

1206. - TO MONSIEUR HORCHOLLE¹

Paris, April 1, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received a letter from you a few days ago; I could not answer you sooner because of my business affairs, and I do not know if my inefficiency will last forever in your regard. I beg God not to allow this for I am very anxious to be of service to you, and I await the opportunity to do so in a matter proportionate to your merit and to my affection.

God knows what a consolation it would be for the Prior² and me to see you here again. Since, however, this is not possible, without inconvenience to you and prejudice to the parish His Divine Goodness has entrusted to you, I think you should not come here about the matter you proposed to me. It will suffice for you to write to one of your friends who understands better than we what has to be done to have you named an abbey graduate,³ and get him to do it. In the event that you do not know anyone in Paris who can take care of this little piece of business, we will try to have it done, if you send us the documents and instructions needed to carry it through. I must insist that I, personally, have no experience in such matters but am most willing to give expression to you of the grace God has granted me of making me, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.³

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Horcholle

1207. - TO JACQUES CHIROYE,¹ SUPERIOR, IN LUÇON

April 3, 1650

When I wrote to you, saying that the Bishop of Luçon was to be obeyed, I meant in those things that pertained to his service or his good pleasure. Now, he cannot receive either of the above from all your harassments, undertakings and expenses, which you were incapable of bearing on your own. If I have asked you not to do anything without orders from us, it is so that you will not incur expenses greater than you can meet. I ask you once again to abide by that.

The regularity and good order of the house should be our primary aim, to which you owe particularly your care and example, and I fear that these domestic difficulties may ruin them. In this we shall find peace, union, progress in virtue, and the grace to perform our functions well. We must, then, apply ourselves to this in preference to everything else, without neglecting other things. This is the maxim we should prize.

You ask to get rid of either the Brother or the servant. All the same, it must be borne in mind that one is our brother and that the servant does not always have to be in the house. That is why I ask you to give preference to the child of the house over the hired hand: keep the Brother to

help you and dismiss Jean. I hope that Vincent² will gradually give you satisfaction.

I am very worried about M... 's illness. Please tell him his ailment concerns me deeply and that I shall often ask God to restore him to health or give him the strength to make good use of his illness. I am not giving you any advice about him because I feel you will spare nothing for his relief. The laborers of the Gospel are treasures who deserve to be well taken care of.

1208. - SAINT LOUISE DE MARILLAC¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

[April 1650]²

Most Honored Father,

Yesterday I had the honor of seeing Madame de Lamoignon.³ Her daughter⁴ asked me what the Ladies had done at Bicêtre.⁵ When she learned that they had decided to put the boys in one wing to free themselves of arranging the necessary separation, she told me that this was not the decision your charity had them make and that she saw clearly all the problems for the boys as well as the nurses, in leaving the girls there.

Although we try to get good women as nurses, it still means that most of them are obliged to leave not so much because of the necessities of the times but because of bad conduct. Furthermore, these women of every sort, taken in from all quarters, use bad language and are very free.

That good lady, the daughter, told me you had to be firm in seeing that the proposal your charity so strongly supported is put into action. She also said you should ask to make a try of it for this Jubilee year and not put it off until some other time. I add that these delays give rise to discussion among certain persons, and she says that, if you fail this time, there will be no way of reopening the question. However, I also think, Most Honored Father, that you should hold your own about taking one or two of your houses at the most to save rent. Otherwise, if they make the choice I think they will, someone else will be given complete charge of them permanently, and, in that case, their plans will be clearly revealed.

The thought occurred to me that they may think we are incapable of abandoning the service of the children and may be committed to it because of the one thousand livres we have from public funds. You know how we have been wronged in that, since it was the intention of the donors that we should have half of it, purely and simply, for the support of the Company and not to bind us to the service of the little children, no more than we are bound to the service of other poor persons and the galley slaves. If they had any intention of contesting this with us, it would be better done now than at some other time.

Yesterday I had the opportunity of going to see the Procurator General,⁶ who did me the honor of receiving me most courteously. He asked me directly if I was there about some matter he was handling. I told him it was to refresh

his memory about it. He asked me if we claimed to be regular or secular. I explained to him that we claim to be only the latter. He told me that this was unprecedented. I cited the case of Madame de Villeneuve's⁷ Sisters and gave evidence to him that they went everywhere.

He indicated to me that he did not disapprove of our plan and said many good things about the Company but that something of such importance merited a great deal of reflection. I expressed to him my joy that he felt the way he did. I asked that, if the Company was not deserving or should not be continued, he should do away with it entirely but, if it was a good thing, we were entreating him to establish it on a solid basis. I said that for at least twelve to fifteen years now this thought had caused us to make a try of it, and during that time, by the grace of God, no untoward events had occurred. "Let me think about it," he said. "I do not mean for a few months but for a few weeks."

He then took the trouble to escort us to our carriage because it was in his courtyard, and manifested great good will toward us. He asked us to greet you most humbly for him, telling us he would be a usurer if he accepted our most humble thanks for the honor he does to all our Sisters when they venture to approach him in their needs for the poor galley slaves or for the little children.

The Marquise de Maignelay⁸ gave me only a verbal reply yesterday and sent our Sister to see the Pastor of Saint-Roch.⁹ He and the said Lady both assured her that there was no fault to be found in our Sisters who were sent away. It was simply a question of the fact that one of the girls who was serving there did not seem suited to remain in the Company so the Pastor sent the other one away to look after her. Now she is married and those who have replaced her continue to follow her example.

The above-mentioned Lady is asking for two Sisters for tomorrow. This poses two difficulties: first, we have to propose to you the ones we are to send and let you get to know them, and they have to make a retreat beforehand. The other difficulty is that that girl, who remained and is now married, is living in the house where our Sisters are supposed to stay, and such proximity is dangerous for us.

I most humbly entreat you to take the trouble to let me know what I should do in these circumstances so as not to displease the Marquise or do any wrong to ourselves.

Give me your holy blessing for all our needs and do me the honor of believing, Most Honored Father, that I am your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

Friday

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the venerable Priests of the Mission

1209. - TO BERNARD CODOING,¹ SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU

Palm Sunday² 1650

Please make your excuses to M. de Maison-neuve about the exchange he is requesting of the Tuet mill and farm for an income of similar value. That property will perhaps be worth double the value thirty years from now, whereas the income can never increase, and this same income can be lost, but not an estate.

I already wrote you that Saint-Cassien³ must be left as it is, and I did not think it necessary to add that, when the late Cardinal Richelieu established the foundation for your house, he counted heavily on the seigniory. He sent a man to me expressly from Amiens, where he was staying, to tell me he wanted it kept in reserve because the more castles with fiefs and incomes that are dependent on a duchy, the more respectable it is. Madame⁴ has no intention of letting that one go, no matter what profit it might bring her, and even less of consenting to the amortization of the income your land brings her.

I ask you, Monsieur, not to give another thought to either. If you were its master, you would always have some lawsuits, and instead of thinking that you would avoid them, you would be entangled even more in them.

I also repeat to you my request to make very few changes, and what you do change, never to do without the advice and consent of the chief officers, M. du Rivau,⁵ M. de Grandpré,⁶ and the seneschal.⁷ They have charge of all temporal matters. If you interfere in that, you are interfering with their duties and with the apple of their eyes.

So, since Madame has informed the first-named that she wants no changes made in the chaplaincy of Champigny, stay there and tell that good lord that you do not want to do anything about that nor about anything else, except what he thinks fit. Show him great deference and respect. Do the same for the others proportionally to their position because the authority of the master resides in them, or at least it sees only through their eyes and works only through their hands. Even kings do not want their edicts enforced until they have been verified by their sovereign courts, so as not to be taken unawares.

If you say that I approved your proposal and that Madame gave her consent to it, that is true, we did. However, both she and I presumed that you and the gentlemen there had agreed on the matter, but you are far from having done that. You can see that they are opposed to it. So Madame is right to withdraw her consent and you are wrong to hope she will agree later to the proposed change; she will never do so against M. du Rivau's wishes. Even should she want to do so, we must not desire this so as not to run the risk of losing her benevolence. If, however, you can persuade those gentlemen that the nature of the foundation will not change, and they in fact consent to it, in nomine Domini; Madame will be pleased and I shall bless God; otherwise, do not give it a thought.

Furthermore, Monsieur, it is advisable that the Company not become involved in any way in getting persons appointed to positions of authority nor in making recommendations for or against them, regardless of the apparent good you see in so doing. Inconveniences can arise from this because it excites jealousy and aversion in people's minds, and we would pass for persons of intrigue and self-interest. In the end, we would be a burden to those to whom we owe obedience and respect, like children with regard to their mothers and fathers. In the name of God, do not write any more about any kind of temporal matters, when they are none of your business; that is the concern of the officers and not ours.

It did you no good to ask for the vacant land for the building, since this has been refused. If you can easily steer clear of paying for the repairs the building needs, go ahead because this payment might be considerable, but if it cannot be done quietly and without any lawsuit, my opinion is that you should advance funds for this year only, even if this has to be repeated, should the occasion arise.

1210. - TO BENOIT BÉCU,¹ IN RICHELIEU

April 10, 1650

I am glad you have been deputed to go to M. du Rivau, but I would have been more so had people not given cause for this deputation, as has happened, stirring up matters entrusted to his authority, without informing him. The rules of prudence and justice demand that we take the precaution of discussing matters of any importance with those who have some opinion on them or who may oppose the good we are pursuing. In fact, we should desist when that is their wish; otherwise, we shall be thwarted and their indignation will fall upon us. All officials are jealous of their authority, and only with great difficulty do they recover from wounds in such a tender spot, once they think they have been attacked.

May Our Lord, who received on this day² in Jerusalem a sample of the honor due to His royalty, grant that we may be able to accord it in full to those who represent for us His dominion and justice, by always asking their advice and approval in temporal matters! Let us consider that we are not doing the Will of God if we do not submit our will to them in this respect. I hope your house will act this way from now on and will not pursue the proposed change in the chaplaincy of Champigny, if M. du Rivau and all the leading inhabitants are not in agreement. This is my request to you personally.

1211. - TO LOUIS THIBAUT,¹ SUPERIOR, IN SAINT-MÉEN

April 12, 1650

I have received two letters from your father, from which I learned two things: first, that God has taken your younger sister to Himself. This would be a source of sorrow to you if you had not learned to conform yourself to His good pleasure and felt assured of the eternal happiness of that

dear innocent child. Second, I learned that your father and mother are still persevering in the desire they once had of withdrawing from the world to unite themselves more closely to their sovereign Creator.

They are asking my advice on this and also on the disposal of their property. As soon as the first letter was delivered to me, I wrote back that, given their age, and their goodness by the grace of God, and the fact that Madame Thibault is not well, they would do well to remain in their present state. I also asked them to dispense me from giving them any advice about their property.

The second letter I received indicates that they are not satisfied with this reply and want to know God's Will more clearly on both points, so they are pressing me to give my opinion on the matter in greater detail. This has obliged me to reflect more deeply on it than I had previously done.

I am now prepared to tell them that perhaps God wishes to grant them the consolation they have so long desired, now that they have no earthly attachments, since all their children are in heaven except you, Monsieur, who are still on the way, working successfully to draw others there. These good people are so pleased with this that they say they can receive no greater consolation in this life.

I think I should add that perhaps Divine Providence wills that their joy may be full by bringing them close to you and your vocation (Who knows?) by calling your father to Saint-Lazare and your mother to Mademoiselle Le Gras' house. There they will be free of the world and in a position to serve Our Lord in a special way, proportionate to their strength.

As for their possessions, if, as their lawyer advises, they plan to give a large part of them to the Church or to the Confraternity of Charity, either they are thinking that you are a religious and, as such, cannot inherit from them, or they fear putting temptation in your way by leaving you some property. This has happened with certain members of the Company: while they possessed nothing they were good Missionaries, but, as soon as a few temporal possessions were given them, they abandoned God's work.

I think we should tell them, first of all, that there is no danger of that in your case, Monsieur, both because of the grace within them that draws down on you the spirit of strength and perseverance, and also because of the grace God has placed in you yourself and in your dear vocation, through which His Divine Goodness has been pleased to save a large number of souls.

Second, the vow of poverty we take is only a simple vow and does not prevent those who take it from inheriting from their parents. In fact, one of our Rules states that members of the Company, who have a simple benefice or other possessions, will leave the use of them to the Company, but can give the property to anyone they wish, by gift or by

testament, to be used after their death. In the case of those who leave us, they can take it back for themselves.

Since, according to several decrees of the Parlement,² they can give nothing to the body of which they are members, neither could you dispose of any part of your inheritance in favor of our Company, to the detriment of your nearest relatives. Assuming that you might have such an attachment to the Company, as I think you already have, it is advisable for your father to know this so that, in declaring you their heir, they may appoint the Company, or whatever Community they please, as the substituted heir after you. In this way your intention and theirs of using their possessions for works of piety will be carried out.

Well now, Monsieur, I am simply proposing all this to you because you might want to know what I think about the letter your father is writing to you, in which you will see his dispositions. I also want to ask you to let me know your views. If you disagree with my opinions as I have expressed them to you, in the name of God, Monsieur, disregard them and give your father whatever advice you judge proper. Please write to him as soon as possible, one way or the other, to console him.

1212. - TO GABRIEL DELESPINEY,¹ IN TOUL
Paris, the Eve of Easter, [1650]²
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A few days ago I received your letter written from the place where you were giving the mission. Like all the others, it consoled me greatly, especially because of the good work to which you and your men have been devoting yourselves for such a long time. O Monsieur, what service you render to God when you assist poor suffering people in this way, with such timely and salutary help!

It is a sign of God's goodness to them and of the predestination of many that, at the height of their bodily miseries, He consoles them with His Word and sustains them with His grace, like a sanctifying bread that gives true life. It is the daily bread, the bread of the elect, which we must often ask of Him and make every effort to break and share with the children of the house, the poor, so that they may make good use of their poverty and not lose the kingdom that belongs to them.

M. Desdames³ has written to me twice in your absence. Like you, Monsieur, I think he is looking after things and is very careful to see that all goes along smoothly. If this is the case when you are not there, it is even more so when you are present because you talk things over and act in harmony, each doing his part to relieve the other, and all for the common good.

I beg Our Lord to give all of you the spirit of union and forbearance and to increase in you that of wisdom, especially concerning the difficult situation in which M. Plenevaux is going to place us. His period of truce is over

and the time of combat has come. I think he will give us a hard time. Well, fine! We belong to God and His Providence, ready to comply with His orders as soon as they are made known. Would to Our Lord that they were already known!

The Archdeacon, M. Le Lièvre, has not yet arrived--at least I have not heard anything about him.

I am really surprised at the increase in the number of troops garrisoned in Toul and crushing that town. I can only sympathize with it in its suffering and ask God, as I do, to relieve His poor people and give us peace or the strength to bear the weight of His hand.

I embrace your little community most cordially and offer it often to Our Lord. I offer Him more often your own soul, which already belongs totally to Him. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Delespiney, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Toul, in Toul

1213. - TO GERARD BRIN,¹ IN LIMERICK

April 1650

We were greatly edified by your letter, seeing in it two excellent effects of God's grace. The first is that you have given yourself to God to stand firm in the country where you now are, in the midst of dangers, preferring to risk death rather than fail to assist your neighbor. The second is that you are devoting yourself to the care of your confreres, sending them back to France to remove them from danger.²

The spirit of martyrdom has prompted you to do the former, and prudence to do the latter. Both are drawn from the example of Our Lord, who, as He was about to go and suffer the torments of death for the salvation of mankind, wanted to protect His disciples from this and save them, saying: "Let these men go and do not touch them."³

That is how you have acted, as a true child of that most adorable Father, whom I thank infinitely for having produced in you acts of sovereign charity, the summit of all the virtues. I ask Him to fill you with it so that, exercising it always and in everything, you may pour it into the hearts of those who lack it.

Since those other gentlemen with you are likewise prepared to remain, regardless of the dangers of war and contagion, we think they should be allowed to do so. How do we know what God wishes to do with them? He is certainly not giving them such a holy determination in vain. My God, how inscrutable are Your judgments!⁴ At the end of one of the most fruitful and perhaps most necessary missions we have ever seen,⁵ You seem to be stemming the tide of Your mercy on this penitent town to weigh Your hand more heavily upon it, adding to the misfortune of war the scourge of sickness.⁶ It is, however, to harvest souls that are well

prepared and to gather the good grain into Your eternal granaries. We adore Your ways, O Lord!

1214. - TO GABRIEL DELESPINEY, SUPERIOR, IN TOUL
April 30, 1650

In this wretched season we have to borrow money to feed ourselves and for the relief of the poor.

1215. - TO SAINT LOUISE
[End of April or May 1650]¹

Monsieur d'Annemont has written me the same thing; his letter is enclosed.² I am going to write him that I hope and pray to God the affair will turn out in favor of those good nuns, if it is for the good of the poor, and that we most willingly agree to having the Daughters of Charity dismissed.

I also think, Mademoiselle, that it would be a good idea for you to write along these lines so as, in a sense, to honor and practice the counsel of Our Lord, which says that, if someone wants to deprive us of our robe, we should give our coat as well.³ I think God will be more honored by that than by the service your Daughters might be able to render to God in that hospital. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, let us be generous with Jesus Christ; He would assuredly act in that way.

1216. - TO A MONK¹
[Between 1643 and 1652]²

I am sure Your Reverence would work wonders in the episcopacy, if you had been called to it by God. Since, however, He has made it clear by the good results He has given to your works and leadership that He wants you in your present duty, it is not likely that He wants to take you away from them.

If His Providence were calling you to the episcopacy, He would not turn to you to have you seek it out; rather, He would inspire those who have the authority to make appointments to ecclesiastical offices and dignities to choose you for that one, without your taking any steps in that direction. Your calling would then be pure and certain. It would seem, however, that there is something to be said against putting yourself forward, and you would have no reason to hope for God's blessings on such a change, which can be neither desired nor sought by a truly humble soul like yours.

Furthermore, Reverend Father, what a wrong you would be doing to your holy Order in depriving it of one of its main pillars, who sustains it and gives it a good name by his teaching and example! If you were to open this door, you would give cause to others to leave by it after you, or at least to grow weary of penitential practices. They would need no pretext to mitigate and diminish these to the detriment of the Rule, for nature grows weary of austerity. If she is consulted she will say that it is too much and that we should spare ourselves in order to live a long time and serve God better. Our Lord says, however, that "the man

who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates it will preserve it."³

You know better than I all that can be said on that, and I would not venture to write you my thoughts on it if you had not ordered me to do so. But perhaps you are not attentive to the crown awaiting you. O Dieu! how beautiful it will be! You have already done so much, Reverend Father, in order to obtain it successfully, and perhaps you have only just a little more to do. Perseverance is needed on the narrow path on which we have entered, which leads to life. You have already overcome the greatest difficulties, so you must take courage and hope that God will grant you the grace of overcoming the lesser ones.

If you take my advice, you will suspend the work of preaching for a while in order to recover your health. You still great service to render to God and to your Order, which is one of the holiest and most edifying in the Church of Jesus Christ.

1217. - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT,¹ SISTER SERVANT, IN MONTREUIL-SUR-MER

Paris, May 9, 1650

Dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Since there is still a lack of understanding with the former Community at the hospital, giving us good reason to fear that you will not find sufficient peace there, we think it advisable for you to leave and for us to withdraw you. Besides, we need you and your Sister here.

Therefore, I ask you to take leave of the Governor, his lieutenant, and the town leaders. Thank them for the honor they have done you, ask them to excuse you for not giving them all the satisfaction they expected, and say that you are sorry for being unable to continue to serve at the hospital because Providence has determined otherwise.

We are waiting for you, and I assure you that you will receive a very warm welcome at your house. As for me, it will console me greatly to see you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, my good Sister, your very affectionate servant and brother.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1218. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Monday evening [Between August 6, 1649 and August 25, 1650]¹

Here I am, on the verge of leaving tomorrow, God willing, Mademoiselle. I hope your prayers will draw down Our Lord's assistance on me for my journey. M. Portail² will do whatever you tell him regarding the business of the house.

I am sending you the Marquise de Maignelay's letter. It will be a comfort to me if she sees good M. Dupont³ and if he brings her the letter himself.

I spoke to the Procurator General;⁴ he promised me full protection for the children in whatever M. Biète⁵ tells him, and will have those who have been weaned taken in at the

asylum with two young women whom the Charity will maintain. M. Biète could see him for any business matters. He has reprimanded some commissioners, who were insisting on taking the abandoned babies from the wet nurses.

I was not able to speak with Marie-Denise;⁶ she has gone to Colombes.⁷

I shall try to have a word with the young one; please encourage her.

Enclosed is a letter from a lady from Sedan, who is in this city, and another which that good chaplain wrote her. I am on the point of my departure, eager to do God's Will always and in all things, by His mercy, and to be, in His love, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: Mademoiselle Le Gras
1219. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE
[May 1650]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

This Sacred Congregation has successively granted missionary faculties to Boniface Nouelly,² Jacques Lesage,³ and Jean Dieppe,⁴ priests of the Congregation of the Mission, sent to Algiers to assist poor Catholic slaves and to work for the spread of our holy faith in those parts. One after the other, they have died there, victims of the plague, while assisting the sick corporally and spiritually.

Now, Very Reverend Father Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, whom the death of so many of his men in the short space of about two years has not discouraged, and who wishes to continue the charitable work which has been begun, once again proposes to the Sacred Congregation another of his priests of the same Congregation of the Mission, Philippe Le Vacher⁵ by name, who has already been a missionary in Ireland, along with some other confreres, and is presently serving in a seminary for the clergy in the city of Marseilles. He humbly entreats Your Eminences to be so kind as to grant him similar faculties for the same place, Algiers, and to add certain new faculties by means of which he would have the authority to put an end to the dissensions and quarrels which often arise among slaves who are members of religious Orders. In that way the scandals that occur may be avoided. He will consider all this as a favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for Philippe Le Vacher, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission

1220. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, May 25, 1650
Monsieur,

I received two of your letters, one dated the last of April and the other the fourteenth of this month. In them I remarked the continued concern you so kindly show in our Chancelade affair, for which I am much obliged and thank you

wholeheartedly. In the future I shall be more discreet about writing to you so as not to give you the trouble of answering me.

