what you wrote concerning the rest. O Jésus! Mademoiselle, this is not the time. Seigneur Dieu! You create too much need in the world! In the name of God, do all you can to stay well and treat yourself better. If I can, I shall have the happiness of seeing you this evening, or else tomorrow, with the help of God.

Your son told me last evening that he was going to see the Pastor at Saint-Nicolas for the examination.² He seems definitely to have made up his mind. He did not come to see you because his long cloak got torn as he was walking along somewhere; he will have it mended. Perhaps he does not want to come and see you until he is bound to the Church, as he wrote to you. Be very cheerful, in the name of God. I am, in His love, your servant.

V. D.

I think you made a good choice with regard to those young women from Lorraine, and the other older one you mentioned to me will do well.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

394. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1648]¹

Your remedy, Mademoiselle, produced its effect on me nine times. Waters have never done me any good during my fever in Forges or here. We shall try them, nevertheless, for we have some here in the house for you, if you need any. My slight fever is, as you say, double tertian, but you know that at this season I usually have it double quartan and have already had it that way this fall.

You would do well to send for Madame Turgis.

Please let me know how many little girls are still left. And what are you doing for your headache? I really think perhaps you still need to be purged a little.

I am very pleased with what you told me about your little suffering. Courage, Our Lord will be your consolation, as I beg Him to be with all my heart. Please do all you can in the matter.

I am, in His love, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

395. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1636 and 1641]¹

I have to come to La Chapelle shortly. If there is any need for me to come to your house, please let me know. Otherwise, I would be happy not to come there at all, according to the decision we made in that regard in the beginning.

396. - TO NICOLAS SANGUIN, BISHOP OF SENLIS

Paris, September 13, 1639

Your Excellency,

The charity with which you are pleased to honor our little Congregation of the Mission gives me the confidence to request you most humbly to be so kind as to grant a dimissorial letter ad omnes ordines¹ to Michel Dupuis,² an acolyte of your diocese who is also a member of our Congregation. He is taking his course in philosophy and has studied theology. By the grace of God, he is of good moral character and hopes to serve God usefully among the poor country people. It is that, Your Excellency, which gives me the confidence to present you this most humble petition, with all the humility and respect in my power. I here renew the offering of my obedience and am, in the love of Our Lord, Your Excellency, your. . . .

The young man has only a bond for one hundred or fifty livres. I hope to have him accepted with that.

397. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Good evening, Mademoiselle. Please reflect on the points I should cover tomorrow¹ and send them to me between now and eight-thirty this evening. Let me know also the state of your health.

I most humbly thank you for your gift. Please let me know which of the two rosaries was the one used by the late wife of the general.²

398. - TO SAINT LOUISE

. . . I wish you a good day, while my heart is still filled with consolation from the conference of our good Daughters of Charity. It seems to me that never have I more admired God's goodness or His guidance than I have done and am doing on this occasion. O Mademoiselle, who will grant us enough humility to consider our place at the bottom of hell if we are not faithful to His eternal designs by serving Him as He wishes, and if we do not abandon ourselves entirely to His most admirable and most amiable guidance!

399. - TO SAINT LOUISE

If you wish me to have the happiness of seeing you during your illness, let me know. I have imposed on myself the law of not coming to see you unless I am summoned for some necessary or very useful matter.

400. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Friday morning

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have never seen a mother so much a mother as you; you are hardly a woman at all in anything else. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, leave your son to the care of His Father, Who loves him more than you do or, at least, do away with your anxiety about him. I am going to send someone to the Bons-Enfants, as if nothing had happened, to find out how the matter stands, and I shall let you know.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

401. - TO MOTHER DE LA TRINITE

Dearest Mother,

The grace of the union of the hearts of Jesus Christ be with you!¹

I received the letter you were pleased to send me and most humbly thank you for it and for all the kindnesses your dear soul chooses to exercise towards my own, which is so wretched, and towards this poor Company. I beg Our Lord, Who has given you such an abundant share of His spirit, to increase it

infinitely in you as your recompense. I am sorry, dearest Mother, for the pain I have given you reason to have on the occasion of this difficulty. But then, charity is patient. O dear Mother, what reason you have to expect a beautiful jewel in your crown for the patience you are practicing towards us in this matter! That is also the prayer, dear Mother, that I offer to Our Lord; and of you, I ask that you not grow weary of bearing with us in the suffering you are experiencing on our account.

M. Dufestel sent me word that the Commander, in his goodness, is setting aside his own feelings to accommodate himself to my wretchedness;² I am to have the Attorney General³ write and he will speak to the Magistrates immediately. I entreat you, dear Mother, to thank him for me, as I do with all the humility in my power. Tell him that I rank this favor among the greatest I have ever received from him. Tell him also that in two or three days I shall have the happiness of going to see the Attorney General in the country, where he is at present. I shall ask him to write the way the Commander directed M. Dufestel to have the letter written.

Our Missionaries assigned to the Geneva diocese are beginning to gather together, I mean one of them, from the illness from which he is recovering.⁴ I hope he will be able to leave at the latest around the tenth of October.⁵

I entreat you, dear Mother, to express our apologies to the Commander for the delay. Be assured that my soul is filled with gratitude for our obligations to you and that you will be, dear Mother, in time and in eternity, and I as well, in the love of Our Lord. Your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, September 27, 1639

402. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Mademoiselle,

We must act against what is painful and either break our heart or soften it to get it ready for anything. It seems that Our Lord wants to take a hand in the Little Company. It belongs entirely to him, I hope, and He has the right to use it as He pleases. As for me, my greatest desire is to wish only the accomplishment of His holy Will. I cannot tell you how far advanced our patient¹ is in that practice, and that is why it seems Our Lord wants to put him in a place where he can continue it more happily for all eternity. Oh! who will grant us the submission of our senses and our reason to that adorable Will! The Creator of the senses and of reason will do so, if we make use of them only in Him and for Him. Let us pray that you and I may always have one and the same will and non-will with Him and in Him, since such is an anticipated Paradise beginning in this life.

403. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 9 or 10, 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I most humbly thank you for the care you take of me. My slight fever is tertian; this is the third attack. It came upon me the evening I had the pleasure of seeing you, because I had gone down

to the refectory immediately after vomiting the little remedy I took. The first attack left me completely sleepless. The day after and from then on I have induced sweating, which has caused the attacks to diminish, and I have been bled twice, so that the attack I am having now is very mild. Our doctor thinks I should be purged next Wednesday. Please have the dose prepared for us. The one you sent recently had no effect--not the one M. Blatiron² took; he has left with the Bishop of Alet,³ for he was much better from it.

Thank you for notifying me about the infirmary and for sharing our sorrow. I recommend our Brother Alexandre⁴ to you; he will receive Extreme Unction this evening, along with the Prior's⁵ servant. The others are well, thank God.

I was most consoled yesterday to learn that you are feeling better. I beg God to restore the strength you need for all the work Our Lord is preparing for you.

I shall say just a word to you about the loss we have experienced in the late M. de la Salle and the one we are in danger of suffering. By the grace of God, my heart is at peace about it, seeing that it is God's good pleasure. I am sometimes a little afraid that my sins are its cause, but seeing even in that the good pleasure of God, I accept it with all my heart and am, in the love of Our Lord, your servant.

V. D.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

404. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON, IN ROME

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of September 13 and a few others before that, which I have answered since my return from Troyes. I repeat to you in this one that I have asked the Pastor of Saint-Leu,¹ who compiled the French martyrology,² to give me the notes he has on Saint Veneranda.³ Before this letter leaves, I shall have someone see him again to ask him to send me what he has and I shall send it to you by the same means.

As for the expenses of the missions, please take care of them when you go on one, even for that good priest from Siena as well, unless he insists to the contrary.

With regard to the litanies of Jesus, I would like you to get permission to say them in common in the morning *media voce sine cantu*,⁴ as we are accustomed to do.

When I spoke to you about sending you some Missionaries, it was just a mere proposal. It would be impossible for us now that we have increased the number of Missionaries in Aiguillon,⁵ have given four to begin the foundation in Alet, and are also going to send another four to the Geneva diocese where Commander de Sillery has made a foundation. And besides the Missionaries in Toul, we have sent men to Nancy, Verdun, and Bar-le-Duc, and are going to send others to Metz to assist corporally and spiritually the poor country people who have been given refuge in those cities. We assist them corporally by distributing five hundred pounds of bread to them a month in each town; that amounts to twenty-five hundred livres which we must find every month. By the grace of God, it has not been lacking up to now and so I hope we shall not fail to have it; at least we have enough funds for this year. We assist them spiritually, teaching them everything necessary for salvation and having them begin by making a general confession of their entire past life and then continue to confess every two or three months.

Brother Mathieu,⁶ who is working wonders in that regard by a very special grace Our Lord has given him, thought it would be well to bring as many of those people as possible into France. He brought in a hundred last month, among whom were forty-six young women--some from good families, and others. He fed them and accompanied them right into this city where the greater number have already been placed. While waiting, they are being fed in a house where the city foundlings used to be cared for. A few good ladies⁷ are doing marvels to assist us in this.

Given all these circumstances, you can see quite well, Monsieur, that we cannot possibly send you any assistance at present; when we can, we shall do so. We are going to send twelve or thirteen to those parts.

That news will console you, but here is some that will greatly sadden your dear heart: hearing about our good deceased M. de la Salle's passing away. He went to God on the feast of Saint Denis⁸ between three and four o'clock in the morning as a result of purpura. During his illness, he was so attached to the Will of God that he never departed from it, so that it can be said his death was an echo of his life. The day before he died, in order to die naked, he took off his shirt with so much decency that everyone was astonished that a body which had not stirred for two days had been able to do it. In fact, I asked him why he had stripped himself and he gave me an inarticulate answer that I could not understand. M. Dehorgny told us that he thought he had done it in imitation of Saint Francis⁹ or, rather, of Our Lord, because last year he had seen him greatly moved by that gesture of Saint Francis the day we were reading his life.

Our Lord seems unwilling to stop there because, while I am writing this, we have two of our brothers at the point of Extreme Unction, one of whom is our dear and admirable Brother Alexandre.¹⁰ I commend to your prayers the dead and the living and beg you to hurry to obtain that privileged altar for us with the dispensation from the stipulated number of nine Masses. Usually fifteen to twenty are said, but it sometimes happens, when people go on missions, that only five or six priests are here. The Cardinal¹¹ just sent someone here to the house to find out if we have one, with an order to have Masses said on it for the late Cardinal de la Valette.

Mon Dieu, Monsieur, how long it is taking to present that petition!¹² I beg you, Monsieur, to hurry it; and, whatever that good prelate and a number of others may say, standum est proposito.¹³ I just discussed the matter with good M. Callon who thinks, as I do, that the matter is absolutely necessary. He told me such favorable things on the subject that my heart was quite touched. Among others, he mentioned the argument of Saint Thomas: quae applicantur primo et ultimo debent esse immobilia.¹⁴ The good M. Callon is a doctor in Theology who works constantly on the missions near Aumale. See to it, therefore, Monsieur, I beg of you. I do not know whether it would have been desirable for you to have applied immediately to Cardinal Antonio,¹⁵ or whether the individual you know does not intend to make a milch cow of the matter so as to get more money or some equivalent service. Would to God you had some other means at hand to attain our goal; that is M. de Cordes' thinking, provided it could be done without spoiling anything! This is said for your ears alone and never for anyone else. But if you think it risky to change means, in nomine Domini, hold on to the one you have. You see, Monsieur, we are mortal. I cannot go on with this for long because next April I shall enter my sixtieth year.¹⁶ Add to that the mishaps that may occur. The doctor just left me; he just told me M. Dehorgny has a fever. As for the one I have at present, it is my usual one.