Father Montal wrote me from Lyons that he was quite surprised that Father Vitet² was making an effort for our two titles and that he would write to Abbé Tinti³ about it. Father Vitet also wrote to me, saying he no longer feels the same way about this, especially since it had nothing to do with our proceedings in Rome. Our lawyer had left Paris to return here before receiving the letter my Vicar-General was writing to him, etc.

The neighboring dioceses are depleting mine of priests, sending for them to give them benefices. A while ago, the Bishop of Sarlat⁴ took the curate who was serving the church of our Saint-Barthélemy Seminary; he certainly did me no favor in this. Yesterday, he took another one, and the day before yesterday the Bishop of Périgueux⁵ took another. If I had more than I needed, I would not mind, but I do not think that will ever be the case if this keeps up....

A short time ago the Bishop of Tulle⁶ almost died of a cerebral hemorrhage. Given his age and condition, it is unlikely that he has long to live. Please try to persuade the Queen⁷ to put a worthy Bishop in that diocese, when it becomes vacant, for it is in a very bad state. Kindly tell Her Majesty that I entreat this of her with all my heart so that in this way we can restore the devotion to the Virgin in Rocamadour,⁸ the most celebrated in the kingdom.

When you see Abbé Olier,⁹ please ask him about the qualifications of the Dean of Carennac¹⁰ of my diocese and whether he judges him suited to be a bishop; I see no one in Guyenne better able than he to head that diocese. I mentioned him to you before; he is very pious and an example of virtue in my diocese. I tell you this so that, if the Queen were to ask you if you knew a suitable person, you might consider him. It is a small diocese worth only seven or eight thousand livres.

I must tell you that my heart bleeds with sorrow at the reproaches people are making me from one day to the next concerning the kind of life one of our young neighboring bishops¹¹ is leading. He recently rented a house outside his capital for six hundred écus,¹² to have a place to keep a pack of hounds and hunting dogs. In a word, he is completely taken up with hunting, in brevibus,¹³ with a rifle slung over his shoulder. You had very good reason to oppose his promotion; would to God your advice had been heeded!

I pray that God will inspire the Queen to appoint to the dioceses persons worthy of such eminent responsibilities. In the meantime, do me the favor of believing that I am, etc....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1221. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION
[1650]¹

Monsieur Hurtel² slipped away from us Sunday evening to go to a blessed eternity, leaving us as grieved by his passing as we were consoled by his innocent life, which was of such a nature that I can tell you I never saw any fault in him. You can conclude from that the good he did and our gratitude to God for having given us this good servant as a confrere. Let us thank Him for the graces He granted him and let us pay our last respects to his soul. If it has no need of them, others will profit from them.

1222. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT¹
1650

If it is right that the person who plants a tree should have the pleasure of seeing it bear fruit, it is likewise right that you should share in the blessings God has given so abundantly to our modest labors. I can assure you that, in the missions we have given since Joigny, I think no one has failed to make a general confession. It is wonderful to see how these people have been touched, even to the point that I decided to preach repentance to them only during the first few days, given the great sensitivity of their hearts, because I was afraid it might be harmful to their imaginations.

1223. - TO DENIS GAUTIER,¹ IN SAINTES
Paris, June 3, 1650
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur de Lavau, the bearer of this letter, passed through Saintes on his way to Paris, and he tells me that he left twenty-two écus in the care of M. Watebled.² I have just had two écus given to him, to be deducted, and promised him you would have the remainder of what he left returned to him. I ask you please to do so, once you have received this letter, and also to be as helpful to him as you can. I beg Our Lord to continue to do the same for you.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Gautier

1224. - TO MARC COGLÉE,¹ SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
June 8, 1650

I was glad to learn your reasons for going back to the old custom of reciting the prayer for the King only when Mass was over, instead of saying it before Communion, as was being done since the visitation. All things considered, I think this was advisable because by this means you put an end to the grumbling of the inhabitants. The latter is an unfortunate situation, more to be feared than the lack of uniformity in the customs of the diocese on this point, since it was a question of a prayer and not of a ceremony. Nevertheless, because this action concerns the King, you should have sought the advice of the Governor,² so that he would not have had reason to take offense at this change.

This omission caused me to wonder if you knew of the request I formerly made to your predecessor³ not to make any

innovations of importance in the external running of the parish until the Governor had been consulted. Now that you are aware of it, I hope you will be exact in following this order. Above all, Monsieur, it is customary for Superiors in the Company to put before the General any unusual problems that present themselves. In this way, by seeking his advice, they avoid many inconveniences and are sure of doing God's Will, which I know you seek in all things and, consequently, will be glad to know this.

1225. - TO JEAN MIDOT,¹ VICAR-GENERAL OF TOUL

June 8, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I received your letter with renewed recognition of the obligations we have toward you and with renewed hopes that God might be pleased to preserve you for many years for the good of His Church, in which I hear you have acquired a new dignity. I thank Providence which has bestowed it on you. Posts of responsibility are usually an honor to those who occupy them, but I venture to say that you bring honor to yours. So now, you are chief Dean, Grand Archdeacon and Vicar-General of a large diocese, notable for piety and for doing good; in a word, great in the sight of God and men. May God grant that your soul will continue to grow in His love!

Thank you again, Monsieur, for the help you are giving us in Rome and for the letters promised by M. Platel from his relatives. Whenever you want to send them to us, we will forward them and hope for the results you mention. The Superior of our house in Rome² wrote me that M. Jehot has reopened negotiations for the settlement, in accord with the order you gave him.

I shall render you most willingly, Monsieur--more willingly than I can express to you in writing--whatever service I can for the commission necessary for the registration of the acknowledgement in question. I do not recall whether or not it is a patent, or how that document is worded. I ask you to send it to me because the counter-seal has to be affixed to it, or to a verified copy, at least. It will have to be shown to M. de Brienne,³ and I will speak to him about it, God willing. True, he is at Court now, and I do not go there unless I am summoned, which happens rarely and perhaps will not happen in the future because we are responsible for settling the affairs of the ecclesiastical congregation⁴ here.

So, if I cannot see M. de Brienne, I will write to the Countess⁵ so that she will talk to him about it. For whom would I use my influence, if not for someone who always acts so efficiently and charitably on our behalf? For this reason, in addition to those of your merit and my affection, do I not have a strict obligation to render you obedience?

With regard to M. du Saussay,⁶ I cannot conceive how there can be any misunderstanding between you and him. Some

troublemaker must be inciting that by talebearing. You are one of the most peaceful, sincere, and amiable men I know, and so is he. Still, on the one hand, I see that you have a certain amount of distrust toward him and, on the other hand, that he suspects you have done him a disservice.

Dare I ask you, Monsieur, to tell me your feelings on this; and would you be agreeable to my acting as an intermediary to restore you both to friendship? My knowledge of his gentleness and goodness leads me to hope he will not offer any resistance to that and, in addition to the consolation of your heart, which loves nothing so much as union, several other benefits will result from it.

While awaiting the honor of your orders, I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord]....

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Since writing the above, I was at the Duchesse d'Aiguillon's house when the Ecclesiastical Judge arrived, and we spoke about you. I can assure you that he is most anxious to be on good terms with you. He even told me we will find him very open to that. Let me know, Monsieur, what you would like me to do.

1226. - TO THE SUPERIOR OF THE GENOA HOUSE

I am very glad that public penances are performed during missions. You will do well to see that they are put into practice as much as you can. The custom is useful as well as necessary but must be carried out wisely. I say "wisely" because discretion is required so as not to involve all sorts of persons in it, nor for all sorts of sins. So, do it, but only in accordance with the Council of Trent,¹ for public sins, and on the orders of the Bishops.²

1227. - TO A BISHOP

[Between 1643 and 1652]¹

It is true, Excellency, that I have wanted you to exercise moderation, but only so that your work may continue and your constant state of overwork may not deprive your diocese and the whole Church of the incomparable good you do for them. If this desire is not in conformity with the impulses with which your zeal inspires you, I am not surprised because my human sentiments distance me too much from that eminent state to which the love of God elevates you. I am still too attached to the senses, and you are above nature. I have as much reason to be astounded by my own faults as to thank God, as I am doing, for the holy dispositions He gives you.

I beg you most humbly, Excellency, to ask Him to give them to me--not the same ones, but just a small share of them or simply the crumbs which fall from your table.

1228. - TO GUILLAUME CORNAIRE,¹ IN LE MANS

June 15, 1650

The boredom you experience in your work may stem from several causes: (1) from nature itself, which grows weary of always seeing and doing the same things. God allows this to give rise to the practice of two beautiful virtues:

perseverance, which leads us to attain the goal, and constancy, which helps us to overcome difficulties; (2) from the nature of the work, which is depressing and which, when done by a person who is also sad, engenders distaste, especially when God chooses to take away the interior consolation and cordial sweetness He allows those who serve the poor to experience from time to time; (3) from the devil, who, in order to turn you aside from the great good you are doing, suggests to you an aversion for it. Lastly, this boredom may come from God Himself because, in order to raise a soul to the highest perfection, He allows it to pass through dryness, brambles, and combats, causing it thereby to honor the times of weariness in the life of His Son Our Lord, who suffered various kinds of anguish and abandonment.

Courage, Monsieur! Give yourself to God and declare to Him that you desire to serve Him in the way most pleasing to Him. It is a matter of triumphing over your enemies--the flesh, which is opposed to the spirit, and Satan, who envies your happiness. God's Will is that you persevere in the work He has given you to do. Trust in His grace, which will never fail you in living out your vocation. Bear in mind that this is one of the holiest and most sanctifying works on earth. Perhaps as many people die in that hospital as in a large number of parishes. Since you help them to die well, you are also responsible for their souls being received into heaven. As for those who do not die, you dispose them to lead a good life; consequently, you do more good on your own than many pastors put together.

I beg Our Lord, Monsieur, to grant your heart the patience and joy He knows it needs and to make me worthy of sharing in the merit of your labors and prayers.

1229. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
[1650]¹

You will be saddened by the news I have to give you: it is the death of good M. Delattre,³ Superior of our house in Agen. He had just made a journey to Amiens and, on his return, was suddenly taken ill with an unremitting fever. The result was that, the day after his arrival in Bordeaux, God took him to Himself. This is a very great loss for the Company. He was a man with good judgment, and was experienced in leadership and business, since he had been the King's Procurator in Amiens. If ever I met anyone detached from relatives, the world, and his health and life as well, it was he. He performed great penances and was very regular. We will tell you more about him another time.

In the meantime, I ask the whole dear family³ of Sedan to pray for him, even though we have every reason to hope that his soul is in possession of the glory of the saints.

1230. - TO BERNARD CODOING, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU
June 22, 1650

I am glad you sent Brother Jamin¹ to Saintes because that house really needs him. I am well aware that this inconveniences you, and I had foreseen the reasons you gave

me for leaving this Brother with you, but there is an overall Providence which demands such changes. Those who are affected by them, but do not see the reasons for them, think they are being wronged, and they complain about them, but God knows they are made for the best.

So, we shall not send any Sisters for Champigny,² since people everywhere are discontented with that project.³ In fact, I fear you have not left room for Providence but have attempted something God does not will. Mon Dieu, Monsieur, how good it is to wait for Providence on these occasions, without trying to anticipate its orders!

Whenever you have a proposal to make to the Bishop of Poitiers,⁴ please inform me about it beforehand. You have been in his diocese too short a time to have sufficient knowledge of persons and affairs, and I fear that certain inconveniences may arise if you act otherwise.

Speaking of that, I implore you once again, Monsieur, not to make any innovations or changes or do away with anything, either in temporal matters or in the customs of the house. If you think something should be done, take the trouble to write to me about it, and together we will decide the time and manner of doing it. I am not talking of ordinary things that come and go and are part and parcel of the Superior's concern, but of those that are of greater importance, either because of their merit or their consequences.

You did not tell me what boarders you have, what fees you charge, whether you have any seminarians who pay nothing, who their teacher and director is, and similar things which merit dialogue. I have seen seminaries open and last but a very short time, for want of discussing matters.

I would also like to see a little more communication and trust between you and M. Maillard,⁵ the procurator of your house. I assure you that you can act with him as with the wisest, most loyal, most understanding person I know among us, and that he has the interests of the Company very much at heart. Please have no doubt about this. If I were in your place I would take the advice I am giving you, not because I have had any information from him, since he has never written any to me, but because I know what sort of person he is.

1230a. - TO MONSIEUR HORCHOLLE, IN NEUFCHÂTEL
Paris, June 28, 1650
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am a little slow with my replies but not with my efforts to be of service to you regarding the parish about which you wrote me. I contacted a person who works closely with the Bishop of Saint-Malo.¹ He mentioned it to the latter, but this good Bishop did not make any decision on it, and that friend of mine came to tell me he thinks it is promised to someone else. Nevertheless, he will see that the preference is given to you, if the benefice should become vacant. That was quite a few days ago, and since you

have not notified me of the pastor's death, I presume it has not occurred and we have to wait for another opportunity.

I will always welcome joyfully any opportunity that comes my way to be of service to you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant, Monsieur, as well as that of your mother, whom I greet most humbly.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Horcholle, Pastor of Neufchâtel, in Neufchâtel

1231. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

July 9, 1650

Far from being a bad thing to seek advice, you must, on the contrary, do so when the matter is of any importance, or when we cannot come to a clear decision on our own. For temporal affairs, we consult a lawyer or some lay persons who are knowledgeable about them; for internal affairs, we discuss matters with the consultors and other members of the Company when we think it appropriate. I often consult even the Brothers and ask their advice on questions involving their duties. When this is done with the necessary prudence, the authority of God, which resides in the person of Superiors and those who represent them, is in no way disadvantaged. On the contrary, the good order which ensues makes it more worthy of love and respect. I ask you to act in this way and to recall that, when there is question of any change or of extraordinary matters, these are proposed to the General.

1232. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

July 15, 1650

I agree with you about.... I do not think he will ever recover from his present state; on the contrary, I fear he will do considerable harm to that house. Not only do I fear it, but we already have experience of it, and I must admit that...and he and someone else as well have unsettled it a great deal. One is out, after we put up with him as much as we could, and it would be expedient for the others to be at a distance from him.

It would be doing justice to the Company to amputate its gangrenous members. This is true and prudence demands it. However, because we have to allow for the practice of all the virtues, we are now exercising patience, long-suffering, and charity itself, in the hope that they will mend their ways. We are applying remedies to the sore, using various plasters of gentleness, threats, prayers, and admonitions. Our sole hope in all this is that God Himself will be pleased to bring some good from it. Our Lord did not send Saint Peter away for having denied Him several times, nor even Judas, although he was to die in his sin. So I think His Divine Goodness sees fit that this same goodness be extended in the Company to our difficult members, bearing with them and sparing nothing to win them over to God. This does not mean that in the end we may not have to get rid of them; that is a necessity.

1233. - TO CARDINAL FRANCESCO BARBERINI¹
Paris, July 15, 1650
Monseigneur,

I received the letter with which Your Eminence deigned to honor me, with the respect I owe to one of the greatest and holiest Princes of the Church. It is my ardent desire that God may be pleased to make our Little Company, and me in particular, worthy of being of service to Your Eminence. His Divine Goodness knows, Monseigneur, that our joy would equal our happiness if we had the occasions to do so. I beg you most humbly to offer them to us and to accept the gratitude we owe to Your Eminence for having been such a support to us in your San Salvatore Abbey.²

You have done so through your excessive kindness rather than for any reason for satisfaction our Little Company may have given you; consequently, we do not deserve the thanks Your Eminence has expressed. I venture, nevertheless, Monseigneur, to entreat Your Eminence most humbly to regard us as your lowly creatures, to honor us with your protection, and to allow the Company, and me in particular, Monseigneur, to be your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

1234. - TO BERNARD CODOING, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU
July 17, 1650

The Chief Justice¹ told me the day before yesterday that the King is supposed to go to Richelieu, if he is not already there.² This obliges me to tell you what I think you will have to do, in the event that this letter is delivered to you in time.

Please go with three or four of your priests to greet him at the château. He does not like long speeches, so do not make any. Tell him, however, that you have come to offer His Majesty the services of the Company and to assure him of its prayers that God may be pleased to bless him and his armies, to preserve him for many years to come, to grant him the grace of subjugating the rebels and of extending his empire to the ends of the earth; in a word, that God may reign over his States. Next, you will have to address the Queen Regent,³ saying something similar to her, then to Monsieur.⁴ On the way out, try to see the Cardinal⁵ to pay your respects to him, pledging your obedience with your best wishes, etc., but do it very briefly.

Above all, Monsieur, be careful not to request anything or to voice any complaints. If you are asked whether you are satisfied with your parishioners, say yes, that they are good, God-fearing people because, in general, that can be said. Say that they are good servants of the King and have had a master and mistress who have given them this example, etc. It takes but a few words like that to move Their Majesties to grant them some favor, such as confirming their privileges.

Find out from one of the chaplains how you should receive the King at the Church: whether or not with the cross,

whether you should give him the cross to kiss or not, whether you should offer him the holy water sprinkler. If he spends a Sunday in Richelieu, preach the sermon or homily yourself and plan the ceremonies of the Mass and Vespers ahead of time. Have the house cleaned and everything in order. Because it is customary to house the chaplains in the priests' residence and in the local communities in places where the Court stops, maybe you will get them all and perhaps also the Bishop of Rodez, the King's tutor;⁶ Father Paulin, his confessor;⁷ and several others. So get a large number of decent beds ready. The members of the Company can be put up all together in one room, leaving the bedrooms free.

Please make everyone feel welcome, offer them whatever you have or can do, and spare nothing to give each one the best reception possible. If you have time, you could send someone to Tours to buy whatever is needed. If a Sunday falls before the King's arrival, you would be wise to exhort the town to give him a proper welcome, to express their joy and affection with praise and acclamations to Their Majesties, and to do all this as courteously as possible. I ask Our Lord to inspire you with whatever else you should do in all that.

1235. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT
Monsieur,

I would have had the honor of writing you more often than I have done, and given you an account of what had taken place with our affair, if we had been able to get our papers from Bishop Farnese, Secretary of the Congregation of Regulars.¹ Out of resentment at the fact that we had Cardinal Palotta² appointed, and thereby have prevented the former from becoming judge as he wished--but we could not allow this--he is holding on to the above-mentioned papers, taunting us with slowness and delays, in one way or another. It is almost unbelievable that a Prelate like him is acting this way for such base motives as his, which, as we have finally discovered, are simply vengeance and the desire for money. I am ashamed to write to the Bishop of Cahors³ about all these delays, but I must do so because it is my duty.

I am very pleased that the solution we have discovered here of requesting confirmation of the Reform rather than speaking of establishment seems good to you. I am still not quite sure what order we will follow for carrying out this plan, since we can do nothing about it without the documents Bishop Farnese is keeping from us. We are doing our utmost to get them; I expect we shall manage this with money, but not otherwise. I await instructions from the Bishop of Cahors about getting funds as soon as possible because we have already spent almost all I had been authorized to withdraw here.

In the second-to-last mail I received a packet from the Bishop of Cahors with the brief of appeal of the Abbot of Grosbois'⁴ decision. He sent it back to me here to be

corrected, especially since the banker who had it drawn up had not followed the statement we had sent from Paris. I had it corrected and another legal copy made, but I cannot get it until next Saturday and will send it a week from today.

I engaged a lawyer for this legal copy so as to keep it confidential. Father Guérin⁵ had gotten wind of the first one and had it revoked. I fear this will cause confusion in the lawsuit that will be initiated in France. I have already written this to the Bishop of Cahors. People here cannot understand what reason can be obliging him to take legal action in the same affair both in France and in Rome. I think there are as many difficulties in not doing so as there are in doing so. Both depend on the will of the above-mentioned Prelate.

I thank you most humbly for the honor you were pleased to bestow on me by your letter of June 24 and the trouble you deigned to take of writing to ask Monsieur Alméras to assist us, which he has most willingly offered to do. We are very much obliged to you for this and will make use of his help when the occasion arises.

Please continue your assistance to us and grant me the favor of believing that I am, Monsieur, your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

J. VITET, Can[on] Regular

Rome, July 18, 1650

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare, Paris

1236. - TO PHILIBERT DE BRANDON, BISHOP OF PÉRIGUEUX¹

July 20, 1650

Thank you most humbly, Excellency, for the opportunity you are giving us to render some small service to God. With all due respect, I beg you, however, to allow me to point out to you that two workers are not enough for an establishment corresponding to your wishes and our Institute. You have the seminary in mind and we, our obligation to give missions. Our principal aim is the instruction of the country people, and the service we render to the ecclesiastical state is merely accessory to that.

We know from experience that the fruits of the missions are very great because the needs of the poor people in rural areas are extreme. But, since they are usually rustic and uneducated, they easily forget what they have been taught and the good resolutions they have taken, if they do not have suitable pastors to maintain them in the good state in which they have been placed. That is why we try also to help form good priests through retreats for the ordinands and through seminaries--not to abandon the missions but to preserve the fruits produced by them.

Therefore, Excellency, since you wish to have Missionaries, it is to be hoped that you may have at least four of them for the two functions. If they had to omit the

first, that of giving missions, which, as I said, is of very great value, even for the best educated parishes, they would be distressed. Furthermore, the missions will provide the opportunity for advanced seminarians to put into practice the instructions they will receive in the seminary, or to acquaint them better with pastoral and ecclesiastical functions by seeing them exercised by our men who evangelize the poor.

If you say, Excellency, that in Cahors we only run the seminary, I admit that, but it is also true that the Bishop of Cahors had reserved to the Canons Regular of Chancelade, whom he established in his town, the right to give missions. At that time, I did not reflect on the consequences of this nor how difficult it would be for our priests to be unable to attend to their principal work at times. Yet, this is so painful that they have no greater nor more habitual temptation. It is also the only one of our houses involved with the seminary alone; all the others, thank God, give missions as well.