I am more touched than I can say about your fortunate meeting with that good priest from Siena. O Monsieur, how thoroughly so I would be if the goodness of God were pleased to unite him to you in spirit! I say that positus ponendis;¹⁷ I think Our Lord grants me the mercy of not wanting men except when His Providence draws them. Alas! Monsieur, how vain and blameworthy our desires are! I beg Our Lord, however, to bestow His blessing on the new life you are about to begin together in your house and on the mission where I am confident you now are. I dare to take the liberty of greeting him most humbly, with all the respect and reverence I owe him, and I recommend myself to his holy prayers. I likewise greet the other good priest you mentioned who will perhaps make the third in your group.

You have spoken to me about Father Garanita in almost every letter and about all the good he is doing, but I do not know if you told me to what Order he belongs. Be that as it may, I can only praise God for the grace He is bestowing on you and also for the kindness shown you by that good prelate who runs the priests' academy. I beg Our Lord to shower more and more blessings on them.

Jésus! Monsieur, how consoled I am by the report you presented in order to obtain the faculty for working and for indulgences for the Company! Please send it to me as soon as you receive it. O Monsieur, how moved I am by the favor Cardinal Bagni did for you in that regard, and how I beg God with all my heart to preserve him for many long years! I shall tell you two things about him: first, I have never seen a goodness more closely approaching that of Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva, than his; second, I deeply cherish his portrait and have no other than his and that of our blessed prelate. I entreat you, Monsieur, to assure him of my obedience, to take care of your health, and to assist me by your prayers to obtain mercy for myself before His Divine Majesty. Ask Him for the grace to live better in order to die well as did Madame

Goussault, the President's wife. She made a holy use of the long and painful illness which preceded her death and died with joy and jubilation.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Paris, October 12, 1639

Addressed: Monsieur Marchand, Banker at the Court of Rome, to be kindly delivered to Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

405. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[October 1639]¹

Courage, Monsieur, raise your heart to God and receive in acquiescence to His good pleasure the sad news I am about to give you. It has pleased the Divine Majesty to take to Himself good Monsieur de la Salle. He died of purpura on the feast of Saint Denis,² between three and four o'clock in the morning on the fourteenth day of his illness. His death corresponded to his life. His acceptance of the good pleasure of God was constant from the beginning of his illness right to the end, without any contrary thought at all. He had always feared death, but as he saw from the start that he was contemplating it with delight, he told me that he was going to die with pleasure because, he said, he had heard me say that at the end God takes away the fear of death from those who have feared it during their life and who have practiced charity towards the poor.

I cannot tell you the devout sentiments he has left in the Company. We were in retreat then and, at the sharing of prayer, each man told what he had heard him say that was most edifying and spoke of the virtues he had seen him practice, all of which gave us reason to hold conferences on the same subject. We held the first the day before yesterday and will continue next Friday. You cannot imagine the effects of that conference. I had objected to it, but, whereas it is the mind of the Church that we converse about the virtues of those who have died in the Lord, and whereas for that purpose she has established notaries to collect and make known the combats of martyrs and the holy deeds of confessors, the funeral orations given in Paris for the great and for all sorts of people in Provence and Languedoc--in some places over the grave at one's burial, or on a Sunday, or after dinner the day of the funeral--I thought we could do the same with profit and I am consoled by it. I even want the practice continued in humility and Christian charity. I think there is reason to hope that some people will correct their failings and others will be encouraged in virtue. One of those who spoke the day before yesterday said that, by the grace of God and by the prayers and example of the deceased, he had made up his mind to do something important for which he had no inclination before. I think, Monsieur, that you would do well to hold a conference at your house. The first point could be the reasons for our conversing about the virtuous words and good deeds we have observed in the deceased; the second point, the words you heard him say; the third point, the deeds.

406. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[October 13, 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I most humbly thank you for your good remedy; I took it yesterday and it worked three times. Our doctor thinks that I should take a dose again tomorrow with some rosepale syrup.² I most humbly ask you to do me this second favor and to send me another dose this evening.

I still have my slight fever. Our Brother Alexandre³ gives us some hope, and the other brother as well. The first still has a little to fear tomorrow, which is his fourteenth day. Monsieur Dehorgny is ill with a colic and a little fever.

This slight indisposition will give me the means to reflect a little more on our concerns about the Charity. Afterwards, if Our Lord grants me life, we shall work at it in good earnest. Your letter the day before yesterday let me see some slight reluctance in your mind about it. Mon Dieu! Mademoiselle, how fortunate you are to possess the antidote for eagerness! The works God Himself is accomplishing are never spoiled by the inactivity of men. Please trust in Him

and that I am, in His love, as much as Our Lord wills, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

V. D. P.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

407. - TO BENOIT BECU, IN RICHELIEU

Paris, October 28, 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

God's Providence has cast His eyes on you to go and serve Him at Notre-Dame de La Rose, in the diocese of Agen,¹ where Messieurs Brunet and Savinier are at present.

I am sending you a secret report which you shall communicate to no one but M. Lambert.

The newness of the duty will give you cause for apprehension. Remember that Our Lord will be your guidance and your guide and that you can do all things with Him. Jeremiah was a child who knew only how to say to God Domine, nescio loqui,² and yet God intended to make use of him in the most important plan His Majesty had at that time for His people. You have reason to hope for the same graces bestowed on him if, like him, no matter what people do, you respond to your vocation in his spirit of humility. I hope for this from His goodness and from the recognition you seem to have of your unworthiness and inadequacy. I am, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

M. Bécu,³ who in Nancy is called M. de Montigny,⁴ is well and is working wonders for about four hundred poor people whom he is nourishing corporally and spiritually. Brother Hubert⁵ keeps on doing better and better.

Your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

408. - TO LOUIS LEBRETON, IN ROME

Paris, November 15, 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter and the formula for your petition. Having reflected upon it together with the present dispositions of their Excellencies, our prelates, we thought it advisable to accord to them the right to correct any errors the Missionaries make with regard to the people while they are giving missions. We shall also likewise accord them the rights of visitation and correction of any houses which become scandalously irregular, after they have notified the General about it two or three times, pointing out the scandalous irregularity which is to be corrected, and have given information concerning the irregularity. And because we are afraid that you may have difficulty obtaining the favor dimittendi incorrigibiles,¹ we thought it advisable to request that solemn vows not be made. Those who have² completed their two years in the seminary will make the four simple vows and those who have completed their first year in the seminary will make a good resolution to live and die in the Company in poverty, charity, and obedience to the bishops circa missionis and to the Superior General circa disciplinam et directionem societatis.³ The latter may withdraw or be dismissed only after making a retreat. The others may likewise withdraw only after making use of every imaginable means to avoid coming to that end, only with the authority of the Pope or the General, and only in the cases which I shall indicate, as I shall everything that is contained in the present letter, in a report I hope to send you within three days. Therefore, please defer presenting the said petition. I shall answer in my next letter everything you asked me in yours. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Monsieur Marchand, Expeditionary Banker at the Court of Rome, to be given, please, to Monsieur Lebreton, Priest of the Mission, in Rome

409. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Richelieu, November 24, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The dysentery in this district is becoming contagious. The town magistrates just sent for M. Lambert, their Pastor, to see about the order to be maintained in the town with regard to the plague. It has broken out in three locations. That gives me good reason for asking you to postpone your trip, even though I sent word to Abbé de Vaux, the Vicar General of Angers,¹ that you could be there around the beginning of next month.² Please wait until we get back, Mademoiselle, and we shall see about it.

I have been in this town for two days and have seen Sister Louise in passing at the church. She is overjoyed at the hope of seeing you. I have not seen our Sister Barbe³ as yet. Things are going better, thank God.⁴

I hope to leave this town in three or four days⁵ and be in Paris around the tenth or twelfth of next month. I am, meanwhile, in the hope of seeing you there, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

410. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[November 30, 1639]¹

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot answer your entire letter; I lost it. Since Our Lord is urging you to go to Angers, go, in nomine Domini; what He protects is well protected.²

Besides, Madame Traversay still has her problem. That has made me think that perhaps Our Lord wants the work³ to be done by itself and for itself without mixing it with another.

If you choose the Châteaudun coach, you will pass through Chartres and can make your devotions on the way.⁴ From Châteaudun you will have eleven leagues to Orléans and perhaps less to Notre-Dame de Cléry,⁵ where the river passes, or nearby, it seems to me. That way, you will avoid the cobblestones, except for three or four leagues near Orléans, where I advise you to go and pay a call. To get there, you will have to rent a trap in Châteaudun. The coach will not cost you anything for the trip; it belongs to this house.

I told our Brother Louistre to give you the places you request. He will leave on Tuesday. See if you can make it that day.

We have talked enough about the way to deal with those gentlemen, about who is responsible for changing the Sisters,⁶ and that there will be no one else with them. I shall write to the Abbé de Vaux about it; he is the Vicar General who is handling the matter.

On your return, you will really have to visit the Charity in Richelieu, which is eight leagues from Saumur where Notre-Dame des Ardilliers is located. From Richelieu, take the coach to Tours which is a good ten leagues from Richelieu. As soon as you arrive in Orléans, send someone to the port to find a boat, but do not take the express. In Angers, lodge at the address M. Grandnom⁷ will give you. Have him and Madame Lotin write to her relatives and friends in Angers who will go beyond the wishes of the late Madame Goussault; she strongly enjoined them during her illness to assist you. Also go to see the Sisters of Sainte-Marie for me.⁸

I am sending you the little rule;⁹ have a good copy of it made and change whatever is necessary. Perhaps I shall see you on your way back, in Tours or somewhere along the way. I beg Our Lord, meanwhile, to lead you by the hand Himself, to bless your journey, and to bring you back in perfect health. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Richelieu, Wednesday morning

Write me, if need be, by the express messenger in Fréneville. I shall be there, or around there, for two days. If there is any reply that is urgent, I shall send it to you at the Sisters of Sainte-Marie in Orléans.

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras

411. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[December]¹ 12, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I arrived quite late last night and read your letter from Saumur, the first of many. O Mon Dieu! how worried I am about you and your Daughters! I was expecting to find you here because of the cold you told me you had caught. We shall understand in heaven why Providence has treated you that way. In the meantime, I beg you, above all, to take good care of yourself amid the great dangers you will encounter in Angers.²

Here is the answer to what you asked. I would rather you lodged in the town than in the house³ and I think it advisable for you not to accept anything for your journey. Our Lord will provide for it, if He wishes. It would be most desirable for the Sisters to be alone in the hospital; it is to be feared that the presence of that young woman might cause some difficulty. I was not told about that. We would have stipulated otherwise if I had known. However, it will be difficult to make her leave now that she is there. What can be done? Your prudence will act as it judges best.⁴

I am very pleased that you took along little Sister Jeanne.⁵ If you need some other Sister to return with you, you can send word to Sister Barbe to come and see you in Saumur, Chinon, or Tours with Sister Louise,⁶ and to bring you the good young woman who introduced herself to me there so that she might belong to the Charity.