The problem lies in the maintenance of these four workers. I know, Excellency, that your diocese has a limited income and is burdened with heavy expenses. I know also that you give a great deal in alms and that it is unreasonable for your relatives always to have to contribute to the expenses of your diocese. You already donate more than your share to it, giving beyond your means, as well as giving of yourself to the extent that you do.

I beg you, therefore, to consider my proposal only insofar as it is feasible. Here is one possibility: M...has a priory in your diocese, which he offered us previously for a foundation; perhaps he will still be willing to hand it over to you.

1237. - TO BARTHÉLEMY D'ELBÈNE, BISHOP OF AGEN

[1650]¹

Excellency,

I would be distressed if M. Grimal,² a priest of our Company, had gone to pay his respects to you and to offer you the humble services of the Company as well as his own, if I did not do the same by means of this letter, and if I personally did not renew the offer of my obedience, as I now do, with all possible humility and affection.

I entreat you, Excellency, to accept it, together with the liberty I take of telling you that M. Pasquier is pressuring us to carry out the terms of the foundation he has made.³ He is asking us for workers to live in his house, serve his chapel, and give missions. Since you, Excellency, are the one who urged him to choose us over others, and since we are neither able nor willing to proceed further than what will be pleasing to you....

1238. - TO MONSIEUR PASQUIER

[1650]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I cannot thank you as humbly as I would like nor as much as we are obliged to you. O[ur] L[ord] will make up for what I lack, if He so wills. I ask Him to preserve you for many years on earth for the good of His Church.

Besides thanking you in general, I want to express to you my personal gratitude for your kindness in consenting to find out from the Bishop² his intention regarding your foundation. Thank you also for your willingness to discuss matters heart to heart with me. Rest assured, Monsieur, that you can count on my confidentiality and collaboration; to this end, I shall try to have my letters delivered to you in person.

If His Excellency and you think it well for us to reside in your house, we shall do so. I repeat, His Excellency, Monsieur; otherwise we would not even consider it, unless the Bishop and you were in agreement on the matter, and we confirmed it.

I am sending M. Grimal there, asking him to see you and to get your orders and the Bishop's instructions concerning this business. Once they have been sent to us, we shall try to give you some while awaiting the ones from there.

If it pleases God that things have changed, in nomine Domini, we shall still be eternally grateful, Monsieur, for the good will with which you have honored us, even though Providence may arrange the outcome differently.

1239. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

August 5, 1650

You have greatly edified me by telling me that you no longer eagerly seek nor even desire an opportunity to get us established in Rome.¹ That is the disposition we must have and the proper way to act in all things. In so doing, we may judge rightly, if things succeed, that it is God who has done them. I do not know what means Providence will use to get us a house in that city, if we ever have one there, but I do know that, if we do not get one, it will not be your fault, as you think. No one else could advance matters there any further than you because the time for that is not yet ripe.

The men giving the mission in the Spoleto diocese would have done well to ask to be excused from the commission the Bishop² gave them regarding the nuns. If he had then persisted, fine; we owe obedience to the bishops, even in matters that do not pertain to our functions, when they absolutely insist. However, we must also make them realize beforehand that our Rules forbid this. Please make this clear to all your workers so that they will avoid such service as far as possible.

1240. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[Between 1647 and 1651]¹

Something has come up preventing me from being able to attend today's meeting. In the name of God, Mademoiselle, let us postpone it until tomorrow. The topic² you sent me seems very timely.

The thought occurred to me--this morning and yesterday, I think--that you should give a solid formation in mental prayer to the Sister in charge of the newcomers,³ so that she can form them well in this holy exercise.

We will not have a meeting at Madame de Lamoignon's house tomorrow; it was held last Monday.

Good day, Mademoiselle. I am your most humble servant.

V. D.

1241. - TO A BISHOP

I cannot tell you, Excellency, how sorry I am to hear that you are not well. God has given me to you, and if He so pleases He will make you aware of the deep feeling He has given me for whatever concerns you. What consoles me is the fact that your illness is not irremediable or incurable. I experienced something similar in the past, when one of my fingers went completely numb, but that went away after a while.

May it please God, Excellency, to preserve you for the good of your diocese which, I have heard, you were thinking of leaving! If I were worthy of being heard by telling you my thoughts on that, I would take the liberty, Excellency, of telling you that I think it would be well for you to leave matters as they are, for fear that God may not profit from your resignation. For where will you find a man to walk in your footsteps and to equal your leadership? If someone could be found, well and good, but I see no hope for that, given the times in which we are now living.

Furthermore, Excellency, you have no greater difficulties in your episcopacy than Saint Paul had in his. Yet, he bore the burden of it until death. In addition, not one of the Apostles divested himself of his apostolate or abandoned his work with its hardships, until going to receive his crown for this in heaven.

I would be rash, Excellency, to propose their example to you if God, who has raised you to their supreme dignity, was not Himself inviting you to follow them, and if the liberty I take did not proceed from the deep respect and incomparable affection Our Lord has given me for your sacred person.

1242. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
August 13, 1650

When your consultors are not in agreement, it is up to you to settle the matter as it seems reasonable to you; or, if it requires writing to me about it, to wait until you have my reply.

As to what you say about honor not making you vain but that dishonor saddens you, I must tell you, Monsieur, that you know the anatomy of the human will better than I, for you are a learned man and I am a nitwit. According to Seneca, the will is inclined to covet what seems good to it and to reject what seems bad. Saint Thomas says that, as a matter of fact, spiritual men rise above covetousness and master it to the point of depriving themselves voluntarily

of their own satisfactions, but only with difficulty do they succeed in truly loving the hurt that comes to them from others.

We are, indeed, more sensitive to pain than to pleasure, to the prick of a rose than to its fragrance. The way to balance out this disparity is to be as willing to embrace what mortifies nature as to deprive ourselves of what pleases it and to incline our hearts to suffering by considering the good it brings with it. We should also be ready to accept it so that, when it comes, we will not be surprised or saddened by it. Le Combat spirituel¹ advises us to envisage upsetting situations that may arise, to struggle against them, and to train ourselves for combat until we feel we are in command of the situation--I mean determined to endure them willingly if, in fact, they arise. Still, we should not imagine extreme trials, such as certain torments of the martyrs, the mere thought of which strikes fear in us, but rather, things like contempt, calumny, an attack of fever, and similar things.

In two or three cases, the community should be told of the fault of an individual:

(1) When the fault is so deeply ingrained in the guilty party that a private admonition is judged ineffective. That is why Our Lord admonished Judas only in the presence of the other Apostles. Even then He did so in veiled terms, saying that one of those who puts his hand in the dish would betray Him.² On the other hand, He reprimanded Saint Peter when he tried to dissuade Him from the Passion He had to suffer, and even let him know what a great fault that was, calling him Satan,³ well aware that he would profit from it.

(2) When these persons are weak and cannot bear a correction, even a gentle one, although they are really good people. Because they are good, a recommendation given in general is sufficient to correct them.

(3) When there is danger that others may slip into the same fault, if a reproof is not given.

Apart from these instances, I think the admonition should be given to the person in private.

As for faults committed against the Superior, the subject must be reprovved but: (1) it should never be done on the spot; (2) it should be done gently and in a timely manner; (3) reasons should be given, pointing out in a cheerful, pleasant way the ill consequences of the person's fault, so that he will realize that the Superior is not admonishing him because he is in a bad mood or because he is taking the fault personally.

I have never made any distinction between those who have taken vows and those who have not; some should not be overburdened in order to spare others.

It is well for you to invite outside preachers to your church occasionally, provided they are good and do not undermine the teachings and good practices you have endeavored to inculcate into your people. The repugnance

you feel for showiness in a parish should not prevent you from doing what good pastors do to keep everyone happy, as far as this can be done.

Those who direct the houses of the Company must not look upon anyone as their inferior but rather as their brother. Our Lord said to His disciples, "I no longer call you my servants, but I have called you my friends."⁴ They should, therefore, be treated with humility, gentleness, forbearance, cordiality, and love. Not that I always do so, Monsieur, but I feel I have failed when I deviate from that way of acting.

It is not the spirit of the Mission to make courtesy calls on prominent persons in the places where we are established. In small towns like Sedan, they are almost all of the same social rank, so you would have to visit all of them and do nothing else but that. If you visit only some of them, the others will think you are slighting them. Therefore, it is better to refrain altogether than to find yourself in such unfortunate situations. I make an exception for the Governor, whom you should visit often and, in his absence, the King's Lieutenant. I also make an exception for those whom you are obliged to see for some special reason, and for distinguished lay persons who might come to see you; in that case, since you are obliged to return the visit, it will no longer be simply a courtesy call. May I add to this that our priests who come to Sedan and who leave there should always go to greet the Governor and to say good-bye to him.

God be praised, Monsieur, that people say the Company knows the things of God but knows men very little! Oh! how we should wish that this be true and that it maintain itself at a distance from the spirit of the world and what goes on there so as to converse only with heaven! Blessed are those who converse on this earth only to snatch souls from it so as to raise them up to God, in whom I am....

1243. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

I am writing to inquire about you and to give you news of us. How are you after such hard work? How many missions have you given? Do you find the people disposed to make good use of your exercises and to derive from them the desired results and profit? I would be consoled to hear the details of all this.

I have had good reports from the other houses of the Company. In all of them the men are working successfully and satisfactorily, thanks be to God. Even Monsieur...has been in the country for nine months, working almost constantly at the missions. It is wonderful to see the strength God gives him and the extraordinary good things he is doing, as I am hearing from everywhere. The Vicars-General have told me so, and others have said or written it, even some monks from the areas near the place where he is working.

This happy success is attributed to the care he takes to win over the poor people by gentleness and kindness. This has made me decide to recommend more than ever that the Company should devote itself more and more to the practice of these virtues.

If God gave His blessing to our first missions, it is because we acted kindly, humbly, and sincerely with all kinds of people. If God was pleased to make use of the most wretched of men for the conversion of some heretics, it was, as they themselves acknowledged, because of his patience and cordiality toward them.

Even convicts, with whom I have spent some time, are not won over in any other way. Whenever I happened to speak sharply to them, I spoiled everything; on the contrary, when I praised them for their resignation and sympathized with them in their sufferings; when I told them they were fortunate to have their purgatory in this world; when I kissed their chains, showed compassion for their distress, and expressed sorrow for their misfortune, it was then that they listened to me, gave glory to God, and opened themselves to salvation.

Please help me, Monsieur, to thank God for all that and to ask Him to inspire all Missionaries to accustom themselves to treat their neighbor gently, humbly, and charitably, in public and in private--even sinners and the hardhearted--never using abusive language, reproaches, or harsh words with anyone. I am sure, Monsieur, that you, for your part, are striving to avoid this improper manner of serving souls, which embitters and estranges them instead of attracting them. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal sweetness of men and angels, and it is by this same virtue that we must likewise go to Him, leading others there as well.

1244. - TO MATHURIN GENTIL,¹ IN LE MANS

Paris, August 16, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It has been a long time since I wrote to you. If I had been able to do so, my heart would have reproached me, and rightly so, for it is certainly glad to communicate with yours, which it cherishes with ever-renewed affection; your letters also give me great consolation. So, Monsieur, tell me no more that you dare not write to me, and that there is no longer any auditus² for you. That is your own word; I remember it well, but I do not know why you have felt that way. God knows, and so do you, Monsieur, that I esteem and love your soul as that of a good servant of God and one of the best priests in the Company. Anything that comes to me from you will be welcomed in that light and, consequently, with respect and joy. Let this be said once and for all.

Let us go on to your last letter, in which you spoke about the seminary. Thank you for the information you gave me. I find it hard to believe that the younger students do

not disburse more than forty écus. To find out whether this is true, please see what the whole house, boarders and externs, has spent for bread, for wine, for meat, for wood, and likewise for the other items. After that, count the number of persons who have lived on that amount, then see how much that comes to for each one. All that cannot be figured exactly, but you can get a close estimate. Because the younger students do not have as much at their meals as the others, note the difference and subtract a reasonable amount for what concerns them. After you put all that in writing, please send it to me so the boarding fees can be adjusted to the fairest rate, for it is not right for the house, in its present straitened circumstances, to contribute to the board of these young people.

It is better not to have a seminary at all, but it is also necessary to maintain this work if it can be done without expense to the Company, other than the effort and maintenance of the teachers. You can see that this calculation must be done soon so that, when the students are leaving for vacation, you can tell them what they will have to pay if they are coming back.

I ask Our Lord, Monsieur, to illuminate you with His light and to unite our hearts in His most holy love, by which I am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Gentil
1245. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME
August 19, 1650

Since you have spoken about M. Authier¹ to Cardinal d'Este² and Bishop Massari,³ and called their attention to the inconveniences that would arise from a similarity between the name of his Company and ours, it will be all right for you to touch on that. This, however, is not my own opinion because I would like to leave the matter to Providence, but it is the opinion of a number of clear-sighted persons, who feel we should try to prevent this source of confusion and disorder.

This makes me fear that my hesitancy springs from an insensitive spirit, so much so that I doubt I will say anything about it to the Keeper of the Seals⁴ nor to anyone else, for I have not done so up until now, not even to the Chancellor,⁵ except for one day when I merely asked if he thought it might be disadvantageous to have two Congregations with the same name. He immediately answered yes, that it would be very disadvantageous and should not be allowed. He also said he would do his utmost to prevent it. I did not even want to tell him certain things that could have borne out his opinion.

Furthermore, what are we to do? Almost all those here engaged in work similar to ours call themselves missionaries. They do so because God, who in His mercy has called us to this profession, has been pleased to confer a certain esteem on that name. Even M. Olier,⁶ who seemed to

like the name, Priests of the Community of Saint-Sulpice, told me he wanted them to be called of the Mission, as is being done, since the two or three seminaries they opened up until that time were under this name.

If this is an evil, it seems a necessary one in our case, and one we cannot avoid because it would be futile to do so.⁷ It is better to leave it in God's hands and strive to distinguish ourselves from others only by great submission, deference, and the practice of the virtues which constitute a true missionary, so that what Our Lord said about the first being last and the last being first may not happen to us.⁸

Continue, as I have already told you, Monsieur, to be vigilant there.

1246. - TO FRANÇOIS DE FLEURY¹

August 19, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

God alone can make you understand what joy the Company experienced at the news of the Queen of Poland's safe delivery.² We hope and pray continually that God will bless and sanctify the King and Queen and give them children who may found a royal family, providing Poland with Kings as long as the world may last.

We purposely did not leave sooner, Monsieur, since we had no specific order from either the Queen or you. We shall do so at the first opportunity which presents itself, unless Her Majesty judges it advisable for us to wait until spring and leave with the Sisters of Sainte-Marie³ and the Daughters of Charity. We await your instructions in this matter and in whatever else it pleases you to do us the honor of commanding.

I say nothing to you about Monsieur de Groni. M. des Noyers, the Queen's secretary,⁴ may have told you about his behavior here, and that he left about two months ago after receiving a letter he showed us, with the confirmation sent him by the Queen of Sweden, conferring on him a diocese dependent on her States. We ask Our Lord to be his guide and to make me worthy of being, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1247. - TO NICOLAS PAVILLON,¹ BISHOP OF ALET

August 20, 1650

Excellency,

I join my humble request to the one the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas² is sending to you to kindly allow the Abbés de Chandénier,³ nephews of Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld,⁴ to retire near you to gather some of the crumbs of doctrine and piety which fall from your table. They are, Excellency, two of the most virtuous clergymen we have in Paris today. They will get a house in your town⁵ and bring with them two very pious priests. If you grant them the consolation they desire, Excellency, you will help win them over more and

more to God and to the service they will render to His Church. They are capable of doing much good in it some day and of attaining the highest posts. I hope, Excellency, that they will be as grateful for the favor you will do them as they will be prudent in making use of it without causing you inconvenience.

I am working to obtain authorization for the resignation of the pastor of a parish in your diocese, which you did me the honor of recommending to me. God knows how displeased I was with the lack of success of the preceding one, and what a joy it would be to me to make good use of my obedience in your regard. I renew the offer of it with all possible humility and affection.

Prostrate most humbly in spirit at your feet, I ask of you your holy blessing, and of God the grace of preserving you for many years to come and of making me worthy of the happiness I have of being, in His love, Excellency, your....
1248. - TO LOUIS THIBAULT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINT-MÉEN
August 20, 1650

Just when I was yearning for some letters from you, I received the one dated the fifth. I praise God for your return to a place of rest because this is a rest for me, too, which will last as long as you enjoy yours. May His Holy Name be forever blessed for the blessings He showered so profusely upon your last mission and its workers! O Dieu! Monsieur, what a great reward you will have in heaven, since so many souls have shared in the fruits of your labors!

We shall welcome M. Greneda warmly and respectfully when he honors us with his visit. In the meantime, we ask your good angel to come to our aid so that we can welcome this good gentleman with the courtesy with which you welcome the servants of God into your house. I shall give no thought in this situation to the service he can render us but to that which we owe to him. If I have occasion to be of service to him, I shall do so most lovingly; how could it be otherwise? I think that neither you nor M. Serre¹ would forgive me.
1249. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT
Rome, August 22, 1650
Monsieur,

I received your two letters of the fifteenth and twenty-second of last month, with which you were pleased to honor me. Regarding the first one, I am sure Brother Bernard has already explained to you, better than my letter could do, the way their business was handled and settled. As for the brief I was hoping to obtain for the Bishop of Cahors to block the indults, I have come up against three difficulties in getting it granted:

(1) The Bishop or his Vicar-General might not want to sign the indult, with no legitimate reason for their refusal. If anything, this might proceed from some resentment or aversion the Bishop may have toward the beneficiary of the indult.

(2) This would arouse the jealousy of the other bishops, who do not raise these difficulties. As a result, it could happen that some disorder might ensue. There would be no fear of this if the entire Assembly of the Clergy,¹ or at least several prelates, made this request.

(3) The granting of this brief would drive to despair those who obtain indulgences.

Although, after a fashion, these reasons cover the refusal, the main one, which people were unwilling to state, is, nevertheless, the interest of this court, which would lose certain clients by granting this brief. I informed the Bishop of Cahors of this situation a long time ago, and I hope to have his reply soon, since without it nothing further can be done in the matter.

For what concerns our affair, here is what we have done since I last wrote you. As soon as the Bishop of Cahors obtained the brief of appeal we had requested against the Abbot of Grosbois' decision, my reading of it confirmed my opinion of the banker who had represented us in that court. We set to work immediately not only to have it corrected, but also to obtain a new one with a more accurate presentation of the situation. It was, however, a little long. This lengthiness caused it to be rejected, so I was obliged to correct the way the preceding one was stated. Since the Procurator General of Sainte-Geneviève² at this court had had our agents recalled, I sought counsel here on what I should do. Before I could act on the advice given me, I received the Bishop's reply.

To make a long story short, it was felt here that a suit should not be filed at this time for the revocation of the brief obtained by the Procurator General of Sainte-Geneviève, but we should simply have ours drawn up without a new date and change one of the first agents we had requested. These agents were the Bishop of Chartres or his Officialis, the Dean of Notre-Dame de Paris, and the Officialis of Saint-Germain-des-Prés. I changed the last-named and asked for the General of the Congregation of Saint-Maur to replace him; I was refused. I was also refused the Bishop of Utica.³ As a last resort, I had the brief forwarded to the Dean of Paris, the Archdeacon of Chartres, and the Officialis of Sarlat.

I am not sure the Bishop of Cahors will be satisfied; I think so, since we have done all we could. I know that the Officialis of Sarlat has gone beyond three diets;⁴ consequently, he cannot remain a judge, unless he is in Paris, but he can delegate some duly authorized Paris priest to carry out the orders. That is the main reason which induced me to have him appointed agent. I know he will do only what the Bishop of Cahors expects of him. I entrust the entire matter to his guidance.

We are still waiting for our documents from Bishop Farnese.⁵ I pray that God will forgive him the great harm he is doing us.

I ask your pardon for the length of my letter. I beg you to continue your patronage for us and to approve the liberty I take of declaring myself, Monsieur, your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

VITET

I almost forgot to tell you that for a month now Father Guérin, Procurator of Sainte-Geneviève, has been checking very carefully in Rome to see if the Bishop of Cahors has someone there working against him. He is using M. Gueffier⁶ for this. The latter is making a very thorough investigation but, as yet, he has learned nothing and is spreading very bad rumors about the Bishop, particularly that he is always involved in lawsuits and is retaining a titular abbey along with a diocese. I have informed the Bishop of all this.

1250. - TO BERNARD CODOING, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU
August 24, 1650

You tell me that, since the Archdeacon was unable to visit part of the Archdeaconry, one of our priests, commissioned by the Bishop of Poitiers, visited it on his own. You would like to know my opinion on this, in the event that a similar case should arise for you in the future. All I can say on that is that we must obey the bishops but should not seek out such services.

As for M. Romillon, chaplain for the Champigny almshouses, since he is an upright man in whom nothing blameworthy has been found thus far, and who is not in disfavor there, it would be discourteous for you to assail him to the point of seeking either his removal from the almshouses or your own release from your duties there. That smacks of severity, and to put pressure in this way on Madame¹ to do one or the other would be dealing too harshly with her. It suffices that you proposed the first suggestion once or twice. She is well aware of the conduct of this man, who most likely is not what people have told you he is. Those who spoke to you about him in a negative way have perhaps no other basis than their own disagreements with his leadership or advice.

You must no longer insist that the poor be lodged outside the almshouses nor prevent their being obliged--most of them, at least--to stay there. There are three or four reasons for this:

(1) M. du Rivau² will not give in to you, and it would be temerity to think you will get the upper hand. Mon Dieu! Monsieur, defer to this good gentleman and do nothing in matters in which he has some say, without consulting him.