I am a little worried about your going to Richelieu because of the disease there. Our dear Sisters have stopped the visiting of the sick and the schools. The Monday I left, a little girl who had been at their school the preceding Saturday died. If you do go there, please stay only one day.

Your letter worked wonders for your Daughters;⁷ they are happy at present and content, provided they see you. We left one of our priests and a brother there, off by themselves, to help the plague-stricken.

I think it is very good for Sister Barbe to visit the Sisters in Angers and I promise you, with the help of God, that I shall visit the ones in La Chapelle and, if I can, the Foundlings also.⁸ I have not been able to see your son yet; I shall do so at the first opportunity. You may rest assured that I shall act on your opinions, provided you take good care of your health, which I commend to Our Lord with all my heart, being in His love, Mademoiselle, [your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

412. - TO NICOLAS DUROT, IN TOULOUSE

December 1639

I received your letter from Toulouse and thanked God for leading you there. I arrived in Richelieu two or three days after your departure and was very sorry not to find you. I made the visitation and looked into the state of affairs and what has happened there up to now. I entreat you, Monsieur, in the name of Our Lord, to return to the spirit He had given you at Saint-Lazare. No one has ever given greater edification in that house. I beg God to grant you the grace of giving as much where you are. M. de Sergis wanted you to the exclusion of everyone else, which should make you realize the esteem and affection he has for you. He sent me word that he would live like a brother with you. I entreat you, Monsieur, to honor the guidance of Our Lord in his person, to hold him in esteem, to have affection for him, and to obey him in that capacity. Oh! how sweet is the guidance of those who love and esteem us and what a great attraction that is for us to enter into their views! If we were truly mortified, we would be indifferent on that point. According to the rule of God's Will, we should prefer those who are most exacting to those who subscribe to our moods. Since I have seen you very fondly attached to the happy practice of the Divine Will, I hope that, when your nature finds no benefit in the exactitude of a director, the faithful practice of the Will of God will help you, for love of Him, to bear with all the little difficulties which may come your way. They shall never be lacking, no matter with whom nor where we may be. If we are often at odds with ourselves, how can we avoid little aversions, encounters, and alienations with someone else? One of the principal acts

of charity is bearing with our neighbor. We must hold as an irrefutable maxim that the difficulties we have with our neighbor arise more from our immortalized moods than from anything else.

I am saying only this to you, Monsieur, although I could tell you many other things about holy charity. It is such a perfect state that he who has the happiness of possessing it is destined to live as in a little paradise in this world and to possess eternal glory in the next, etc. . . .

413. - TO BROTHER JEAN DUHAMEL, DEACON¹

December 15, 1639

Dearest Brother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since I cannot have the happiness of coming to see you as I had informed you, I am asking you in these lines not to yield to the temptation which is trying to dissuade you from taking the holy order of the priesthood. To attain it you have done almost everything you have done since you came into the world. Therefore, please prepare yourself for it so that you may receive it at this ordination. If you put it off any longer, you will deprive God of the glory He would receive from it, the blessed of the consolation they would have from it, the souls in Purgatory of the relief they would receive from it, and the entire Church Militant of the graces you would obtain for it by your adorable sacrifice. What is worse, you will delight the devil because he will have had the power to dissuade you from doing all that good. To think you would be more fit some other time--O Jésus, you must not expect that. Never to go through with it--God keep you from having to answer for that before God. That would be burying the talent Our Lord has placed in your hand, in which case Holy Scripture threatens you with a horrible punishment. To say that you are not fit and never will be--I admit that, Monsieur, considering the infinite holiness of the work, but with regard to our wretchedness, trust, Monsieur, that Our Lord will be your competence just as He Himself will be the sacrificer with you. As for the rest of your difficulties, we shall discuss them later. I am, meanwhile, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

414. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ANGERS

Paris, December 17, 1639

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Last night I received your letter written on the feast of Saint Nicolas.¹ It brought me great consolation after my worrying about the place where you might be and the state of your health. May God be blessed that you are in Angers and lodged in good Abbé de Vaux's house. I shall not reply in this letter to everything you asked me because I have not been able to see your Sisters in La Chapelle yet and the messenger is going to leave soon.

I wrote to you this week in answer to your letter from Saumur. I addressed my letter to Abbé de Vaux, to whom I allowed myself the honor of writing.²

Today is Ember Saturday, which obliges me to go and say Mass at Notre-Dame for the Charity. After dinner, with God's help, I shall go to La Chapelle, speak to Madame Turgis,³ and begin to give the order for the Sisters you requested, but I feel we should not consider Marie from Saint-Germain⁴ or the one from Saint-Paul.⁵ I shall try to send you the others as soon as possible and shall give some thought to Madame Turgis. There is much to be said pro and con.

Alas! mon Dieu! what shall we do about Nancy; we need to send some Sisters there as soon as possible.⁶ Yesterday I gave the Duchesse d'Aiguillon reason to expect someone. As for Henriette,⁷ I still know nothing at all.

With respect to the articles, I think you answered well; there is no need to add any more of them. We shall look them over in a little while, during which time we shall give God's good pleasure a trial. You would do well to talk about them that way, it seems to me, and even to show their little rule of life to M. de Vaux and to anyone else he judges suitable. You would also do well in particular to strengthen the Sisters in their determination to keep the rule well

and to obey the administration in the way set down in the said rule. Inculcate, both in those gentlemen and in the Sisters, the gravity of making any changes in them. The Duchesse d'Aiguillon said that to me only recently.