(2) Although your reasons are very weighty, there are, however, stronger ones on the other side. How do you know, Monsieur, whether, by leaving the poor here and there on their own, the income might not be diverted to other things, with the passage of time? It might be used to reward some servants, or to do a favor for a friend who will put in a good word for someone, or to elicit some service or debt of

gratitude, or for other similar abuses. The result of all this is that it would no longer be the poor who had the use of these funds, but others who could live elsewhere. But this inconvenience is not to be feared as long as the poor are obliged to reside there because only those who are truly poor will want to live at the almshouses.

(3) The intention of the founders must be respected. They were good, clear-sighted princes, who gave no orders without full knowledge of the facts. Lastly, Madame is unwilling to allow any change on this point.

What are you to do in all that? Personally, I must admit that, if my advice had been asked, I would have held the opinion you are disputing, for we are sure of doing what is right in respecting the intention of the founders, whatever advantage there may seem in acting otherwise. Please, Monsieur, in the name of Our Lord, let us keep to that. Rest assured that I will be greatly consoled if you do not mention this again, and I will be even more so if, in this and in all else, you are united with M. du Rivau. If you cannot make up your mind to take any responsibility for these almshouses because of the chaplain, hand it over to another member of the Company and let him do it.

1251. - TO POPE INNOCENT X

Most Holy Father,

I, the most unworthy Superior of the insignificant Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, prostrate at the sacred feet of Your Holiness, dedicate with all possible reverence and obedience the said Congregation and my own person to Your Holiness. The supreme majesty and honor due to Your Holiness by all the faithful, especially by me, your sincere and devoted servant, have so far deterred me from writing to you. Nevertheless, your outstanding kindness and willingness to receive both the letters of those who are absent and the homage of those who are present have given me courage.

Indeed, Most Holy Father, I have been most anxious to render my personal homage to Your Holiness and to give you an account of the ministries of our Congregation, truly the most insignificant one of all, but the one most grateful and obedient to the Holy See. Having done this, my only consolation would be to die at the feet of Your Holiness. For this I pray even now, although my infirmities and my seventy years do not allow me to hope for this. My only recourse is, therefore, to address Your Holiness by letter, since the decrepitude of old age does not allow me to present myself in person and to explain the works of our humble Congregation.

Most Holy Father, the end of our Institute is the salvation of poor country people. For this purpose we go about teaching in villages and towns, hear general confessions, settle quarrels and disputes, and assist the sick poor. These are our works in the rural areas.

At home, we give spiritual retreats, prepare the ordinands, for ten days before the Ember Days, for the worthy reception of Holy Orders, and instruct clerics in the seminaries in good morals, ecclesiastical discipline, and sacred rites.

Besides our workers in France, we have some who perform similar ministries in Italy, Ireland, and Barbary where they encourage and assist poor Christian slaves. There are others in the Indies, where they have gone in the name of Your Holiness to Saint-Laurent Island, commonly called Madagascar. This island is six hundred Italian miles long.

In a word, Most Holy Father, wherever we are, on land or on sea, we are there only by your authority and favor to prepare people to receive the Gospel wherever Your Holiness should send us, in the same way as if Christ Himself were sending us, since Your Holiness represents Christ on earth.

Therefore, with all our heart we have recourse to the Divine Goodness, asking God to keep Your Holiness for many years to come, to give prosperity to the Church under such a great Pontiff, to allow us to find favor before Your Holiness, and to make our ministry acceptable to you and profitable to souls.

In anticipation of all this, prostrate in spirit at the sacred feet of Your Holiness, I humbly entreat you to look with favor on this little Congregation as being entirely yours, to honor it with your protection, and especially to look graciously upon me whom God in His great mercy has made entirely and perfectly obedient to Your Holiness.

I am, Most Holy Father, your most humble, obedient, and devoted son.

VINCENT DEPAUL, Superior of the Congregation of the Mission

Paris, the fifth day before the Kalends of September, 1650¹
1252. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, August 29, 1650

Monsieur,

I had the honor of writing to you by the preceding mail and addressed my letter to Monsieur Lemaire, a banker in Paris, asking him to see that it was delivered to you at Saint-Lazare or at the Bons-Enfants.¹ However, since the Bishop of Cahors has informed me by this mail that he had not received any letter from me in the mail that left here June 27, and that he feared someone was intercepting his packets, I have changed the address and asked Monsieur Alméras to have this one delivered to you. In it I have to tell you, Monsieur, that our lawsuit here has been discovered. Father Guérin² was informed about it at the office of Bishop Farnese from whom we still cannot get our papers. He is most unjust in keeping them from us, and we are powerless to do anything about it.

I have engaged someone to deal with him about the restitution of these documents. I do not yet know how this will be done. Up to the present, he has put us off with

fine words, but they are of no use to us. Father Guérin still does not know that I am here and attributes the lawsuit to the Assistant of the French Augustinians. We will, of necessity, have to prolong our business and win over another pontificate. This Pope does not favor an increase in the number of religious Orders, and Bishop Farnese is inclined to do away with them. I heard that it was the latter who had the Bull against religious published, and its deadline will soon be here. We shall see what comes of it. I beg you, Monsieur, to continue to assist us and to allow me the honor of believing that I am, Monsieur, your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

J. VITET

1253. - TO MONSIEUR HORCHOLLE, IN NEUFCHÂTEL¹
Paris, September 2, 1650
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

As soon as I received your letter,² I planned to answer it immediately, but the pressure of business caused it to slip my mind. I can tell you now, Monsieur, that I am the most unsuitable of all men to be of service to you in the matter of the parish about which you wrote me. The reason is that the local seigneur, who is its patron, is deeply immersed in the opinions of the times;³ therefore, he would never accept any priest I might present to him. If he delays so long in naming one, it is perhaps because he is looking for someone--or is getting someone prepared--who will be infatuated with these new doctrines.

I shall await from the goodness of God a better opportunity to serve you and the grace to do so, in order that I may be able to merit a share in your prayers and give you reason to believe that I am truly, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Horcholle, Pastor of Neufchâtel, in Neufchâtel

1254. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON,¹ SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
September 2, 1650

If you begin to furnish a statement of accounts, I fear this may create a precedent and that, after the Cardinal² is gone, when the Archbishop who succeeds him sees that you are accustomed to doing this, he will oblige you to continue. This, however, must be avoided more than anything else in the world as a most troublesome form of constraint.

Before we came to Saint-Lazare, our predecessors rendered an annual account to the Bishops of Paris. At the time of our establishment, the Archbishop wanted to oblige us to do likewise, but I earnestly entreated him to dispense us from that. Since he was unwilling to do so, I told him we would prefer to leave--which we would have done without fail, if he had insisted.

It is difficult for Missionaries who come and go to write down exactly what they spend in town and country because

they have many small, unavoidable expenses, which would seem superfluous to auditors of the accounts. In addition, many things are forgotten; so, in order to balance your account when you are presenting it, you have to give an estimate, as some Companies do. These estimates can be harmful and even sinful. I said this to the Archbishop of Paris,³ and I am writing it to you so that you might use this argument, if need be.

I still have not had time to examine your regulations for the Charity. As for protectors and counselors, however, I can tell you that this custom may be good for Italy, but experience has shown us that it is harmful in France. Men and women working together do not agree on administrative matters. The men want to assume entire responsibility for them and the women cannot tolerate this. In the beginning, the Charities of Joigny and Montmirail⁴ were governed by persons of both sexes. The men were responsible for the care of the poor who were in good health, and the women for those who were ill, but because the funds were in common, we were obliged to remove the men. And I can give this testimony in favor of women, that there is no fault to be found in their administration because they are so careful and trustworthy. Perhaps in Italy the women are less capable of these things, so I am not giving you as a rule what I have just said.

1254a. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, September 3, 1650

Monsieur,

...Father Guérin, Procurator of Sainte-Geneviève, discovered the plan of the agents of the Bishop of Cahors¹ concerning the revocation of the commissioners. Thus, he knew about the arrival of these two agents, monks from Chancelade, who had put on black cassocks, which we tried to hide from him. He is threatening to have them put in prison. He has a date set for an audience with the Holy Father. The two Chancelade monks are being advised to return to France; imprisonment would be a humiliation for the Bishop and the ruination of the Chancelade affairs.

It is true that a monk who alters his habit is excommunicated, and his immediate superior cannot dispense him from that....

1255. - MONSIEUR LA FERRIÈRE-SORIN¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

The letters you kindly wrote to the late M. Granil,² one of our members, to find out from him in confidence the views of the Bishop of Nantes³ concerning your Daughters whom you were so good to give us, have apparently somewhat slowed down the charity you have always shown for this house and prevented the fulfillment of the promises you made to me personally. You had decided to give us two of your Daughters to relieve the six we have, when I took the liberty of writing to you in view of the caprice of certain persons of rank of this town who, either through self-

interest, in order to gain greater authority in the house by a change, or through love of novelties, expressed the desire for new orders. This was confirmed for me by your letters sent to the late M. Granil, which I shared with the Fathers.⁴ On their orders, I repeat to you the request they themselves had the honor of making to you in the letter, signed by their clerk, which they sent you together with one from me. In it they beg you to send them two of your Daughters to replace those who have died. They hope for this from your charity, in this season particularly, when the onset of autumn is beginning to increase the number of their patients. This would be a great consolation to them and would make them, and me in particular, even more obliged to you. I consider it an honor to be, Monsieur, your most humble and very grateful servant.

LA FERRIÈRE-SSORIN, one of the Fathers of the Poor
Nantes, September 4, 1650

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare Hospice, in Paris

1256. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, September 5, 1650

Monsieur,

I took the honor of writing to you in the last mail that Father Guérin, Procurator of Sainte-Geneviève, had discovered our plan. What is more, he found out about the new brief we had obtained and had a lawyer summoned to see to its revocation. We are working now to uphold it and prevent this.

I do not know by what well-disposed or ill-disposed person Father Guérin was informed that the Bishop of Cahors¹ was sending, or had sent, those two monks from his abbey in black habits, having given them a dispensation for that. If that is so, he intends to complain to the Pope and have them imprisoned. In addition to the insult, this would ruin His Excellency's reputation here and would cause him absolutely to lose his case, which he does not yet wish to prosecute by contentious means.

I have also been notified that Father Guérin has a date set for an audience with His Holiness about this matter. This is a great concern to these monks, who would like to be back in France. They are being advised to make a hasty departure in order to avoid these inconveniences, but they fear displeasing His Excellency in so doing.

This, Monsieur, is all I have to write you for now, begging you to do me the honor of believing me to be always, Monsieur, your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

VITET

I almost forgot [to tell you] that they say here that a monk who alters his habit is excommunicated and the immediate Superior cannot give a dispensation in this case. Please do not reply before being informed of the final decision we will take.

1257. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

September 9, 1650

Yes, with all my heart, Monsieur, I am praying and will have others pray that God will make known to you His Will as to whether the Company should remain in Sturla¹ or leave. Let us allow Him to act. There is too much agitation about the matter in Rome, and you have too many strong adversaries to be able to stay in that place, unless God Himself keeps you there. If He does not, it will be a sign that this establishment is not for us, for you accepted it only on a trial basis and out of sheer condescension to the Cardinal². Let us please remain in a state of great indifference so that, whatever the outcome, it may find us well disposed to accept it. I beg you, Monsieur, to ask God to grant us this with regard to all things of this world.

As to what you wrote me about finding less submission in members of the Company than in those non-members who worked with you, I can tell you, Monsieur, that people usually like novelty, and those men, who have not yet given a mission, nor even observed one being given, and the same for the other functions of the Company, have found them so beautiful and useful that they enjoyed taking part in them. They willingly took orders from the Superior because he understood things better than they did. This, however, is transitory; they do not keep it up but back out, as you are beginning to see.

In the past, a number of priests from Paris used to go to work with us in the rural areas, but now that the novelty has worn off, scarcely anyone comes. Happy the Missionaries who will persevere in a service that is so hard for them but so profitable for the neighbor! If your men grow weary of the work or balk at obedience, you must bear with them. Get what you can gently from them. True, it is good to be firm in attaining your goal, but use appropriate, attractive, and agreeable means.

The Brothers are very wrong to object to the fact that they are being asked to render an account of their administration, for this is being done not because of any distrust but because good order and the customs of the Company require it. They themselves should offer to do so. I ask you, Monsieur, to accustom them to render an account daily to the procurator of the house, and he in turn should do the same once a month to the Superior.

1258. - TO MOTHER MARIE-AGNÈS LE ROY¹

Paris, September 9, 1650

Dear Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Just two days ago I wrote you about your return. I told you, among other things, that I doubted it would be safe but that I would find out about this from M. Le Tellier,² as I did when you set out on your journey. Now, M. Le Roy, his first commissioner, whom you know well, has assured a trustworthy person who has just written to me that your safety is guaranteed for the return, if you leave as soon as

you receive this letter or immediately after. If you wait any longer, there will be no guarantee.³

I can provide you with an escort as far as Amiens, like the one you had when you left. When you get to Amiens, we will find some way to have you return safely. Therefore, dear Mother, I ask you to drop everything and leave as soon as possible. I am sure your presence is very useful where you are and that this will cause your friends and relatives, and particularly our dear Sisters, to protest loudly, but you are greatly needed in your dear house here, where all your Sisters are asking for you with inexpressible urgency. For this reason, dear Mother, I ask you once again to come as soon as possible. You have only to arrange whatever you think fitting for the adjustment and good order of your dear family there, and you can rest assured that our dear Mother Superior⁴ will carry out your orders exactly.

You will find your family increased to four by the person of Mademoiselle de Longueville,⁵ and perhaps by Madame de Saint-Pierre from Reims, her natural sister.⁶ Our dear Sister Assistant can hardly wait for your return. I ask Our Lord to be Himself your guide. I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I renew here the offer of my perpetual obedience to Madame Le Roy⁷ and all her dear family and most humbly entreat our dear Sister Superior to excuse me for being unable to write to her. I have a great deal of business to attend to, but I am setting it aside to make the visitation of our dear house in the city; I am writing you this from its parlor and am using their seal. I most humbly greet all our dear Sisters also and recommend myself to their prayers and yours.

Addressed: Mother Superior of the Visitation nuns of the faubourg Saint-Jacques in Paris, presently in Mons 1259. - TO ONE OF THE KING'S CHAPLAINS

[Between 1643 and 1652]¹

Monsieur,

I received your letter with all the respect due you and all the esteem and gratitude merited by the grace God has put in your loving heart. Given man's natural inclination to exalt himself, only God alone could have given you the light and impulse to do the contrary. He will give you also the strength to put them into practice and thereby to accomplish what is most pleasing to Him.

By so doing, Monsieur, you will be following the rule of the Church, which does not permit us to put ourselves forward for ecclesiastical dignities, particularly for the office of bishop. You will also be imitating the Son of God who, though He was the Eternal Priest, did not come on His own to exercise that role but waited until His Father sent Him, although He had been so long awaited as the Expectation of all Nations.² You will give great edification to the present age where, unfortunately, there are few persons who

do not ignore this rule and example. If God is pleased to call you to this sacred service, Monsieur, you will have the consolation of having a true vocation because you will not have entered it by human means. You will be aided in it by special graces from God, which are attached to a legitimate vocation, and will help you bear fruits of an apostolic life, worthy of a blessed eternity. Experience has shown this in prelates who have made no move to have themselves named bishops, and whom God clearly blesses both personally and in their leadership.

Lastly, Monsieur, you will have no regrets at the hour of death for having taken upon yourself the responsibility of a diocese which may then seem unbearable. I cannot indeed write this without thanking God for distancing you from the dangerous pursuit of such a burden and for disposing you not even to seek it. This is a grace that cannot be sufficiently prized or cherished.

1260. - TO CARDINAL MAZARIN

September 14, 1650

Eminence,

The Bishop of Mâcon,¹ a very fine Prelate, is suffering now from liver disease. He has resigned his diocese in favor of Abbé de Chandénier,² subject to the King's good pleasure. This good Abbé is one of the best men he could choose in the kingdom. Great pressure has been necessary to make him accept the choice this good Bishop has made of him. He is a priest and has the other qualifications required by this dignity. Everyone hopes he will one day render as much service to God and His Church as did his uncle, the late Cardinal de La Rochefoucauld.

This diocese is worth only eight to nine thousand livres. The good Prelate has expressed the desire that I give testimony to Your Eminence of his intention and the merit of the person he is choosing. I do so, Monseigneur, all the more willingly because I feel you will do a work pleasing to God and useful to His Church, and will meet the approval of the public, if you choose to speak to the Queen in his favor so that His Majesty will accept this resignation. I beg you most humbly, Monseigneur, to approve this along with the renewal I make to Your Eminence of the offer of my perpetual obedience. I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord]....

1261. - TO BERNARD CODOING,¹ SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU

September 14, 1650

If your next-to-last letter grieved me because of the thoughts you had about Messieurs...and..., your last one has no less consoled me, since I saw that their retreat has given you reason to have high hopes for them. I can assure you that they are two of the best priests in the Company, whom I would trust as much as anyone. I speak advisedly, from what people have told me about them and from my own experience of their virtue, which, in the case of the first man, goes back some fifteen or twenty years.

Suspicious are often deceiving. We lost a fine worker, who left us because someone was suspicious of him without much foundation in a situation very similar to the one of which you suspect these men. In the name of God, Monsieur, respect them highly and have confidence in them. I tell you again that I would be willing to trust them as I trust myself. If you take my word for it, you will put them back in their duties and rely on their conduct and my word.

1262. - TO JEAN BARREAU,¹ CONSUL, IN ALGIERS

Paris, September 16, 1650

My very dear Brother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was deeply grieved to learn of your present situation, which is a source of affliction for the whole Company and a source of great merit before God for you, since you are suffering, although you are innocent.² Thus, I have experienced a consolation surpassing all consolation at the meekness of spirit with which you have accepted this blow and at the good use you are making of your imprisonment. I thank God for it and do so with a sentiment of incomparable gratitude.

Our Lord, who descended from heaven to earth to redeem men, was captured and imprisoned by them. What a happiness, dear Brother, to be treated in almost the same way! You left here, going, as it were, from a place of joy and rest, to assist the slaves in Algiers, and lo and behold you have become like them, although in a different way. The more our actions resemble those our noble Savior did and suffered in this life, the more pleasing they are to Him. Since your imprisonment so closely honors His, He also honors you with His patience; I pray He will confirm you in it.

I assure you that your letter touched me so deeply that I decided to have it read in the refectory after the present ordination, in order to edify the members of this Community. I already shared with them the oppression you are enduring and the calm acceptance of your heart, in order to incite them to ask God for your release and to thank Him for your freedom of spirit. Continue, dear Brother, to maintain yourself in holy submission to the divine good pleasure. In this way Our Lord's promise will be fulfilled in you, that not a single hair of yours will be lost and that in your patience you will possess your soul.³

For our part,⁴ we shall do all in our power to assist you by our continued prayers and sacrifices for your intention, even with the Queen, when she comes here. At present the Court is in Bordeaux trying to quell some of the unrest of these wretched times.

In the future it will be well for you to write to the Comte de Brienne from time to time to give him an account of matters which concern your office, not only while you are in a state of suffering but after you have been released. I shall write to him before his return to find out what can be done for you.

We are putting off sending you a priest, for fear lest he be captured and your suffering be increased by seeing him suffer. When the storm has passed, we will have him leave. We were thinking of M. Philippe Le Vacher, so I had written to M. Almérás to get the necessary faculties for him, which he did. Shortly after that, since the Sacred Congregation had made his brother Vicar Apostolic of the Bishop of Carthage in Tunis, it agreed to grant the same favor to M. Philippe for Algiers and to write to the Bishop for his approval. We are still not sure whether, in fact, we shall send you M. Le Vacher because he is needed in Marseilles, since he is very gifted in seminary work. In addition, certain other difficulties are causing us to look at some other men and to choose one of the most suitable among them. We shall see.

Take good care of yourself and spare nothing for that purpose. Remain at peace. Put yourself firmly in the hands of Our Lord and recall what He endured in life and in death. "The servant is not greater than his master," He said. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."⁵ "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."⁶ According to these divine words, dear Brother, you are blessed. Rejoice, then, in Him who is glorified in you and who will be your strength in the measure that you are faithful to Him. This is what I earnestly ask of Him. And I entreat you, by the love you have for the Company, to ask Him for the grace for all of us to carry our crosses well, be they great or small, so that we may be worthy children of that cross, which begot us in His love, and by which we hope to praise Him and possess Him forever in the eternity of the ages. Amen.

I thought I was finished,⁷ but I have to tell you that we are well, thank God, and that the Company is blessed in its work everywhere, not only in its progress but also in the salvation and edification of the neighbor.

We hope to make three new establishments soon; one in Périgueux, one in Picardy, and the other in Poland. The last one will be in the springtime because the roads are difficult in winter. Others are also presenting themselves, but they are still only in the early stages.

I think I informed you of the death of good M. Gondrée,⁸ who had gone with M. Nacquart⁹ to the island of Madagascar in the East Indies. Since then, we have received a report of their journey, the situation of the country, the customs of the inhabitants, their dispositions in accepting our holy religion, and the happy beginnings of this mission. It is very consoling to read this. I hope to send you a copy of it as soon as possible, as I now send you in this letter my heart, which is filled with affection and esteem for yours.

Adieu, dear Brother. I am, in the love of God, your most humble and affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

O my dear Brother, how happy are you to be in the state of the beatitude which declares blessed those who suffer persecution for justice sake! I shall henceforth consider you among the blessed of this world!¹⁰

At the bottom of the first page: Brother Barreau

1263. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[Around September 1650]¹

Here is a piece of news which has grieved us; it is the death of good Monsieur Gondrée in Madagascar. On the other hand, however, we have as much or even more reason to rejoice in his happiness, of which there is no cause for doubt. He died in complete renunciation of all things of this world and in the active pursuit of the pure glory of God, after living in remarkable innocence and the practice of all the virtues which make not only a good Christian but also a perfect priest.

1264. - TO GUILLAUME CORNAIRE, IN LE MANS

September 20, 1650

I praise God for the calmness of spirit with which you received the prohibition of the Administrators¹ and the good use you make of the contradictions you are encountering. I am sure they are being stirred up against you by the evil spirit, the enemy of the good you are doing, but all he will get from that is shame. Say fearlessly, like Saint Ignatius the Martyr, when he was being persecuted, "Now I am beginning to be a disciple of Jesus Christ." I certainly hope that the persecution you are undergoing for such a holy work as yours will cause you to merit the grace of bearing with other greater trials, if God in His Providence allows them to befall you, which He might do for your greater sanctification. I recommend you and your crosses to Him with all my heart, Monsieur, asking Him to strengthen you in order to enable you to carry them to the top of the mountain of your perfection, or to be Himself your heavenly Simon, helping you to carry them as the Cyrenean helped Him to carry His.²

I think your resolution to continue the administration of the sacraments to the sick and to have an instruction in the hospital on solemn feasts and catechism on Sundays is a very good idea. It is worthy of a true child of the Gospel, but you will do even more if, despite the prohibition, you do not stop visiting the patients. You were in the habit of going to see them every day to console them in their afflictions and encourage them to be patient; please continue to do so. Teach some to make acts of resignation, love of God, and hope in His mercy; prompt others to contrition and amendment. In a word, prepare them for a happy death, if they are dying, and to lead a good life, if God should leave them longer in this world.

When this work is done over a long period of time, it is true that it becomes tiresome to those who do not reflect on its importance, but for you, Monsieur, who know its merit and who, thanks be to God, have the salvation of the poor at

heart, it must be a boundless source of consolation, as well as an incomparable happiness. Until now you have had good results with thousands of persons through this charitable activity, procuring eternal life to so many souls who have passed through your hands. Seigneur Dieu! Monsieur, could anything in this world deter you from, or even give you a distaste for, a service so precious in the sight of God?

How many high-ranking persons of both sexes in Paris do you think there are who visit, instruct, and exhort the sick daily at the Hôtel-Dieu, and bring such admirable devotedness and perseverance to their work? It is a fact that people who have not seen this have a hard time believing it, and those who do see it are most edified by it because this life is indeed the life of saints, and of great saints, who serve Our Lord in His members in the best way possible. May God be pleased to draw His own glory from your vocation to this service, since He has chosen you from thousands of others and given you great grace to make a success of it!

1265. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[Around September¹ 1650²]

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

By decree of July 9, 1648, the Sacred Congregation granted to Charles Nacquart, prefect of the Mission, and his companion, Nicolas Gondrée, both priests of the Congregation of the Mission, the faculties of Apostolic Missionaries to Saint-Laurent Island, commonly called Madagascar, to work for the conversion of unbelievers in that country. Upon their arrival on the island, they were welcomed by Andian Ramach,³ King of the region where they disembarked. He promised to return to the Catholic faith, after the arrival of other priests and the construction of a church there. Within six months they had already baptized fifty-three unbelievers, including three adults, and converted five heretics from among those who had gone there from Europe.

In the meantime, Nicolas Gondrée has died, leaving Charles Nacquart, prefect of the Mission, all alone. The latter writes that the harvest is abundant and there is much work to be done in the Lord's vineyard, and he asks for the help of other companions, all the more so because he is the only priest on this entire island. For these reasons, Father Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, proposes to the Sacred Congregation that other members be sent. Should it give its consent, he will send the names of these men⁴ to have them approved and the usual faculties granted, and he will consider this as an outstanding favor from Your Eminences.⁵

Whom God, etc.

On the back: Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide for Father Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1266. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

[La Fère, September 26, 1650]¹

The soup provided with alms from Paris for the sick refugees in Guise,² Ribemont,³ La Fère,⁴ and Ham⁵ has saved the lives of more than two thousand poor persons. Without this relief, they would have been turned out of those towns, where they had taken refuge, and died in the fields without any spiritual or corporal assistance.

Most of the nuns from La Fère and the other towns acknowledge that the help given them has saved their lives. They pray constantly for the persons who have sent or procured these blessings for them.

1267. - CARDINAL MAZARIN TO SAINT VINCENT

September 29, 1650

Monsieur,

I received the letter you wrote me¹ concerning the resignation the Bishop of Mâcon has made in favor of the Abbé de Chandénier. I spoke to the Queen about it, and she thinks it advisable that the question be deferred until our return to Paris. I will tell you the reasons for this soon, I hope, since the Bordeaux affair is just now being settled.² I am writing along these lines to the above-mentioned Bishop, and I ask you please to have the enclosed letter delivered to him; it is a reply to his letter.

Rest assured of my affection and believe that I am....

1268. - TO JACQUES CHIROYE, IN LUÇON

October 2, 1650

I was well aware, Monsieur, that only prompt compliance with the orders of Providence and great magnanimity toward the family was to be expected of you, which you have demonstrated in turning over your office of Superior to M. Lucas¹ and, for the edification of the others, subjecting yourself to him who had been subject to you. I have been told how you handled this, and it could not have been done better nor more in keeping with my desires.

I have heard, too, that all of you are disposed to continue always and in all things to give evidence to one another of sincere, mutual love, for which I thank God. I ask Him that you may always be only of one heart and one mind. I expect this of you, and M. Lucas leads me to hope for the same from him. I experienced a special consolation from your letter at the vivid recollection of the goodness of your heart, which is, as you know, so dear to my soul.

1268a. - FATHER VITET TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

I greatly regret the news I received previously from the Bishop of Cahors¹ that we have been discovered here. We are obliged to leave as secretly as possible. Father Guérin² has planted so many spies everywhere that I do not know how we have remained so long without being recognized and pointed out, as we have been recently. I have been told that Father Guérin has registered his complaint with the Pope. This has forced us to make a final decision, and we have been advised to withdraw. I am leaving some very good reports with an upright, honorable man, who is taking our affair to heart

and who has been of great service to us. He is the Assistant of the French Augustinian Fathers.

If God grants me the grace of seeing you, I am sure you will say that our journey was not in vain. I shall not write to you again from here because we are leaving this week. I beg you, Monsieur, to continue your protection and benevolence in our regard and do me the favor of believing that I am, Monsieur, your most humble, obedient and grateful servant.

J. VITET

Rome, October 3, 1650

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, in Paris

1269. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

October 4, 1650

You ask me how you should act with quick-tempered, touchy, critical persons. My reply is that prudence should dictate this. In some cases it is wise to go along with them so as to be all to all, as the Apostle says;¹ in others, it is good to confront them gently and with moderation; in still others, hold firm against their manner of acting. This must always be done, however, with God in view and in the way you think most conducive to His glory and the edification of your family.

1270. - TO ANTOINE LUCAS,¹ SUPERIOR, IN LE MANS

Paris, October 6, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The bearer is a fine young man, thirteen years of age, from an upright family. He is entering your seminary and will pay fifty écus for his room and board. He has been recommended to me by a person who has been a friend of mine for thirty years, a very honorable man worthy of being served. I ask you, Monsieur, to admit him and to give special attention to him, his studies, and his piety, as his relatives desire. In addition to the merit you will have for this before God, you will be doing an act which will be a great consolation to me and a gratification to my good friend, M. Coqueret,² who recommended him to me. I ask you also to write to me about him every three months. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lucas, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Le Mans, in Le Mans

1271. - TO CARDINAL ANTONIO BARBERINI,¹ PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

Most Eminent Prince,

For a long time now my obligation of gratitude has demanded that I should thank my Most Eminent Lord Cardinal to the best of my ability for the favors granted by the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide to members of our Congregation living in Rome. Until today, the consideration of my insignificance and of your eminent dignity has

hindered me from doing so. I now presume to ask Your Eminence to accept the perpetual offer I make of myself, the most unworthy Superior of the Congregation of the Mission, and of all the members of our Congregation, as your most faithful and devoted servants.

I earnestly entreat you to add a new favor to those already granted, namely, the concession of the faculties necessary for two Irish priests of our Congregation,² who wish to go to the Hebrides Islands to work for the salvation of souls, if this is agreeable to the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. These men are more qualified for this task than others, not only because of their knowledge, uprightness, and zeal for souls, for which they are to be highly commended, but also because most of the people of these islands speak Gaelic, and there are no other priests there.

If this mission meets with the approval of Your Eminence and of the Sacred Congregation, they will await your mandate and depart as soon as it arrives. In the meantime, I and our Congregation ask God to preserve Your Eminence for many years to come for the good of the universal Church, and to make me forever, Eminence, your most devoted and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, most unworthy Superior of the Congregation of the Mission
Paris, the nones of October,³ 1650⁴
1272. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, October 13, 1650
Monsieur,

What I reported to you on the confirmation of the union of the benefices I made to our seminary is not so that you will follow my opinion, etc. I have always believed, as you had informed me, that our seminary would be a nursery for this whole area, and my own experience has borne this out. Just recently four fine priests have been taken from me. My diocese is suffering from this and will feel its effects for many years to come....

You were quite right to assure the Bishops, who signed the letter¹ you mentioned to me, that I would sign it. Yes, I can assure you of this and will do so most willingly, with my own blood, if necessary, and will always be ready to combat that evil doctrine² everywhere palam et publice.³ So, please send me that letter and allow me to share it confidentially with the Bishops of Sarlat⁴ and Périgueux,⁵ since I am sure they will sign it most willingly. It is advisable to have it signed by as many prelates as possible because I know for a fact that [people] in Rome believe that most of the Bishops in France are tainted with this error, and this keeps the Pope from acting. I trust that the Bishops of Bazas⁶ and Condom⁷ will also sign it. As for the Bishop of Pamiers,⁸ he is totally under the influence of the Bishop of Alet.⁹ If you think it proper to write to him about it, I think neither will refuse to sign.

The peace of Bordeaux is concluded, by the grace of God, and the soldiers who were in that area have withdrawn.

This morning I sent orders for the visitation of my diocese; please God I will leave for this purpose on Sunday morning. I need the assistance of your prayers that God may be pleased to give His blessing to it. I ask this of you; I ask you also to send some of your men as soon as possible to the Bishop of Périgueux,¹⁰ since he has requested them, even if there are only three of them to begin with. It will not take him long to ask for others.

I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, Bishop of Cahors

1273. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

October 14, 1650

I am certainly anxious about the illness of M...and quite surprised that he is asking to go to Milan, as if there were no good doctors and surgeons in Genoa. If he persists, tell him you will write to me about it, as I have already asked you to do. In the meantime, please let me know the nature, symptoms, and circumstances of his ailment so I can consult someone in Paris about it. If it is a growth, he should be careful not to let the surgeons touch it; it is better for him to bear patiently with it than to put himself in danger of a greater evil. There is a man in this city with one almost as big as his head, and he wraps a scarf around it. The city lieutenant came to see me yesterday all upset; he has a little one on his neck and tried to get rid of it by having a small incision made and a lot of flesh cut away from it several times. This only made it worse, to the point that it is now feared it may become cancerous--at least he is very apprehensive about this. He told me this in secret because no one but two or three of his people know about it. Sometimes God chooses to send us such infirmities and they must be endured. Those who do not have similar ones are not exempt from others, either in body or mind.

I see clearly that you need great strength to bear the difficult trial the lack of mortification of others causes you. This is your heavy cross, and I often ask Our Lord either to lighten it, if He so chooses, or to strengthen you. I am confident He will do so, seeing you submit humbly to the burden of your office. The thought of what Our Lord Himself suffered from His disciples will especially encourage you, for the more our trials resemble His, the more pleasing we are to Him. If I did not find consolation in this, where would I be?

As for the retreat M...wants to make with the Discalced Carmelites, you did very well to dissuade him from it. Please hold firm, not only in that but in all matters that are not in line with our customs, to prevent anything from being done contrary to them. If someone pressures you too much, as M...is doing, ask him to be patient and tell him that, since you cannot give him the permission he is asking, you will write to the General of the Company about it, and

then actually do so. In that way, while the person is waiting for the reply, time passes and often the temptation disappears. I shall write to those persons to ask them to stop being singular and to conform to common practices. If they do not, but, on the contrary, follow their own desires against your will in an important matter, such as going to make a retreat outside the Company, in that case, if they return to the house, do not take them back. For one man we will lose to maintain good order for the honor of God, His Providence will give us two more. This strictness will put some fear in the others so they will not get carried away by such liberties.

1274. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

[1650]¹

Seeing a large crowd of sick people everywhere moves us to great compassion. Many--in fact, a very large number--are suffering from dysentery and fever. Others are covered with scabies, purpura, growths, and running sores. Many are bloated, some in the head, others in the abdomen, others all over their body. These diseases are due to the fact that, for almost the entire year, they have eaten nothing but grass and spoiled fruit; some ate bran bread so bad that even the dogs would hardly eat it. All we hear are pitiful laments. They cry out to us for bread and, sick as they are, drag themselves two or three leagues through the rain and over bad roads to get a little soup.

Many die in the villages without confession and the last sacraments, and no one will even bury them after their death. This is so true that only three days ago, when we went to visit the sick in the village of Lesquielle,² near Landrecies,³ we found in one house a person who had died for lack of assistance, and his body was half devoured by animals who had entered the house. Is it not a terrible sorrow to see Christians, abandoned there in this way during life and after death?

1275. - TO POPE INNOCENT X

Most Holy Father,

The favorable reception of the homage rendered to Your Holiness and to your Most Eminent Cardinal Vicar of Rome by the priests of the Congregation of the Mission, prostrate in body and spirit, and the benevolence with which you have recognized the works to which they devote themselves untiringly, make them and especially me, their Superior, most obedient and devoted sons of the Holy See. Deeply moved by this benevolence, and considering and recognizing more clearly the duties of my office, I have always cherished the hope of prostrating myself at the feet of Your Holiness to profess my obedience. I have often sought ways and means to carry out this plan, but I see daily that my infirmities make it more difficult. Taking, therefore, the only possible way, I come by means of this letter to prostrate myself at the feet of Your Holiness with all reverence and humility, and I honor you as the Vicar of

Christ, giving you, as I am bound to do, an account of the works and state of the said Congregation.

Most Holy Father, the purpose of our Institute....¹

VINCENT DEPAUL, unworthy Superior of the Congregation of the Mission

Paris, eve of the nones of November,² 1650

1276. - TO CARDINAL PAMPHILI¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Prince,

The promotion of Your Eminence to the dignity of Cardinal and the choice our Most Holy Father the Pope has made of you for the administration of public affairs are most certain proofs of your very great merit and the supreme excellence of your qualifications. In consideration of this, I presume by this letter to offer my most respectful regards to Your Eminence and to congratulate you. At the same time, trusting in your exceeding kindness, I humbly ask you to extend your gracious protection to the little Congregation of the Mission, approved by the Apostolic See and endowed by it with many favors, which enable it to continue its functions freely.

And, that Your Eminence may become acquainted with our ministry and way of life, I wish to explain it briefly. Thus, knowing our Congregation, you will be able to make use of it more readily in accordance with your absolute right over all of us and over myself in particular, its Superior.

The end of our Institute is the salvation of poor people in rural areas. Therefore, we go about villages and towns to preach the Gospel, hear general confessions, settle quarrels and disputes, and provide temporal and spiritual assistance for the sick poor. This is our work in the country.

At home we give spiritual retreats and receive the ordinands into our house for the ten days preceding the Ember days to prepare them for Holy Orders. In seminaries we instruct clerics in good morals, ecclesiastical knowledge, and sacred rites.

Besides our members working in France, we have some who do the same work in Italy and Ireland and others who assist and care for those who are held in chains in Barbary. Some have gone as far as Saint-Laurent Island, commonly called Madagascar. This island is about six hundred Italian miles long.

This is a summary of our functions and ministries. If you, Most Eminent Prince, deign to extend your protection over us, we shall, with the help of God's grace, gather even more abundant fruits.

I am the most humble and obedient servant of Your Eminence.

Paris, eve of the nones of November,² 1650

1277. - TO CARDINAL D'ESTE¹

Most Serene and Most Eminent Prince,

I have learned from letters from our men in Rome that Your Highness receives them with great kindness, accords

them your benevolence, and has obtained many favors from the Sacred Congregation for our men living in Barbary and on the island of Madagascar. These benefits, which entitle you to our eternal gratitude, should demand that I go to Rome in person to express my thanks, but my advanced age and numerous infirmities prevent me from doing so. I wish, therefore, to express my gratitude, by letter at least, and to assure you that I and our whole Congregation will never forget these benefits but will pray to the infinitely good and almighty God for the preservation and prosperity of Your Eminence. I renew to you the offer of myself and of the said Congregation, which belongs to you for so many reasons, and over which as over me you will have perpetual right and authority.

I am the most humble and obedient servant of Your Most Serene Eminence.

VINCENT DEPAUL, unworthy Superior of the
Congregation of the Mission
Paris, eve of the nones of November,² 1650
1278. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR¹ IN SEDAN
Paris, November 5, 1650
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I think, Monsieur, that you mentioned to me once before the project you have recently been reconsidering. At that time, after the reasons prompting you to become a C[arthusian] had been thoroughly discussed, they gave way to those requiring you to remain in the state in which God has placed you. And because, after that, you indicated to me on several occasions that you felt moved to devote yourself to the salvation of distant peoples, I have offered you to Our Lord for this purpose, since the opportunity has presented itself. Furthermore, I have sent your name to Rome, from where approval must come. I did this after the Nuncio here,² to whom I first suggested you, gave his approval, in accordance with the authority granted him by Rome. So then, you are now bound to God's loving Providence for this purpose.

The reason I did not inform you of this sooner is that we are not sure the ship will leave at the end of January, as was said, and I know that I do not have to stand on ceremony with you. This place is the East Indies and M. Nacquart³ is there. It is an island 350 leagues long called Madagascar or Saint-Laurent Island, which is below the equator and three or four degrees this side of the Tropic of Capricorn.

I am sending you the report M. Nacquart made to me about it. O Monsieur, how consoled you will be at the prospects of such good results! Many Carthusians would like to go and could do so, or at least it may be said that it would be most desirable for them to leave their cloister for such an important work. We plan to send three or four priests and two Brothers there and are beginning to assemble their modest baggage for that purpose. We have here a young

Breton, who came from there and entered the Company with the idea of returning. He is a very fine young man.⁴

Well now, Monsieur, do not give another thought to the C[arthusians]; Our Lord is calling you to more distant places. He will accompany you there and, through you and with you, will continue the mission He began while on earth. O Monsieur, what a happiness to be chosen by God for one of the most important works to which a priest can be called!

I shall not say any more to you about this; Our Lord will tell you the rest. I am, in His love and in that of His holy Mother, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

You could have someone read the report in the refectory; I ask M. Coglée⁵ to see to this. I embrace your community, prostrate in spirit at its feet, and I recommend myself to its prayers.

Addressed: Monsieur Dufour, Priest of the Mission, in Sedan 1279. - TO A BISHOP¹

[Between 1643 and 1652]²

Your letters, Excellency, have filled me with such respect for your sacred person and with such a desire to obey you that I venture to say I have almost continually before my eyes the order you gave me, and I hardly ever meet the person in question without mentioning it to him. Yet I know, Excellency, that you are as far above your opinion of yourself as a mountain is above a valley. Since, however, I cannot serve you as you wish, except by doing what you desire, I shall try to do so in this matter and on any other occasion that may arise.

1280. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

[1650]¹

We have visited the poor of this place and of the other villages in this valley,² where the distress we have witnessed surpasses anything you have been told. I begin with the churches: they have been profaned, the Blessed Sacrament trampled underfoot, chalices and ciboria carried off, baptismal fonts broken, and vestments stolen. As a result, there are in this small region more than twenty-five churches where Holy Mass cannot be celebrated.

Most of the inhabitants have died in the woods, while the enemy³ occupied their homes. Others have returned only to end their days there because all we see are sick people everywhere. We have more than twelve hundred of them, besides six hundred just dragging themselves around, scattered over more than thirty devastated villages. They are lying on the ground and in half-demolished, roofless houses, with no assistance of any kind. We find the living mingled with the dead, and little children alongside their dead mothers.

1281. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

[Saint-Quentin, 1650]¹

How can we come to the aid of seven or eight thousand poor persons who are starving to death, of twelve hundred

refugees, of three hundred fifty sick persons, who can feed themselves with only soup and meat, of three hundred families of embarrassed poor from town and country? These people have to be helped in secret so as to save many young girls from final disaster and to avoid what almost happened the other day to one young man. Driven by need, he tried to stab himself to death and would have committed this crime if someone had not rushed to prevent him from doing so. How can we provide for fifty priests who should be given food preferably to all others? The other day we found one in town dead in his bed, and we discovered that this happened because he did not dare to ask for the bare necessities of life.

1282. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[1650]¹

In several ruined towns the leading citizens are in dire need. The pallor of their faces gives ample testimony to this need, and they must be assisted in secret. The same applies to the impoverished nobility in rural areas who, having no bread and reduced to ruin, suffer in addition the shame of not daring to beg for what they need for survival. Furthermore, whom could they ask, since the misfortune of the war has distributed equal portions of misery everywhere?

What is more conducive to tears is that the poor people of these border areas not only lack bread, wood, linen, and blankets, but they have no pastors or spiritual assistance because most of the parish priests have died or are ill, and the churches are in ruins and pillaged. In the diocese of Laon alone there are about a hundred of them, where Holy Mass cannot be celebrated for want of vestments.

We do whatever we can, but this work is endless. In order to assist the more than thirteen hundred sick persons we have on our hands here in this canton, we have to come and go continually, exposed to the danger of roving bands.

Several monasteries of nuns are in a state of extreme poverty. They are suffering hunger and cold and will be forced either to die in their cloister or to break it and wander around in the world in search of something on which to live.

1283. - A PRIEST OF ORLÉANS TO SAINT VINCENT

For the love of God and of the Blessed Virgin, please grant me the privilege of another retreat in your house. All I do is yearn for this, and I hope that, when you realize why I want to make it again, I will obtain this grace from the mercy of God and your kindness. Certainly, Monsieur, when I think of the good sentiments conceived in your house, I am, as it were, beside myself with delight and can only hope that all priests might make these holy exercises, please God. If this were the case, we would not see all the bad example many are giving, to the great scandal of the Church.