Yesterday, Saturday, I went to La Chapelle where I saw all your Sisters. They are doing quite well, by the grace of God. Madame Turgis is very pleased with them.

Henriette is still at home. Her brother⁸ came to say that, before she went to Saint-Germain,⁹ she would come to La Chapelle. It is not advisable for her to go there. Someone else should be sent to Saint-Germain and she should be kept here in order to bring her to a realization of her fault.

I have some objection to sending you Madame Turgis.¹⁰ I think it would be good to send you Geneviève¹¹, who was with you when you were near here, or Marie¹², who was at the Foundlings. If we send you the latter, the former will be sent to Saint-Germain, or vice versa. I shall try to have them leave within three days.

Your son is fine; I still have not spoken to him because of the quandary I am in. I am going to send for your Sisters this afternoon so as to have them leave the day after tomorrow, with God's help. I am, in His love, provided you take good care of your health, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras, at the home of Abbé de Vaux, in Angers

414a. - G. PLUYETTE TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

Please continue to give to the present Etienne Pluyette the money which is due on the first day of the year for the Pluyette scholarship. He was pleased to receive six months ago what was due at that time. That is gratifying to us, as are you in not failing to pay him. I shall remain, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

G. Pluyette

Fontenay, December 26, 1639

415. - TO SAINT LOUISE, IN ANGERS

Paris, the last day of the month

and of the year 1639

Mademoiselle,

So you are unwell by order of God's Providence. May His Holy Name be blessed! I hope that His goodness will be glorified again in this illness as it has been in all the others; that is what I am having people ask Him unceasingly, both here and elsewhere, wherever I am. Oh! how I wish Our Lord might let you see how willingly everyone is doing that and how moved the officers of the Hôtel-Dieu Charity were when I told them about it at a little meeting the day before yesterday!

I entreat you, Mademoiselle, to do all you can to recover your health and above all to spare yourself nothing. If you need money, good Abbé de Vaux will not refuse you while you are waiting for me to send you some, as I shall do if you let me know. As for your return, it will have to be in a litter; we shall try to send you one when you are able to travel.

Your son came here yesterday to bring me your letter. It was a consolation to me, as you can imagine, because of what I had been told about you.

You now have in Angers, Madame Turgis, Barbe,¹ and Clémence,² I hope; they left here the day before Christmas eve on the Orléans coach.³

Things are going fairly well in La Chapelle according to your order. I send greetings to your good Sisters and I am, in the love of Our Lord. . . .

416. - TO GUY LASNIER DE VAUX

Paris, the last day of the month

and of the year 1639

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot thank you warmly or humbly enough on the part of Mademoiselle Le Gras and on my own for the unparalleled charity you are extending to her and to her Sisters. I most humbly thank you to the best of my ability, Monsieur, and beg Our Lord, for Whose love you are doing all of that, to be Himself your thanks and your reward. I offer you all that I can do on earth for heaven and every act of gratitude in my power before God and the world.

So that good woman has fallen ill. In nomine Domini! We must adore therein the wisdom of Divine Providence. I do not commend her to you, Monsieur; your letter reveals to me how solicitous you are towards her and that is what she wrote to me as well. I would like to be there to free you from the care your goodness is taking of her and from her concern about it. Our Lord wishes to add the jewel of that merit to the crown Our Lord [sic] is fashioning for you.

I am writing her a note. Please send her my letter, Monsieur, and look upon me as one whom Our Lord has given you and who is, in His love and that of His holy Mother, your most humble and most obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

INDEX

This index proposes to facilitate reference to the biographical data used in this volume and to the explanation of places and terms which recur frequently in the text and which have been explained in the footnotes when first used. Names of persons are in bold print, those of terms or places appear in italics. The accompanying numbers indicate the letters to which the reader should refer for the desired information.

A

ABELLY (ABELINE), Louis: 323
ACARIE, Madame: 135
AIGUILLON, Marie de Vignerod, Duchesse d': 224
ALBERT, Honoré d' (CHAULNES): 154
ALMERAS, René: 368
AMAURY, Claire-Marie: 383
ANGIBOUST, Barbe: 207a
ANGIBOUST, Cécile-Agnès: 338
ANGLURE, Claude d' (BOURLEMONT): 321
ANGLURE, Charles-François d': 321
ARDIER, Claude (FIEUBET): 246
ARGENSON, René de Voyer d': 243
ARISTE, Françoise-Madeleine: 383
ARRONDISSEMENT: 111
ATRI, Scipion d'Acquaviva d'Aragon, Duc d': 321
ATRI, Marie-Angélique d': 289
ATTICHY, Achille d': 237
ATTICHY, Anne d' (MAURE): 237
ATTICHY, Louis-Denis d': 283
ATTICHY, Valence de Marillac, Demoiselle d': 55
AULENT, Charles: 376
AUTHIER de SISGAU, Christophe d': 156
AUX COUTEAUX, Lambert: 146

B

BAGARD, Catherine: 372
BAGNO, Giovanni Francesco Guidi, Cardinal di: 112
BAILLEUL, Elisabeth-Marie (MALLIER): 159
BAILLEUL, Marie de (CHAUMONT): 290

BAILLEUL, Nicolas de: 11
BARBERINI, Antonio, Cardinal: 404
BARREME, René: 112
BAYTAZ de DOUCY, Nicolas: 388a
BEAUFORT, Madame de: 159
BEAUMONT-CARRA, Anne-Catherine de: 68
BECAN, Martin: 30
BECU, Benoît: 278
BECU, Hubert: 329
BECU, Jean: 26
BELIN, M.: 47
BELLEGARDE, Octave de Saint-Lary de: 388a
BERULLE, Pierre, Cardinal de: 7
BESSON, Jean: 330
BICHI, Alessandro, Cardinal: 112
BIGNON, Jérôme: 177
BINET, Etienne: 388a
BISSON, René: 366
BLATIRON, Etienne: 403
BONS-ENFANTS: 11
BOUCHER, Léonard: 307
BOUDET, Jacques: 220
BOURDET, Etienne: 376
BOURDET, Jean: 376
BOURDOISE, Adrien: 56
BOUREL, Etienne: 220
BOURLEMONT, Claude d'Anglure, Comte de: 321
BOUVARD, Marie-Augustine: 97
BRETEL, Frédéric: 233
BREVES, François Savary, Marquis de: 1
BROU, Mademoiselle: 184
BRUNET, Jean-Joseph: 26
BUISSOT, Nicolas: 293

C

CAIGNET, Antoine: 218
CAILLOU, Geneviève: 414
CALLON, Louis: 26
CASTELNAU, M. de: 302
CAULET, François-Etienne de: 146
CHAMBRE DES COMPTES: 15
CHANTAL, Celse-Bénigne de: 22
CHANTAL, St. Jane Frances Frémiot de: 19
CHARITIES: 15
CHARPENTIER, Hubert: 321
CHASTEL, Simon: 209
CHATELET: 98
CHAULNES, Honoré d'Albert, Duc de: 154
CHAUMONT, Marie de Bailleul, Dame de: 290
CHIROYE, Jacques: 377a
CODOING, Bernard: 287
COLEE, Antoine: 269
COLOMBET, Pierre: 260
COMET, M. de: 1
COMPAING, Guillaume: 108

CONDREN, Charles de: 112
COQUERET, Jean: 133
CORDES, Denis de: 180
CORMAN, Nicolas: 311
CREIL, Jean de: 177
CUISSOT, Gilbert: 270

D

DALIBRAY, Marie (SAINCTOT): 159
DAUZENAT, M.: 303
DEHORGNY, Jean: 26
DELABARRE, Jean-François: 326
DELESTOILE, Jean-Baptiste: 376
DESBORDES, Mademoiselle: 262
DEURE, M.: 48
DIMISSORIAL LETTERS: 365
DROUARD, Bertrand: 248
DUCHESNE, Bernard: 30
DUCHESNE, Jérôme: 30
DU CHESNE, Pierre: 294
DU COUDRAY, François: 16
DUCOURNAU, Bertrand: Introduction
DU FAY, Isabelle: 13
DUFESTEL, François: 322a
DU FRESNE, Charles: 10
DUHAMEL, Jean: 413
DUPUIS, Michel: 396
DUROT, Nicolas: 198c
DUVAL, André: 73

E

ECU: 1
EPERNON, Jean-Louis de Nogaret de la Valette, Duc d': 1
ESCART, Pierre: 390
EXAMEN: 142

F

FAURE, Charles: 156a
FAVRE, Marie-Jacqueline: 79
FERRAT, M.: 75
FERRER, St. Vincent: 102a
FIEUBET, Claude Ardier, Dame: 246
FLAHAN, M.: 158
FLEURY, François de: 306
FONTENEIL, Jean de: 189
FOREST, Madame: 65
FORTIA, Anne de la Barre, Dame: 183
FOUQUET, Bishop François: 290a
FOUQUET, François (VICOMTE de VAUX): 326
FREMIOT, André: 388a
FRENEVILLE: 203
FROGER, Georges: 74

G

GALLEMANT, Jacques: 284
GALLEMANT, Jean: 323
GERMAINE: 55a
GESSEAUME, Claude: 414
GESSEAUME, Henriette: 224
GILIOLI, Giovanni: 177
GODEAU, Antoine: 290a
GONDI, Catherine: 154
GONDI, Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Dame de: 7
GONDI, Bishop Henri de: 178
GONDI, Archbishop Jean-François de: 11
GONDI, Louise de: 13
GONDI, Philippe-Emmanuel de: 6
GONDI, Pierre de: 154
GOUAULT, Sébastien: 369
GOURNAY, Charles-Chrétien de: 194
GOURRANT, M.: 293
GOUSSAULT, Madame: 109
GRANADA, Luís de: 136
GRENU, Daniel: 125
GUERIN, Juste: 388a
GUERIN, Mademoiselle: 18
GUILLARD, M.: 376
GUYARD, Louis de: 45

H

HANIVEL, Marie d' (MOTHER de la TRINITE): 284
HARDY, Sébastien: 290
HAURANNE, Jean Duverger de (SAINT-CYRAN): 281
HENNEQUIN, Antoine (VINCY): 23
HERSE, Madame de: 203
HOLDEN, Henri: 207b

I

i.s.C.M.: 156b

J

Jacobin: 123
JOLY, Marie: 122
JOSSE, Jean: 81
JOURDAIN, Hector: 26
JOURDAIN, Jean: 26
JOUSSE, Claude-Espérance: 261

L

LA BISTRADÉ, Mademoiselle de: 161
LAISNE de la MARGUERIE, Elie: 278
LALANDE, Bertrand de: 2
LALLEMANT, Jérôme: 135
LAMOIGNON, Guillaume de: 276