1284. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

The mission given in Saint-Gilles was a complete success. No more disagreements, divisions, or lawsuits; thieves have given back what does not belong to them; the poor have received assistance; the Confraternity of Charity has taken care of the sick; and the faith of Catholics has been strengthened.

1285. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON

November 10, 1650

Madame,

Enclosed are two letters from M. Lambert;¹ one is addressed to you, Madame, and the other to me. Yours came in the last mail and mine in the one before it. When I saw what M. Lambert had to tell me about the prosecutions and new calumnies being alleged against us, and the excommunication they were going to have published, I sought the advice of M. Saveuses, Counselor in the Parlement,² regarding what we should do. He was of the opinion that we should send M. Codoing³ to Poitiers to appear before the Officialis⁴ and to testify in person so as to avoid the accusation that we had him leave town for fear of legal action. We did this deliberately so that he might not remain in Richelieu. I am also sending you, Madame, the letter that the Bishop of Poitiers⁵ did me the honor of writing to me.

I received the letter for you three days ago and intended to bring it to you myself but, since I cannot do so today, I am sending it to you. I am, Madame, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], your....

1286. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Between 1647 and 1660]¹

Most Honored Father,

For the love of God, I beg you to give me an appointment and tell me when I can talk to you so that, depending on this, I might take the time needed to attend to the matter I mentioned to you after dinner. I am afraid your charity will leave tomorrow. If you think you cannot afford this time before your departure, and you allow me to take the coach or borrow a carriage, I will go there for dinner, and could speak to you there.

I beg you to grant me these requests. I need this for the glory of God, for which He has granted me the mercy to be, Most Honored Father, your very grateful, though unworthy, daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1286a. - LOUIS EUDO DE KERLIVIO¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Pax Christi!

Monsieur,

I ask God to reward you for the care you have taken to provide our hospital with persons who, I hope, will run the establishment in good order for the assistance of the poor. We see already that things have begun well since the safe

arrival of Sisters Anne² and Geneviève³ on the sixth of this month, thank God.

The Vicar-General has shared with me the letter in which you expressed some fear that a difficulty might arise because of a person who has, until now, been in charge of the sick in this hospital. There will be no problem with this, Monsieur, and if that person cannot get along with the two Sisters, I shall have her leave the place, where I have full authority to arrange things as I wish. The matter can be taken care of all the more easily since she is a person of very low social class. From now on, Sister Anne will be in charge of everything.

The Vicar-General will have the honor of writing to you, if he has not already done so. Please believe, Monsieur, that I shall do all I can to help our good Sisters, particularly in what concerns their salvation. I hope God will grant me the necessary graces for this. Please ask Him to do so and to consider me, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant in O[ur] L[ord].

LOUIS EUDO, unworthy priest

Hennebont, November 22, 1650

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare, in Paris 1287. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
November 24, 1650

There is reason to thank God for the piety of that good senator who gave you alms so you would pray for him, and who so esteems your work that he wants to participate in the mission you are now giving. I do not know, Monsieur, if you and your men reflect sufficiently that people look upon you as servants of God and workers of the Gospel. I mean good servants, and that is why you are esteemed and assisted. As a matter of fact, God has seen fit that, since our services are useful to many persons, everyone approves them, but only when they are carried out in the spirit of Our Lord. Let us strive then, Monsieur, to enter into this spirit as much as possible. Let us remain firm in it so that the good reputation and results of the missions do not come to nothing but increase and improve for the good and the consolation of souls.

1288. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
November 26, 1650

I shall continue to recommend to the Company that they place your needs before God now that you have so many refugees and sick poor on your hands.¹ May it please His Goodness to strengthen you in the measure that your work increases! If your family redoubles its courage and fidelity for the good use of the common affliction and the consolation of the souls His Providence places in its path, this will be the means of drawing down blessings on the town and on yourselves. I certainly hope for this from the generous share of His charity Our Lord has given you.

If the town taxes you for the duty it is levying, do not refuse to contribute to it. In these urgent and unavoidable circumstances, excuses for being dispensed are not well received, and people may not fail to use pressure.

If you take my word for it, you will condescend to those who would like to have a burial service at the Capuchins, since there are more drawbacks to refusing this than to allowing it.

1289. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR, IN SEDAN
November 26, 1650

I never had any doubt about your entire submission to God and His orders, nor about the trust with which you honor me and of which I would be unworthy if I did not refer it, as I do, to God, who has given it to you. It is for His greater glory and your own sanctification that I dedicate to Him your life and zeal as often as I do my own.

I lovingly invoke His Holy Spirit upon you so that, animated by it, you will be able to pour His light and fruits into souls deprived of the assistance priests owe to them. Without this the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ would be ineffectual for them. Therefore, Monsieur, nurture carefully the charity He gives you for them. Be inflamed with zeal for their salvation, and keep alive your determination to go in search of the lost sheep in the Indies.¹ This is a great grace of God, and I thank Him for it. We shall rely upon it and consequently are preparing everything for that end. I will notify you a month in advance of the departure. God knows how warmly I shall then embrace you.

1290. - TO JACQUES CHIROYE, IN LUÇON
November 27, 1650

I am greatly consoled by the desire God has given you to do all you can for the union and good example of the family. I was right in saying that we should expect nothing less from you, Monsieur, since you have received from His Goodness a strong inclination toward cordiality, forbearance, and obedience, and have given yourself so totally to the service of Our Lord.

I praise Him a thousand times for the graces He daily bestows on your house through you. I certainly hope it will grow better and better because, if another is its head, you are still its heart. Continue then, Monsieur, to have for it the heart of a child, as well as that of a father, by respect and submission to the Superior and by the practice of the other virtues, which unite hearts and are characteristic of a true Missionary.

1291. - NICOLAS PAVILLON, BISHOP OF ALET, TO SAINT VINCENT
Monsieur,

Since the bearer of this letter, Monsieur de Ciron, Chancellor of the University of Toulouse,¹ is going to Paris and would like to have the honor of meeting you, I feel obliged to send you along with it a letter of recommendation of my own. He is a person notable not only for his

position, being the son and brother² of a President of the Parlement, but even more so for his virtue and exceptional piety. He is one of the most disinterested clergymen I know in this region and is very close to God. He also gives every indication of rendering great service to the Church.

He is going to Paris for some business that is important for the glory of God, as you will learn from him. I am sure that, once you know what it is, you will be favorable to him.

I ask you with all my heart, Monsieur, to have consideration for him and all that concerns him. In the meantime, please grant me the honor of believing me to be always, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

NICOLAS, B[ishop] of Alet

Toulouse, November 30, 1650

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

1292. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

December 2, 1650

I praise God for inspiring you to have M. Richard¹ preach and for blessing his sermons. We are beginning to recognize our mistake in the past of not giving our young men enough practice, either here or in the other houses. The result was that the older men wore themselves out and only much later were the young ones formed. So, from now on, Monsieur, it will be well for us to have them work in all areas. Please do so with your men: have them do the preaching and catechizing in the country, and give them practice in all our functions, even at home. In this way, through experience they will be formed adequately, will be encouraged, and will be capable of rendering service to God.

Our past ordinations have always been directed by one of our older men, but this time we have decided to put M. Duport,² who is new, in charge and to entrust the first class to two young priests. One of them has been a priest only a month or two and the other for two years. We will not stop there; from now on, I hope to set everyone to work early, although gradually and prudently. We are in great need of workers and will never have enough, if we do not form some.

1293. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

December 4,¹ 1650

I have no doubt about the Governor's² deep concern for the service of the King and the town. Everyone is aware of it, and his leadership is considered one of the best in the kingdom. We would be fortunate if we had similar zeal for the glory of Jesus Christ.

I hope that your disposition for holy obedience will obtain for you the graces you think you need to guide the family and the parish well. Let yourself be led by Our Lord; He will govern all things through you. Put your trust in Him and, following His example, always act humbly,

graciously, and in good faith. You will see that all will go well.

I sympathize with you in your heavy labors, which are increasing even as your own resources are diminishing through illness outside and inside your community. God is doing all that, but you can rest assured that He will not leave you with such a burden on your hands, without bearing the weight of it Himself. He will be your strength and reward for the extraordinary services you are rendering Him in this emergency situation. Three can do more than ten when Our Lord puts His hand to things, and He always does so when He takes away the means of doing otherwise.

We cannot send you any men, but we are striving to assist you with our prayers. We have prayed in common and privately for the preservation of your sick men, especially for M. Dufour, who is in danger. Mon Dieu! Monsieur, how anxious I am about him and how I fear losing such a good servant of God, if only for the souls he is gaining for Jesus Christ! This thought should suffice to commend him to your care, much better than I could ever do. Besides, I know that your love for him is so compassionate that nothing can be added to what you are doing for him. Please do the same for yourself, taking care of your own health for the service of God and the consolation of the afflicted.

You ask me if a local Superior can, on his own authority, remove the officers in his house from their position. Yes, for those he has appointed, but not others--the Assistant, for example--who have been given to him by the General or the Visitor.³

1294. - CARDINAL D'ESTE TO SAINT VINCENT
December 4, 1650

Because of your merits and your zeal for all that concerns the service of God and the spread of the holy faith, I shall always be especially prompt in doing whatever is in my power to please you and your Congregation.

The services I have rendered you up until now are few and are as nothing compared to the desire I have to do much more. The marks of affection and gratitude which your letter of November 4 has conveyed to me increase this desire even more and will make more precious the occasions I will have to show you that I am....

Addressed: Father Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Congregation of the Barbary missions

1295. - JEAN DEHORGNY¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
Castiglione,² December 1650

I have attended all the exercises of the mission being given in this parish and jointly for eight or nine neighboring ones. The people come very regularly to the sermons and catechism classes and keep the confessors busy all the time. It must be acknowledged that they are second to none of those in other regions but rather surpass them in certain things. Two people living together openly in concubinage, moved to repentance, have made amends publicly

in church during the sermon, in the presence of a very large congregation, and several usurers have committed themselves in writing, before a notary public, to make restitution of all they unjustly exacted from the poor people to whom they had lent their money.

The Confraternity of Charity has been established in this parish and in all the others mentioned above.

The Superior of this mission gives a conference every Monday to ten or twelve pastors from the surrounding areas. I was present for one of these conferences; everything went very well. It can be hoped that they and their people will profit greatly from this.

1296. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

December 1650

Monsieur,

My Officialis¹ has orders to follow your advice about requesting the evocation.² Since you do not think it expedient to do this before three months' time, he will put it off, not only for that length of time but for as long as you judge it advisable. Meanwhile, I thank you most humbly for the care you so kindly took to urge Fathers Vitet and Parrot³ to make their retreat, which I think they need. I ask you to procure this charity for them and to make Father Vitet aware of his obligation to have that Grosbois decision rescinded.⁴

The Parlement⁵ has just issued a decree depriving me of the right to appoint the preacher, granting it instead to the municipal councillors. My predecessors and I have always had this privilege, and I still pay my share of pledge for it. This is just to tell you that I should never hope for any justice from this Parlement.

The Bishop of Magnac⁶ had asked me to allow one of the seminarians from my diocese to remain for a while in the seminary he had established in Magnac, Limousin,⁷ and that the year he spent there (because he has not yet received any sacred Order) be counted as the year spent in our Cahors Seminary. I told him I would permit him to stay there for the year but would discuss the rest with his brother, the Dean of Carennac. He wrote back that he was surprised at my refusal and asked me to let you and the Pastor of Saint-Sulpice⁸ make the decision on that.

I feel it my duty to tell you, however, that our synodal statutes require the clerics of my diocese to spend six months in our seminary before subdiaconate and six months before priesthood. For some years now, I have obliged them to spend an entire year there before subdiaconate, which is likewise done. You have before you a copy of the report of the Bishops' Conference held here about fifteen months ago. If you kindly take the trouble, you will see it stated that they shall remain there one year before the first sacred Order, and that those who have not yet established seminaries will send them to nearby ones.

Consider, after all that, whether I can dispense this man, causing a breach and precedent by sending him to a new seminary, as yet unformed, instead of to Cahors, which is flourishing so successfully. You know what I have written you about this, and the battles I had about getting the cantor of my Cathedral church dispensed. When he finally made up his mind to go through with it, I cannot tell you how piously he spent that time, to the satisfaction of everyone.

Nevertheless, if the Bishop of Magnac is unable to appreciate all these reasons, since he is a pious person whom I do not wish to offend, I ask you to make him understand that I will allow him to receive this cleric into the Magnac Seminary and keep him for one year. After that, if he is of service to them, they can submit a request to me, and I will transfer him to them completely so he can remain there permanently. In that case, I will give him dimissorial letters⁹ because I prefer to give him to them outright rather than to act in such violation of the regulations of my diocese.

I am, as always, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1297. - TO PHILIPPE LE VACHER, IN ALGIERS¹
[1652]²

I praise God that you have acted in the right way to have yourself acknowledged as Apostolic Missionary and Vicar-General of Carthage. If you have proceeded wisely in this, you should act incomparably more so in carrying out your office. Do not take a hard line against abuses, if you see that greater harm can come from this. Use gentle methods to get whatever good you can from priests and monks who are slaves, as well as from merchants and captives. Resort to severe measures only in extreme cases for fear lest the hardship they are already enduring in their state of captivity, joined to the strictness you might want to exercise in virtue of your authority, drive them to despair.

You are not responsible for their salvation, as you think. You have been sent to Algiers only to console afflicted souls, to encourage them to bear their sufferings, and to help them to persevere in our holy religion. That is your main concern and not the office of Vicar-General, which you have accepted only to the extent that it serves as a means to attain the aforementioned ends. It is impossible to carry it out in strict justice without increasing the sufferings of those poor people, nor almost without giving them grounds for losing patience and even being lost yourself. Above all, make no attempt to do away this soon with their customary practices, even if they are bad. The other day, someone reminded me of a beautiful passage in Saint Augustine, where he says we should be very careful about attacking straightaway some vice that is rampant in a place; not only will we be unsuccessful but, on the contrary, we will offend the persons for whom this habit is

deeply rooted. As a result, we will no longer be able to do them any other good, which we might have done had we approached them from another angle.

I ask you, then, to condescend as much as possible to human weakness. You will win over slaves who are priests by sympathizing with them rather than by rebuke and correction. It is not light they need but strength, and strength permeates through the external balm of words and good example. I am not saying that their disorders should be either condoned or allowed but that, in their present condition, remedies for them must be mild and gentle and applied very cautiously because of the place, and the harm they may cause you if you displease them. This may be prejudicial not only to you but also to the Consul and to God's work because it could influence the Turks,³ who might never allow you to go there again.

You must avoid another pitfall among the Turks and renegades: in the name of God, have no communication with those people, and do not expose yourself to the dangers arising from that. In exposing yourself, as I just said, you would be exposing everything to danger and would do great harm to the poor Christian slaves. They would no longer receive any help, and you would be closing the door in future on the freedom we now enjoy to render some service to God in Algiers and elsewhere. You can see what harm you would do for a small apparent good.

It is easier and more important to prevent many slaves from being perverted than to convert a single renegade. A doctor who keeps a person from becoming ill deserves more merit than one who cures him. You are not responsible for the souls of Turks or renegades, and your mission does not extend to them but to poor Christian captives. If, for some important reason, you are obliged to deal with people native to that country, please do so only with the consent of the Consul.⁴ I ask you to defer to his opinions as much as possible.

We have good reason to thank God for the zeal He has given you for the salvation of poor slaves, but this zeal is no good if it is not discreet. It seems as if you have taken on too much in the beginning, such as wanting to give a mission in the prisons, wanting to stay there yourself, and introducing new practices of devotion among these poor people. That is why I ask you to follow the custom of our deceased priests, your predecessors. Good works are often spoiled by moving too quickly. We act according to our own inclinations, which bypass mind and make us think that the good we see to be done is feasible and timely, which is not the case. We recognize this subsequently by our failure. The good which God desires is accomplished almost by itself, without our even thinking of it. That is how our Congregation came into being, that missions and retreats for the ordinands began, that the Company of the Daughters of Charity was formed, that the Ladies of Charity for the

assistance of the poor at the Hôtel Dieu of Paris and the sick in the parishes were established. That is also how the care of the foundlings began and, in a word, how all the works for which we are now responsible came into existence.

None of the above was deliberately undertaken by us, but God Himself, who wanted to be served in such circumstances, brought them imperceptibly into being. If He made use of us, we had no idea, however, where that was leading. That is why we allow Him to act, far from busying ourselves with the development of these works, any more than we did when they were just beginning. Mon Dieu! Monsieur, how I wish you would moderate your ardor and examine matters thoroughly before making any decision on them! Be acted upon rather than active. In this way, God will do through you alone what all men put together could not do without Him.

1298. - TO AN ABBESS

[Between 1643 and 1652]¹

I venture to ask you, Madame, kindly to receive into your abbey one of your nuns, who says she is Prioress of.... Since she cannot remain in her own priory because of the misfortunes of the times, she remains exposed to want, and her situation is subject to the censure and ridicule of the world and the soldiers.

Perhaps, Madame, you have reasons for not wanting to take her back; at least I thought you might raise some objection to this. I am, nevertheless, writing to you about it because charity obliges me to help a person of this kind, who leads us to hope that she will give you satisfaction and to fear that, if she remains away from her center--I mean outside of her monastery--she will neither be at peace nor be safe.

If you do not agree with her return, I entreat you most humbly to let me know if you will at least contribute something for her to live on, in the event that a place can be found to board her for a time in this city. In the name of God, Madame, do not take it amiss that I make this suggestion to you.

1299. - TO A MONK, DOCTOR OF THEOLOGY

I sympathize with you in your sufferings, Reverend Father, and I ask Our Lord to release you from them or to give you the strength to bear them. Since you are enduring them for a good cause, you should be consoled to be among the blessed who suffer for justice' sake.¹ Be patient, Reverend Father, and be so in Our Lord, who chooses to try you. He will see to it that the religious Order in which He has placed you, which is like a storm-tossed ship, will bring you safely to port.

I cannot recommend to God, as you would like, your thought of transferring to another Order because I do not think that this is His Will. There are crosses everywhere, and your advanced age should lead you to avoid those you would encounter in changing your state of life.

As for the assistance you want from me in obtaining the decision in question, you are asking the impossible. That is why I beg you most humbly to excuse me from having your proposals presented to Rome.

1300. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
December 23, 1650

One of our maxims must be that we do not go to houses where we have no business, either in town or countryside. We must also refrain from all visits, even though they may be useful in maintaining friendship with certain persons, unless there is a real need, or when we are called there to visit the sick or console some troubled person.

1301. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION, IN THE SAINTES HOUSE
December 28, 1650

You tell me you are practicing meekness and giving good example but are finding it hard not to study. In that case, Monsieur, you do not consider the acquisition of virtue an excellent study. Can you pursue any better studies in the world equally helpful to yourself and to others? Leave matters as they are; while you are making progress in the school of Our Lord, He will give you greater knowledge than what can be found in books. He will give you His own Spirit, and by means of His lights, you will illuminate souls whom vice and ignorance are keeping in the dark.

I speak to you this way, Monsieur, because I know you have sufficient knowledge in other respects and because, as a rule, the most learned persons do not produce the greatest results. We see this only too often.

I am distressed at the weakness shown by the absent member in speaking against a means by which one gives himself to God in a special way.¹ I hope, however, that it will have no bad effect and that the person who still seems ill disposed toward it will recognize this as a temptation. If those who dare to find fault with such a holy practice would spend as much time reflecting on it before God as the Company has taken to discern His Will, they would never speak of it without respect and devotion. Mais quoi! There is nothing good that does not meet with opposition, and it should not be valued any less because it encounters objections.

1302. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, IN GENOA
Paris, December 29, 1650
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I cannot express to you what consolation the reading of your last letter and the account I gave of it to the Company have brought me because of the constant graces Our Lord bestows unceasingly on your mission in Genoa.¹ I thank God and ask Him to continue to bestow them more and more on this dear family. O Monsieur! what joy I experience at this, even as I speak to you. Your presence in that place has done so much good and is laying deep foundations of zeal for the glory of God in the souls in your seminary!

Eh quoi! Monsieur, they have scarcely begun and already they are disposed to suffer martyrdom. I ask Our Lord to animate them more and more with His Spirit, that His Divine [Goodness]² may be pleased to use them as leaven to make the dough of His Word rise for the nourishment of the poor people of the countryside. I embrace them all, prostrate in spirit at their feet, at the sight of my own unworthiness in which Providence has placed me in their regard. I am unworthy to untie the strap of their shoes.³

O mon Dieu! Monsieur, with what ardor and emotion have I depicted to the Company the pleasures of devotion in those who work for the salvation of peoples, such as the man you mention to me, whom God has so highly blessed!⁴ Long live piety! And may God be pleased to make the Little Company understand this truth!

In almost all his letters, M. Alméras has written me that a qualified man must be sent to Rome to deal with the Sacred Congregation. I told him to do what he can with the persons Our Lord has given him. If you have an idea that some one of your men can be of service there without prejudice to your family, please give it some thought and write to me about it.

We have sent seven priests and six Brothers to assist the poor people in Picardy and Champagne. They are in extreme spiritual and corporal need, as the people formerly were in Lorraine. This impoverishes our ranks.

One of your cousins came to see us. At first, he wanted to remain with us, but when he saw the hard work of our Brothers and the household help, he did not think he could endure such a life and preferred to return home.

And I, Monsieur, end this letter by recommending myself to the mercy of God through the prayers you offer for me. I entreat you, Monsieur, to continue because I have great need of them. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Dehorgny, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa

1303. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

December 29, 1650

I most willingly ask you, Monsieur, to stop looking for a house but to continue to take charge of that business, whatever opinion you may have of yourself. God in His benevolence is giving us this opportunity of honoring the condition of Our Lord, who had no dwelling place on earth. It is justice on our part to repeat our thanks to you, as I do now, just as you repeat the offering you so kindly made to help us find a place to live in Rome. I ask Our Lord to attribute to you the glory He will receive from this and reward you in proportion to the great good you are doing in this and in so many other ways.

1303a. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR, IN SEDAN¹

Paris, December 29, 1650

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank God and ask Our Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, to be Himself His thanksgiving for the favor He has granted us in preserving you from the great danger in which your illness placed you. I ask Him to keep you for many years to come for the good of His Church and, if He so chooses, for the good of those fine people in Madagascar for whom in particular He seems to have saved you. In the name of God, do all you can to build up your health more and more so you can go and devote yourself to those poor people of the Indies,² whom Our Lord seems to want to save in part through you.

I am, through the ministry of His holy mother, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Dufour, Priest of the Mission, now in Sedan

1304. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS

Paris, last day of the year 1650

Excellency,

The unusual amount of business I have had for some time now has deprived me of the joy of writing to you. I do so on this last day of the year to renew to you the offer of my obedience for the next year and for my whole life. Please accept it, Excellency, and allow me to inform you of the arrival of your good Fathers¹ in this city about two or three weeks ago.

They returned in fairly good health, thank God. However, Father Vitet's companion has not been very well since his arrival. I have spoken to them together and separately. They still seem to be strongly attached to their vocation. Both have told me that they were at risk in Rome because of the habit. Father Vitet has given you a full report. He mentioned to me in private that he thinks it is advisable for you, Excellency, to send someone to Rome in habitu sancto² to take action overtly against Father Guérin in your affairs. He also thinks it unnecessary to send two monks; one, accompanied by a servant, will suffice.

Here, he says, is the way to terminate this affair: it must be done directly either by the Pope, the commissioners from here, or the Parlement. He rules out the commissioners because application has been made to the Parlement for the affair; the latest decree, of which Sainte-Geneviève served notice to Chancelade, forbids anyone whomsoever to look into it and will most likely rescind whatever the commissioners decide by an appeal by writ of error. He sees a difficulty in applying to the Parlement because of his fear that it may already be impeded by the large number of counselors who have their children placed with them,³ by their esteem for that Congregation, and by its extension over most of the provinces of the kingdom. In addition, they will be unwilling to make room for another Congregation, which these

Fathers have always opposed and prevented from being extended. As for recourse to the Pope, he sees clearly that there will be difficulties but does not consider this an impossibility, judging from the atmosphere of that court, and with the help of Abbé Tinti⁴ and several others of his status.

That, Excellency, is his reasoning. It will be up to you, Excellency, to make a judgment on it. He offers quite simply to be of service wherever and however you wish, be it here, in Rome, at Chancelade, or any other place you like.

His companion, whom I also interviewed in private, told me that this good Father was a little upset for fear of having displeased you in some way, but he felt that the latter was nevertheless firm and stable in his vocation. They both await whatever orders you choose to give them.

In Rome they met with M. Ferentilli, one of the most competent Bishops of that court. He has great respect for you, Excellency, and is very good to us. They are placing great hopes in his good advice and favor. They also have the highest praise for the Assistant of the Jacobins⁵ and hope to accomplish something good in a certain roundabout way they can use and which Bishop Ferentilli approves.

We have sent some workers⁶ to the Bishop of Périgueux.⁷ Please give them and me your blessing in spirit, Excellency. I ask this of you, prostrate in spirit at your feet, and am, Excellency, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: The Bishop of Cahors, in Cahors
1305. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[1650 or January 1651]¹

We have distributed vestments for the Churches, and blankets and clothing for our sick. The effect that this has produced on all these border areas is indescribable. People there speak of almost nothing else but of these acts of charity. Our workers take such good care of the sick that, by the grace of God, of five hundred sick persons in the town of Guise alone more than three hundred have been cured. In forty villages in the environs of Laon, such a large number of persons have been restored to perfect health that it would be hard to find there six poor persons unable to earn their own living. We felt it our duty to provide these people with the means of doing so by giving them axes, billhooks, and spinning wheels to put the men and women to work. In this way, they will no longer be dependent on anyone, if some other disaster occurs which could reduce them to the same wretched state.

We have also distributed the seeds sent from Paris for this region. They have now been sown, and God is giving great blessings to this. The result is that the poor people bear their trials more patiently, in the hope that the ensuing harvest will bring them great relief.

We give several poor pastors two hundred livres a month for their subsistence. By means of this assistance, all the

parishes of the deaneries of Guise, Marle, and Vervins are being served. At least in each of these, Holy Mass is celebrated once a week and the Sacraments are administered.
1306. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[1650 or January 1651]¹

No words can express our gratitude to you. We see clearly that the hand of God has struck this province. Its abundance has turned into sterility; its joy into tears. Its villages, which were once heavily populated, are now nothing more than ruined hovels. It can also be said that, without the aid of the charitable persons God has raised up in Paris, there would not be the slightest trace of debris from this sad shipwreck. All those who have been rescued from it owe their lives to their generosity.

The thirty-five villages in this valley and the surrounding area give a million thanks to their benefactors. We have distributed the church vestments and the clothing for the poor. A number of our sick people have recovered their health and are now able to earn their own living.

We held a meeting of the neighboring pastors, at which we distributed to twenty-three of the poorest ones the four hundred livres that were sent to us. That will enable them to subsist and to serve their parishes. It would have been impossible for them to survive otherwise.
1307. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME
January 3, 1651

I pray that Our Lord will help you make perfect use of your present state of illness so that He may be as glorified by it as He would be from your work. You must refrain from all exertion, as I have asked you, acting in the house only as the soul acts in the body, for it gives movement to all the parts without tiring itself out.¹

Thank you for seeing the agent in charge of our petition for the approbation of our vows. God determines some things for certain times, which He does not want at others. Since we are uncertain of the time when God will be pleased to grant us this grace, we must go forward without becoming discouraged, no matter how unlikely success may appear, according to the maxim of Hippocrates, which states that as long as a sick person shows signs of life, he must be nursed and given remedies. If this affair cannot succeed in the manner proposed, another petition will have to be presented at some other time and by some other ingenious means.

I spoke about this recently to a person of sound judgment, who is very intelligent and experienced in these matters. He thinks there must be some bond among us, and between us and God, to offset man's natural inconstancy and prevent the dissolution of the Company. Otherwise, many will enter it solely to study and to become competent for public service, and then leave. Others, who will have good intentions in the beginning, will abandon everything when the slightest thing displeases them or at the first

opportunity to establish themselves in the world, since there is nothing that might hold them back.

We have only too much experience of similar injustices. At the very time I am writing to you, we have one of these persons. After being supported by us and put through his studies for thirteen or fourteen years,² no sooner did he become a priest than he asked us for money to withdraw. That is all he is waiting for to leave us. How can we remedy this evil? Money has been given us to work for the salvation of the people; how shall we avoid its being used up by those persons who have other plans, if we have no means of strengthening them by some powerful reason of conscience, such as the vow of stability or some solemn promise?

This manner of binding oneself is not without precedent. In the past, a newly-formed Company in Italy was given permission to have its members pledge their word that they would remain in their vocation, which is concerned with the care of poor orphans. I think the founder was a Venetian.³ Please find out the facts about this Institution which, in time, became a religious Order.⁴ We, however, could never do that, and this condition will have to be stipulated.

1308. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, January 4, 1651

Monsieur,

I have expressed to you several times in writing and in person my desire to unburden myself of Chancelade Abbey. I have retained it in order both to defend it against those who want it so much and not to abandon those good monks, who have asked me not to leave it while their lawsuits are still in process. I must tell you now that I have such a great desire to give it up that I think I will have no satisfaction until this is done, although I am having a hard time with it. I also foresee that great harm will come to these monks if their affairs are not settled soon.

That is why I beg you with all my heart to oblige Father Vitet not to stop until he has had the decision of the Abbot of Grosbois rescinded, which he allowed to be handed down by a formal act of disobedience, and not to leave Paris until this is done. He is bound to this by all sorts of obligations of honor and conscience. In a word, he must make amends for the fault he committed. He writes to Father Garat¹ that he is beginning to be bored and will not do anything in Paris. I ask God to make his duty clear to him and give him the grace to do it. It is absolutely essential that you do not mention my great desire to resign the abbey. He wants this so passionately that he thinks he will never see it.

You have heard about good M. Treffort's² illness. He is well now, thank God.

M. des Vergnes, my Officialis, has written two or three times that Abbé d'Estaing³ told him that, as soon as he has his patent for the diocese of Clermont, he wants to come to

see me. If he does me this honor, I shall do my utmost to get him to ask you for your priests to open a seminary in Clermont, a very appropriate place for your men. If he goes to see you, I think it would not be a bad idea to share with him the report of the Bishops' conference we had here; if he wants to put it into practice, have a copy of it given to him.

I sent the Bishop of Périgueux,⁴ as he requested, a copy of the act of establishment of your men in Cahors and of the King's patents. I think you should be very careful about the places where you establish yourselves and, for several reasons, not take any small dioceses. There will be enough large ones asking you for men and you will not be able to supply them.

I am always, Monsieur....

ALAIN, Bishop of Cahors

1309. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[1650 or January 1651]¹

We have just visited thirty-five villages of the Guise deanery, where we found almost six hundred persons in such a wretched state that they are pouncing on the remains of dogs and horses, after the wolves have made a meal of them. In the town of Guise alone, there are more than five hundred sick persons living in cellars and in the mouths of caves more fit for lodging animals than men.

1310. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
Epiphany 1651

I am doubly and triply consoled to realize that I am writing you on the same day you were born into the world, into grace, and into the Company!¹ Seigneur Dieu! Monsieur, what a memorable day this should be both for you and for us! I do not mean only because of the mystery we are celebrating, when the King of Kings was recognized as such in His infancy and poverty, but also because of the glorious titles of subject and servant of His household, which you received on this day. I have thanked God for them and will continue to thank Him all my life, both for your personal happiness and for the good of our little Congregation. In receiving you, we have received from God a priceless gift in honor of those His Son received from the Magi.

May you proclaim forever the grandeurs of this little Child whom they adore! May you draw to His knowledge and love souls who are far removed from them, so that your own soul may one day be numbered among those who will judge the twelve tribes of Israel² and reign with them in the glory of the Sovereign Lord!

1311. - TO CHARLES DE MONTCHAL, ARCHBISHOP OF TOULOUSE¹
[January 1651]²

Excellency,

I hereby renew the offer of my perpetual obedience with all possible humility and affection at the beginning of this New Year. I entreat you to accept it, Excellency, and I thank you for the honor you have bestowed on me of

remembering me by the letter you wrote to your brother, M. de Montchal, and M. Guillon. These, Excellency, are the results of your incomparable charity toward me, undeserving though I be.

Lastly, Excellency, I want to tell you that someone has given us an annuity of five hundred livres to secure for ourselves an establishment of our choice in the Parlement of Languedoc,³ and to offer you the service of our Little Company on this occasion. I have not done so until now with sufficient evidence of zeal, I think, because some years ago we pledged ourselves to God never to ask for any foundation. We had observed God's special Providence in our regard in establishing us Himself, without any intervention on our part, in all the places where we are situated. The result is that we can say we have nothing but what O[ur] L[ord] has offered and given us, even this foundation I mention to you.

That is why, Excellency, you have found me so cautious on this point, whenever there was some occasion on which I had to act. God knows that there is no Bishop on earth for whom O[ur] L[ord] has given us a greater desire to belong than you, Excellency. I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Excellency, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I think, Excellency, that I have already mentioned this matter to you.

1312. - TO RENÉ ALMÉRAS, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

January 13 [1651]¹

Please assure M. Authier of three things: (1) that I have never said or done anything against him or his holy Congregation² but quite the contrary; (2) that I learned about M. Deslyons'³ affair only after the Nuncio⁴ had informed the Sacred Congregation of what he knew about it, and it was he who told me; (3) that I never celebrate Holy Mass without praying to God for his Company during the preparation and at the Memento, and I always mention it to Our Lord before our own lowly one. I authorize you to swear this to him before God, in whose presence I tell you this.

As for your statement that you find life boring and oppressive, I certainly do not doubt that. You have been carrying your cross for a long time now and struggling against nature, which, finding itself laid low, causes you this repugnance. You must not let it get a hold on you, however. Nature is a sluggard that shrinks from pain; its aim is to deprive you of the merit of suffering, which, the longer it lasts, the greater it is.

Our Lord Himself said that He was sad unto death,⁵ in apprehension of what He had to suffer. You are now in the situation of being able to honor His suffering in this shuddering of the inferior part, just as you always do when you submit the superior part to the Will of the Eternal Father.

Since you know the means of getting better, in the name of God, make use of them. Do not take on anything beyond

your strength, do not be anxious, do not take things too much to heart, go gently, do not work too long or too hard. In a word, unburden yourself of all else except the direction of the house and whatever you can do by way of relaxation.

Please do not admit anyone into your house, or give or lend money to anyone, who has been--or who you think is--a member of the Company, unless he has his obedience or a formal letter from his Superior.⁶ I am making this request of all our houses, and for good reason.

1313. - TO JEAN BARREAU, CONSUL OF FRANCE, IN ALGIERS
January 15, 1651

Your last letter, dating from October, inspired us with deep sentiments of affection and consolation, since we saw that your patience has not grown weary nor is surprised at anything, but that you acquiesce humbly in your present difficulty and in all that God will be pleased to ordain for the future. We have already thanked Him for such a great grace and will continue to ask Him earnestly for your release.

The King was absent from Paris for six or seven months,¹ and on his return we did our best to procure this benefit for you. It has finally been decided to write to Constantinople, and the King will register a complaint with the Porte² about your imprisonment, asking that the articles of peace and alliance agreed upon by Henry IV and the Grand Turk in the year 1604³ be put into effect. When this is done, the Turks will have to stop their raids on the French and give back the slaves they have. If they do not, His Majesty will take matters into his own hands.

We will see that this is carried out, with the help of God. It will be up to His Providence to do the rest. I hope all will go well if we abandon ourselves to Him with trust and submission, as you are doing by His grace. Perhaps it will be so propitious to us as to free you from prison and distress by a shorter route than that of Constantinople, for either the Pasha, your adversary, will relent, or some change or turn of events will bring about this good result.⁴

1314. - TO CHRISTOPHE D'AUTHIER DE SISGAU
January 15, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I hereby renew to you the offer of my obedience and entreat you to accept it, especially since I do so with all possible humility and affection. I venture to add, Monsieur, that I have in no way contributed to the difficulty M. Deslyons has encountered in his affair. I was not even aware that he had any thought of the diocese of Babylon, until the Nuncio told me by chance a few days ago that he had received a letter about it from the Sacred Congregation and had answered it. I would also not have known that you, Monsieur, had already obtained the decree

for this diocese, if M. Alméras, who learned it from you, had not told me about it.

I tell you, moreover, that I have never done or said anything against your holy Congregation. On the contrary, God has always given me respect for it and a great desire to be of service to it. As proof of this, since learning of its establishment I have never celebrated Holy Mass without recommending it to God--actually in two places: one during the preparation and the other at the Memento--that His Divine Goodness might cause it to prosper in a holy manner and accompany its purpose and functions with His blessings. I even mention it before our own because, in fact, I esteem it more.

I speak as a Christian, Monsieur, in the presence of God who knows that I am telling the truth. So that you may have no doubt about this, please give me opportunities of proving it to you other than by words. Make use of me for the service of your Congregation. I hope Our Lord will grant me the grace of devoting myself to it with all the vigor that the work of God demands. That is how I define what contributes to the welfare of a Company such as yours, dedicated to His greater glory. Then, perhaps, the father and children will do me the honor of believing that I am, for all in general and for you in particular, Monsieur, your....

VINCENT DEPAUL

1315. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU
January 15, 1651

I asked you to go and make the visitation in Luçon, where M. [Lucas]¹ is now the Superior and M. [Chiroye] is only the Assistant. I had asked the former to send someone to M. de la Marguerie's² villages in the Angoulême diocese. He has informed me that the Bishop of Luçon³ does not approve of this. These two priests are accustomed to act in this way whenever I write to them about something. Please make them understand that they should not act like that in any matter whatsoever. I am sure the Bishop is so good that he will not disapprove of what I ask them to do, provided they tell him about it in the proper spirit.

1316. - EDMÉ DESCHAMPS¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
[December 1650 or January 1651]²

Today we have fulfilled to the letter what Jesus Christ said in the Gospel about loving and doing good to one's enemies,³ for we have buried those who had pillaged the property of our poor inhabitants and caused their ruin, and had also beaten and violated them.⁴ I consider myself most fortunate to have had the happiness of obeying you in a matter especially recommended in Holy Scripture. I will say, however, that those corpses scattered here and there over the open countryside were very difficult for us to gather up because a thaw set in toward the end and made this somewhat unpleasant. In this we recognized that God favored this pious task with the intense cold that accompanied it.

If we had to begin again, now that the thaw has set in, no one would be willing to do it, even for a thousand écus; yet, it cost us only three hundred livres.⁵

So, by this means, these poor bodies, which one day must all rise again, are now buried in their mother's bosom. The entire province has a special debt of gratitude toward the charitable persons who have contributed to this good work, in addition to the crown God is preparing for them in heaven as a reward for their virtue.

1317. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
[1650 or January 1651]²

No tongue can express nor ear dare to listen to what we have witnessed from the very first day of our visits: almost all the churches desecrated, sparing not even what is most holy and most adorable; vestments pillaged; priests either killed, tortured, or put to flight; every house demolished; the harvest carried off; the soil untilled and unsown; starvation and death almost everywhere; corpses left unburied and, for the most part, exposed to serve as spoils for the wolves.

The poor who have survived this destruction are reduced to gleaning a few half-rotted grains of sprouted wheat or barley in the fields. They make bread from this, which is like mud and so unwholesome that almost all of them become sick from it. They retreat into holes or huts, where they sleep on the bare ground without any bed linen or clothing, other than a few vile rags with which they cover themselves; their faces are black and disfigured. With all that, their patience is admirable.

There are cantons completely deserted, from which the inhabitants who have escaped death have gone far and wide in search of some way to keep alive. The result is that the only ones left are the sick, orphans, and poor widows burdened with children. They are exposed to the rigors of starvation, cold, and every type of misery and deprivation.

1318. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, January 25, 1651

Monsieur,

I felt it my duty to inform you personally of the mishap that befell me in Cahors at Christmastime. Let me tell you that my Vicar-General had me consult four of the town's doctors, after our regular doctor had reported to the others how much blood I had lost. They agreed that this was due to the rupture of one of the veins in my lung. After three hemorrhages, it was still open, and I should have died from it since I had lost a great deal of blood.

All four of them came to the Bishop's residence just as I was getting into my carriage to come here. They announced to me openly that I might soon die. Not only were they fearful that the vein would not close, but if it did close an ulcer might form, as usually happens, and this would ultimately cause my death. Just the opposite happened, however, for the wound has healed without any ulceration.

I really should have died, not only from the above causes but also from my great exertion in calling out to get someone to come that Christmas night, on my return from Matins, when I was losing so much blood. Doubtless, Our Lord wanted to keep me alive to make reparation for the faults I have committed in my duty and to do penance for my sins.

So that is what has caused people to send some extraordinary correspondence asking for our diocese, and even our abbey, so I have heard. This rumor had so occupied people's minds that they could not get rid of this idea, although I have continued to sign all kinds of dispatches.

This sudden illness has not had the consequences the doctors had expected, but they all agree that there is still much to be feared from it, at least until autumn has passed. The same thing could happen to me again if I suffer any physical or mental shock. That is why they have ordered me to rest a great deal, which I have done up until now. I leave my room only to say daily Mass in our chapel and, for the past few days, to go to the reception room when persons of rank come to see me. I shall continue to follow their advice.

In the meantime, since there is still some danger, I feel that the Queen should be informed. I ask you to do this and to remind Her Majesty that, as I was leaving her in 1646, I requested most humbly of her that, when she should hear the news of my death, she would please choose an apostolic person for my diocese. Her Majesty promised me this and repeated the promise. I think you will recall that I told you all about it.

I cannot tell you how surprised and distressed all the good people of my diocese were at the time of this mishap, not for fear of losing me O Dieu! not at all, but because they were fearful either of remaining a long time without a Bishop or of getting someone who would be more interested in enjoying the grandeurs of this diocese than in maintaining the well-being God has been pleased to establish in it, which would require a Bishop who is more than just a man.

In the name of God, please convey clearly the importance of this to the Queen. Tell her that one of the greatest services she could render to Our Lord would be to place an apostle in it, whenever God chooses to take us from this world, and that I entreat this of Her Majesty by the Sacred Passion of our Savior. I am well aware that I do not deserve this effect of her goodness. Nevertheless, since she was pleased to promise it to me, I hope she will grant it all the more readily, since I think she is bound to do so, as she herself told me when I made this request of her. She can reserve to herself absolutely the disposition of this diocese and, if that happens during the King's minority, to request it of him. I pray constantly that God will preserve Her Majesty. If she grants me this favor, she will oblige me to redouble these prayers.

I ask you also to represent to her that the late King left the election of the Abbot of Chancelade to the monks so that, if people ask her for it, as I understand they have done, she will refuse them and say that she is reserving it to the Chapter of the abbey.

I entreat you to tell no one, including Father Vitet and our Officialis, what I have written you about this mishap. I ask you also with all my heart, out of your affection for me, that, if you hear that I have had a similar attack again and that it has carried me off, you will go at once to Her Majesty, exhorting her to [keep] her promise. I request you also to use all your influence to see that my diocese is provided with a person having all the qualities I could desire, in order to reserve the election and nomination of the Abbot to the monks of Chancelade.

Kindly let me know what the Queen tells you when you have spoken to her. Please put this in a confidential letter so I can keep it and use it at the proper time and place.

And because you have been so good as to recommend to me to keep well, let me tell you that, so far, I have taken the best possible care of myself, following the doctors' orders to the letter and taking all the remedies prescribed. True, I asked them to let me resume my accustomed way of living, which they have done, except for ordering me to drink a cordial at the beginning of the meal, eat a little fruit at the end, and sleep two hours longer.