LAMY, Catherine Vigor: 15
LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, François, Cardinal de: 146
LA SALLE, Jean de: 18
LASCARIS, Paul: 271
LASNIER, Guy (VAUX): 409
LAURENT, Madame: 74a
LA VALETTE, Louis de Nogaret, Cardinal de: 281
LE BON, Adrien: 91
LE BRET, Jacques: 100
LE BRET, Julien: 376
LEBRETON, Louis: 376
LE GRAS, Michel: 14
LE JUGE, Thomas: 64
LELEU, M.: 158
LE MARINEL, Martin: 61
LEPEINTRE, Jeanne: 337
LE ROY, Marie-Agnès: 257
LESTOCQ, Guillaume de: 91
LEVESQUE, Nicolas: 58
LHOSTE, Jean-Marie: 241
LHULLIER, Hélène-Angélique: 29
LIANCOURT, Jeanne de Schomberg, Duchesse de: 198e
LIVRE: 1
LONGUEVILLE, Louise de Bourbon, Duchesse de: 198e
LONGUEVILLE, Marie d'Orléans, Demoiselle de: 321
LOTIN, Nicolas: 362
LOUISTRE, Robert: 328
LOYAC, Jean de: 224
LUCAS, Antoine: 26
LUMAGUE, André: 376
LUMAGUE, Jean-André: 163

M

MALLIER, Elisabeth-Marie (BAILLEUL): 159
MARCEILLE, Nicolas: 328
MARILLAC, Catherine de Médicis, Dame de: 81
MARILLAC, Louis de: 105
MARILLAC, St. Louise de: 12
MARILLAC, Marie de Creil, Dame de: 277a
MARILLAC, Michel de: 237
MARILLAC, Michel de: 289
MARTIN, Elisabeth: 224
MASLE, Michel le (ROCHES): 293
MAULJEAN, Edmond: 4
MAURE, Anne Doni d'Attichy, Comtesse de: 237
MAURE, Louis de Rochechouart, Comte de: 321
MAZURE, Nicolas: 267
MESPUITS: 203
MESSIER, Louis: 30
MEYSTER, Etienne: 197
MIDOT, Jean: 293
MILOIR, François: 125
MINIM: 135
MITTE de MIOLANS, Melchior (SAINT-CHAMOND): 297a
MOLE, Mathieu: 74

MONSIEUR: 248
MONTCHAL, Charles de: 299
MONTHOLON, Guy-François de: 188a
MONTHOLON, Jean de: 188a
MONTORIO, Pietro Francesco: 1
MORAN, Madame: 283
MOREL, Claude: 125
MOTTA, Paolo: 156
MOUTON, Jacques: 307

N

NASEAU, Marguerite: 40
NODO, Sébastien: 316
NOGARET, Louis de (LA VALETTE): 281
NOTRE-DAME-des-ARDILLIERS: 362
NOYERS, François Sublet, Seigneur de: 237

O

OLIER, Jean-Jacques: 146
ORLEANS, Marie d' (LONGUEVILLE): 321

P

PARLEMENT: 91
PAVILLON, Nicolas: 108, 290a
PELLETIER, Madame (VIALART): 251
PERCEVAL, Guillaume: 369
PERDREAU, René: 366
PERDU, Jacques: 158
PERROCHEL, François: 197
PETAU, Anne (TRAVERSAY): 237
PICARDAT, Edmond: 369
PIERRE, Claire-Madeleine de: 410
PILLE, Jean: 190
PLUYETTE FOUNDATION: 39a
POISSON, Geneviève: 251
POLLALION (POULAILLON), Marie de Lumague, Demoiselle de: 109
PORTAIL, Antoine: 26
POTIER, Augustin: 30
PRESIDIAL COURT: 58

Q

QUINZE-VINGTS: 180

R

REBOURS, Hilarion: 378
REGNARD, Mathieu: 318
REGNIER, Jacques: 26
RENAR, François: 112
RENEL, Jacques de: 125
RICARD, Raoul: 58
RICHELIEU, Alphonse-Louis du Plessis de: 188

RICHELIEU, Armand du Plessis, Cardinal de: 245
ROBINEAU, Louis: Introduction
ROCHE, Nicolas: 125
ROCHECHOUART, Louis de (MAURE): 321
ROCHES, Michel le Masle, Prieur des: 293
ROUGEMONT: 178

S

SAINCTOT, Marie Dalibray, Dame: 159
SAINT-CHAMOND, Marquis de (MITTE de MIOLANS): 297a
SAINT-CYRAN, Abbé de (HAURANNE): 281
SAINT-LAZARE: 91, 100
SAINT-MARTIN, Jean: 54
SAINTE-MADELEINE: 131
SALES, St. Francis de: 29
SAUSSAY, André du: 404
SAVARY, François (BREVES): 1
SAVARY, Pierre: 322a
SAVINIER, Annet: 197
SEGUIER, Madeleine Fabri, Dame: 155
SEGUIER, Pierre: 235
SERGIS, Robert de: 48
SEVIN, Marie Véron, Demoiselle: 64
SILLERY, Noël Brulart, Commander de: 60a
SIRMOND, Jacques: 347
SOLMINIHAC, Alain de: 146
SOUFLIERS, François: 110
SOUSCARRIERE, Madame de (TREMBLAY): 347
SUBLET, François (NOYERS): 237

T

TALON, Charles-François: 327
TEMPLE: 295
TESSONNIERE, Marie: 287
TRAVERSAY, Anne Petau, Dame de: 237
TREMBLAY, Marie du (SOUSCARRIERE): 347
TRINITE, Mother de la: 284
TURGIS, Elisabeth: 227
TURPIN, Marie-Euphrosine: 261

V

VALENCAY, Léonor d'Estampes de: 293
VAUX, Abbé de (LASNIER): 409
VERON, François: 153
VERON, Marie (SEVIN): 64
VERONNE, Alexandre: 243
VIALART, Catherine (PELLETIER): 251
VILLENEUVE, Marie l'Huillier d'Interville, Dame de: 86
VILLENEUVE, Sieur de (DU FRESNE) 10
VILLESABIN, Madame de: 159
VINCY, Antoine Hennequin, Sieur de: 23
VIOLE, Mademoiselle: 219

W

WIART, François: 65

Z

ZAMET, Sébastien: 197