After all, we have to die of something in carrying out our duties; otherwise, I assure you that I think I would live more than a century. I am in my fifty-eighth year and can truthfully assure you that, apart from this incident, I have never had better health than I do now, nor greater strength and vigor to work hard and undergo every sort of hardship and fatigue. God will give us whatever is according to His Will, which we shall always adore, by His grace, and to which we submit ourselves entirely. With the Apostle we shall say: Mihi vivere Christus est et mori lucrum.¹ I beg Him to continue to grant you His graces, while keeping you in perfect health. I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN,² B[ishop] of Cahors

1319. - TO THE COMTE DE CHAVIGNY¹

Paris, January 27, 1651

My Lord,

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

On the occasion of this New Year, I renew to you the offer of my obedience and the perpetual gift I have made you of my poor heart. I do this with all possible humility and affection and entreat you, My Lord, to accept it.

Every day, My Lord, I hear of the progress you are making in the exemplary life you began to lead so long ago and have continued with such success that your good reputation has spread even to us. I thank God for it and ask Him to sanctify your dear soul more and more.

I am sending you a report of the pitiful state to which the poor people on the border of Picardy and Champagne² have been reduced. I am sure your merciful heart will be deeply touched and moved by it as I always am when I think of you. I often present you to Our Lord, in whose love I am, My Lord, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: The Comte de Chavigny

1320. - TO SOME FRENCH BISHOPS¹

February 1651

Excellency,

The pernicious effects of the opinions of the times² have prompted a large number of the Bishops of the kingdom to write to O[ur] H[oly] F[ather] the Pope to entreat him to pronounce on this doctrine. The particular reasons which have led them to do so are: (1) they hope that, by means of this remedy, many will hold fast to the common opinions; otherwise, they could be led astray, as happened to everyone when the censure of the Two Heads³ appeared; (2) the evil is spreading rapidly because it seems to be tolerated; (3) it is thought in Rome that most of our French bishops follow these new opinions, and it is important to make it clear that very few do so; (4) lastly, this is in conformity with the holy Council of Trent, which states that, if opinions contrary to the Council's decisions arise, recourse should be had to the Sovereign Pontiffs to set things right.⁴

This is what we are trying to do, Excellency, as you will see from the enclosed letter⁵ which I am sending you. I trust you will consent to sign it, as about forty other bishops have already done;⁶ the list of them is enclosed....

1321. - TO GABRIEL DELESPINEY, SUPERIOR, IN TOUL

February 4, 1651

I entreat you to ask God to pardon me all the abominations of my past life and particularly of this last year.

1322. - TO N.

February 5, 1651

In this letter Vincent de Paul writes about the Missionaries and Daughters of Charity sent to Picardy and Champagne to assist the unfortunate inhabitants of these provinces.

1323. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[February 1651]¹

Most Honored Father,

A decision was handed down on the truth of the abandonment of the child mentioned in the notice that was served. I sent it to your charity yesterday to have it shown to the Ladies. Now we need some advice on how to carry out this decision because we have to deal with a powerful opponent. The simplest thing to do is to take the bull by the horns. I was wondering, Most Honored Father, if you might not think it advisable for us--I mean for one of our Sisters--to go and seek the advice of the Procurator

General,² or whether, for similar questions we might have in the future, it might not be better for Godefroy, one of the bailiffs of your jurisdiction,³ to go and have this whole case heard.

We are in somewhat of a hurry about this because the child's mother is with Sister Geneviève,⁴ and we are afraid she will run away from us. Furthermore the father is trying to use his influence to find some way to extricate himself from this affair, which would put that poor creature in a deplorable state.

We are also quite anxious about that poor girl who is still a worry for us. I entreat you most humbly to take the trouble to speak about her to Monsieur Portail. Also, to give us a better idea of the truth of her conduct, we will send for Sister Marie and the Sister from Saint-Nicolas,⁵ with whom she has been up to now, if you think it advisable. They will go to see you with Sister Julienne⁶ on the day and at the time you indicate, in order to do everything with the greatest assurance and charity.

Please give us your blessing, since I am, Most Honored Father, your most humble daughter and very grateful servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1324. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, February 13, 1651

Monsieur,

I received your two letters of January 28 and February 7 in the last mail. I asked you, as I do once again, to urge Father Vitet to go to Chartres as soon as possible and have our brief put into effect immediately. He should not limit himself to consultations on what might happen in the Parlement because if it should happen that the Parlement wants information, we will have recourse to the Council, which is in the best position to understand matters of court rule. I do not think this will happen, however, because our opponents have renounced this, and so have we. So, of necessity, we have to go the route we are taking.

I asked you, as I do once again, to beware of the mentality of Father Vitet, which is certainly strange and disagreeable. If he no longer mentions these difficulties with the Parlement, send him back and urge him to do his utmost to get a decision quickly from the Bishop of Chartres.¹ This is absolutely necessary before I resign from the abbey, since it involves me. It is likewise necessary that he and Father Parrot be there at the time of the election. So, in the name of God, I beg you to urge him strongly to obtain a decision soon, but do not tell them nor give any indication of the resignation and election. It is essential that no one know about it, until it is time to proceed to the election.

I am returning to you the three copies of the letters addressed to Our Holy Father the Pope, signed by the Bishops

of Sarlat,² Périgueux,³ and me. When I received them, I kissed them out of respect.

Yesterday I received a thick packet addressed to me. When I opened it, I found it was a slanderous libel against the letter in question, addressed to all the Bishops. This is the spirit of heresy, which cannot tolerate just corrections and reprimands, and attacks immediately with violent calumnies. Allow me to tell you in this regard that four or five years ago I was in Toulouse, and the Bishop of Lombez⁴ was also there. During our visits he told me he was the sworn enemy of the teaching of Jansenius and of these new opinions. He is a learned Bishop and, in my opinion, would take great pleasure in signing that letter. So, if you took the trouble to send it to the Bishop of Pamiers,⁵ who is his neighbor and belongs to the same archdiocese, and asked him to take care of getting him to sign it, and send another one to the Bishop of Alet,⁶ I think they will do it.

We have joined battle at last, and I have always felt that it had to come to this. We must pursue them to the bitter end.

In your letter of February 7, you tell me to take care of my health and follow the doctor's advice. I have done so up until now and they are pleased, asking only that I continue. I assure you that I shall do so, with the help of God, if only to stay in the fight, which I foresee will have to take place. Even if I have only a little life left, I want to preserve it for that purpose. I hope, with God's help, that we shall overcome them.

I would like one of the letters to be sent to the Bishop of Maillezais⁷ because I know he is on the side of the right opinion. The Bishop of Bordeaux⁸ could get him to sign it.

I must tell you that I was sorry to receive a letter from the Prior of Sablonceaux,⁹ in which he begged me to make a visitation there. He thinks this is necessary for the good of the Saintes diocese and the solace of its worthy Bishop.¹⁰ The latter is surrounded by Jansenists, who are quite popular in that place, and a breviary with Jansenist overtones is already circulating there. That is what he says in his letter. I do not understand clearly from the words "the solace of its worthy Bishop" whether or not he is one of them. Oh! how fortunate is my diocese! I can assure you that we live in such great ignorance that the people know nothing about Jansenius or his party.

I am having prayers said constantly for the King, the Queen, and peace. I shall redouble them, as you requested, for the affairs of the kingdom. I ask you to believe that I am always, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1325. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS
Paris, February 18, 1651

Excellency,

I am very happy that your health continues to improve, and my ardent wish is that God may give you sufficient

strength to continue your good services to His Church for another half-century. This is the grace I often ask of Him. The most earnest request I can make of you, Excellency, is that you take care of your health in order to do your part for your own preservation.¹

I am also pleased that the state of affairs regarding your Chancelade monks has the odds in its favor over the writ the Sainte-Geneviève monks had served on them, and also that the Bishop of Chartres² has been appointed commissioner. I had the honor of writing to him to entreat him to accept the brief of His Holiness and to protect the interests of the Chancelade monks. I told him all the good things I am bound to say in favor of them because of their virtue and the usefulness of their Congregation.

In accordance with the instructions you gave me, I have seen the Queen on your behalf, Excellency, and Her Majesty was very pleased at the news of your health and your decision. She told me that you may choose whatever person you judge most apt and qualified for this purpose, and she will have the King confirm this appointment.³

I ask Our Lord to make His most holy Will known to you. I am, with my entire will, in His love, Excellency, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i. s. C. M.

I do not know, Excellency, if the Abbot of Saint-Astier⁴ has the honor of your acquaintance; he works hard for the Church of God.

Addressed: The Bishop and Comte of Cahors
1326. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, March 1, 1651
Monsieur,

I am much obliged for your kindness in writing to the Bishop of Chartres and speaking to the Queen about what I had written you. I thank you most warmly for this. If my zeal and attachment for Her Majesty's service could increase, I could have no more powerful motivation than the acts of kindness she has shown me. Since she has been willing to allow me to choose my successor, and since the salvation of so many souls, including my own, depends on him, I think I should have many prayers offered for this purpose, which I shall do. I ask also for your prayers and those of your Company, requesting secrecy so that not a single person will know anything about this matter. I will write to you about it afterward.

I am doing what you told me about preserving our [sic] health, which is now very good, thank God. However, I ask you, too, to take care of your own health and to recall that you promised me to do so. Above all, always keep a fire burning in your room. Nothing is more prejudicial to both you and me than the cold, because of the very chilly weather we are having. I am writing expressly to M. des Vergnes, my Officialis, to find out how you are getting along and to let me know. In the meantime, believe me, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1327. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

March 4, 1651

You strengthen my hopes that God will bless your seminary and that, in lieu of Saint-Lazare, it will provide workers for our other houses. We are more cautious than in the past about accepting postulants who present themselves, especially the young ones, because very few of them give themselves to God with the right intention.

1328. - TO MARC COGLÉE, IN SEDAN

Paris, March 8, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I owe you a reply to two letters, and I owe praise to God for the health of your patients and the graces with which He is blessing your leadership. With this letter, I take care of the first duty, and I ask Our Lord to take care of the second: to keep all of you in the good health He is giving you and to continue to bestow His blessings upon you.

I did not think it would take so long to send you the priest¹ you need. The reason for this delay is the devastation of the border areas of Picardy and Champagne. We have sixteen or eighteen persons--in particular, the priest we had earmarked for you--working for the salvation of those people. We will have to leave them there until the milder weather lessens the miseries of that region. In the meantime, Monsieur, please proceed as slowly as you can, leaving things as they are. Perhaps we will soon send you a Visitor, with whom you can discuss everything face to face and have him make the change you suggest, if it is advisable.

You ask me if a local Superior can, on his own, remove the officers in his house from their position. Yes, for those he has appointed, but not those--the Assistant, for example--who have been given him by the General or the Visitor.²

I strongly hope that you will try to get yourself dispensed from going to the synod this time. See if you have some plausible excuse and notify the Vicar-General of Reims. If you have none, do not fail to write and ask him to allow you to continue to help in the parish because the influx of people and sick refugees makes your small number of priests barely adequate.

You have greatly consoled me by the good news you gave me about the Governor.³ He is a person for whom I have a high regard in the sight of God and for whom His Divine Goodness has filled me with esteem and respect. Please thank Him most humbly for remembering me, and renew to him the offer of my perpetual obedience, in gratitude for the good he has done the Charity.

We shall send you the two-volume lives of the saints to be presented to M. Demyon.⁴ I gave instructions to have it bought and suitably bound.

I embrace your own heart and your family as cordially as possible, asking God in His immense bounty to make them ever more pleasing and more suited to the advancement of His glory.

We have no news here. I recommend the Little Company and myself to your prayers. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Coglée, Priest of the Mission of Sedan, in Sedan

1329. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN RICHELIEU Paris, March 15, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God for the large number of ordinands who have made retreat at your house and for the graces God has given them. I ask Him to grant them the grace of making good use of them.

The girl from Parthenay has arrived, and Mademoiselle Le Gras has received her into her little Community.

I sent you word that the business of the Prior of Assay¹ has been delayed and that its nature demands that we find another way out of it; I leave it to you to figure out how. I am not going to repeat what I already wrote you about that nor about the return of M. Alméras, who will leave Rome around Easter. If you have not mentioned the little assembly we are planning, and to which I invited you, please do not speak of it. I forgot to recommend this to you in my last letter.²

That business about M. L. is very strange. He must make restitution of the thirteen livres he took during the mission. If that cannot be done without telling the persons who gave the money, take it from him just the same for justice' sake and use it for whatever you think most suitable. If he wants to leave, let him go, but do not give him anything. Since he has no travel money, perhaps he will remain. Perhaps also he will get over his flightiness, especially if you make him consider the harm he would be doing the Company.

I am as surprised as you are that M. Drouard³ has not answered you, since it is true that all your letters have been sent to him. It would be a good idea for you to write to him again to remind him of that poor family you mentioned to me and of the letters confirming the appointment for the position of notary. I shall not fail to say a word to him about it at the first opportunity. Above all, repeat what you wrote him concerning the financial difficulties of the Daughters of Charity and how greatly it is to be hoped that their modest subsistence be assured. I shall not mention that item to him; it is more appropriate for you to handle it than for me.

You tell me you are short of priests; since this is so, we shall try to send you two shortly. In the meantime,

however, please let me know if you think M. Pennier⁴ is capable of directing the house because, if we need you here, thought must be given to the person to whom you will hand over your authority. I know he has common sense and other good qualities, but I am not very sure of those he lacks.

I am worried about M. Manceau's⁵ continued illness and Brother Lejeune's⁶ condition. I ask Our Lord to restore them to perfect health and to preserve it in those who now enjoy it, especially in you, Monsieur, so that He may profit from it for the service of the good of souls and the consolation of the Company, in which nothing new has happened.

All of us here are well, thank God. We have five new priests. I am touched when I think of you and often offer you to God as I think you offer my soul. I am, in Him, Monsieur, your humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Priest of the Mission, in Richelieu

1330. - TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY OF SAINT-ÉTIENNE-A-ARNES¹
Paris, March 18, 1651

My good Sisters,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing you this letter to ask for news of you and to give you some of our news. We are in good health, thank God, and everything is going along fairly well both in your Company and in ours. We often ask Our Lord to bless and keep you in the important work you are doing.

One thing that can greatly help to draw down God's grace on you and your service is fidelity to your practices of devotion, such as morning prayer--even if only for half an hour--the particular examens, spiritual reading, the raising of your hearts to God, and purity of intention in all your thoughts, words, and actions. To be faithful to all that is to be true daughters of Our Lord, to make yourselves worthy of His love, and to advance surely toward your perfection. This is the grace I desire for you and the best advice I can give you.

I do not know if I recommended these holy practices to you when you were leaving. If not, I do so now, even though I know you do not deliberately omit any of them and that, in the midst of your troubles and cares, you often place yourselves in the presence of God. This helps you find the time to do everything else each day, as far as the place and the service of the poor allow.

So, continue, dear Sisters, to do the Divine Will in all things. Entrust yourselves to God, call upon Him, and rest assured that He will be your strength, your consolation and, one day, the glory of your souls.

I am, in His love, Sisters, your most affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Our dear Daughters of Charity, now serving the poor in Saint-Étienne and Saint-Souplet²

1331. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

March 18, [1651]¹

Most Honored Father,

Allow me to tell you that, to relieve the pain from your wound, I think you should have some blood let from your arm on the same side, even if only a basin full, to move the infection that could result from stirring up the body fluids caused by purgings. It seems absolutely essential to me, however, that you use no saline purgatives for about a week.

There is a type of ointment I have found very good for reducing infection and alleviating pain. I would like you to try some, Father. Rub the entire affected area, and apply a folded compress of three or four thicknesses that has been soaked in water, after the chill has been removed from it by placing it over some warm ashes. Change it at least twice a day. If the wound is so inflamed that it causes the compress to dry out quickly, remoisten it more often. If it sticks to the wound, be careful not to pull it off without moistening it so that the skin does not come off with it.

But, in the name of God, Most Honored Father, do not wait until the wound is in a very bad state before sending for Monsieur Pimperlle. He cured my leg with an ointment that first formed a big scab on it and then healed it. Perhaps, if you have a bloodletting and use this little remedy for three or four days, you might need nothing else. I hope so with all my heart, and also that your charity will ask God's mercy on my soul that it may awaken from its torpor in order to serve Him more faithfully. Then I will be able to say more truthfully that I am, Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and grateful servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

1332. - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPEINTRE,¹ SUPERIOR, IN NANTES

March 22, 1651

Your letter of February 29² brought me great joy. I praise God for all you tell me, particularly for the kindness of those gentlemen and the consideration with which they treat you. That is the way God brings about calm after the storm. I ask Him to let it last a long time and to grant you the grace of making good use of tribulation when it comes your way. You must expect it and prepare yourself for it now, when you are at peace.

Peace is never so complete that we may not have something to suffer. This is essential for those who serve God, and Our Lord recommends that we carry our cross daily. You have several crosses in your duty because you have to deal with a large number of persons within the establishment as well as outside. Since it is impossible to please all of them, they offer you the occasion for practices which increase your merit in the measure that you make them meritorious by your patience. I often ask this of Our Lord for you and for our dear Sisters. I send greetings to them and to you, and I am....

1333. - TO THE ADMINISTRATORS OF THE MAIN HOSPITAL OF LE MANS

Paris, March 22, 1651

Messieurs,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter with special sentiments of respect and joy because it is your letter and because of the attachment God has given me for your service. For these reasons, opportunities to obey you will always be dear to me. Before you made known to me in writing your desire to have M. Cornaire changed, I had instructed M. Lucas¹ to give him another duty and to replace him with M. Gorlidot² to serve in the hospital. I did so because I had been informed that this is what you would want. It has now been put into effect.

May God grant M. Gorlidot the grace of working hard for His glory, the salvation of the poor, and your satisfaction. May He also give me the means of showing you how much I am, in the love of Our Lord, for all in general and each one in particular, Messieurs, your most humble and obedient servant.

Addressed: The Administrators of the Main Hospital of Le Mans, in Le Mans

1334. - TO A BISHOP

[After 1638]¹

Alas, Excellency! how is it that you share such important affairs² with a poor ignoramus like me, abominable in the sight of God and men because of the countless sins of my past life and my many present miseries. These make me unworthy of the honor your humility has done me, and would surely oblige me to keep silent if you were not ordering me to speak.

Here, then, are my humble thoughts on the points in your two letters. I propose them with all due respect and in the simplicity of my heart.

I can begin in no better way than by thanking God for all the graces He grants you, asking Him to glorify Himself for the happy success of your functions, at which you labor as zealously and assiduously as possible....

I think you will be happy to hear that your priest brother went to make a short retreat with our priests in Richelieu. The Superior sent me word that he greatly edified that little community by his devotion, wisdom, and modesty. He even enjoyed the spiritual exercises so much that he has led them to hope he would spend the Christmas feasts with them.

Since I know, Excellency, that you desire nothing so much as to see your relations center on God, I wanted to share this consolation with you. It was a great one for me, seeing that, at the same time you are working to establish His service in your diocese, He Himself is strengthening and perfecting this in your own family.

1335. - TO PHILIBERT DE BRANDON, BISHOP OF PÉRIGUEUX

April 1, 1651

Excellency,

I have received instructions from the Ecclesiastical Council¹ to request you, as I now do most humbly, to let me know whether it is true that Châtres² Abbey in your diocese, now vacant, has been held as a confidence³ by the house of Peyraux for a hundred years, as is said;⁴ and if the brother of the late Abbot, who is one of your pastors and for whom this benefice is being sought, has the requisite qualities for this office. I shall report to them whatever you do me the honor of informing me on these two points.

The various letters I have received from several priests of your town and from those fortunate enough to have close contact with you, Excellency, have made me realize rather clearly that we are entirely unworthy of rendering service to God under such a fine Prelate as you. When I reflect on the reasons Providence has had for allowing us to be considered as such, I see no other cause than my sins.

That is why, Excellency, I hope you will allow Messieurs Bayart and Laudin⁵ to return, according to the orders I gave them. This will never prevent you from having sovereign authority over us. I shall embrace with greater joy than ever the opportunities God will give me to please and obey you, since I am, in His love, Excellency, your....

1336. - TO BALTHAZAR BRANDON DE BASSANCOURT¹

April 1, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

In accordance with the orders you gave me, I am asking Messieurs Bayart and Laudin to return as soon as possible, since God has not been pleased to grant us the grace of being of service to His Excellency and his diocese. No reason for this need be sought other than my sins. I am hoping, nevertheless, for two good results from this withdrawal. The first will be the opportunity to honor Our Lord in His perfect submission to the will of those who sent Him away from one place and refused to allow Him to enter another. The second, Monsieur, is the testimony I offer you of my prompt obedience. Would to God I might be worthy of offering it to you in a matter of greater importance! I would do so with all the extent of my affection.

Please make free use of me, then, if I can be of service to you in any way. In the meantime, I thank you for the charity and forbearance you have shown us.

1337. - TO THE SUPERIORS OF THE HOUSES OF THE MISSION

[April 1651]¹

God has chosen to make the Company an orphan by taking from us a father who had adopted us as his own children. I mean the good Prior of Saint-Lazare, who died on Easter Sunday. He died, fortified by the sacraments, and in such conformity with the Will of God that throughout his illness not the slightest trace of impatience was apparent; the same was true for his preceding illnesses. I ask all the priests

of your house to celebrate Masses and all our Brothers to receive Holy Communion for his intention.²

1338. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1651 or 1652]¹

...It will also be well for you to speak to Mademoiselle Viole² about the house for the little children. The one in Saint-Marcel,³ however, seems to me to be at the end of the world. See if you can find something in one of these faubourgs.⁴

1339. - CARDINAL SPADA¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, 1651

The Institute of the Congregation of the Mission, of which you are the founder and head, daily acquires greater influence and reputation in these parts. I have received excellent service from it in my own town and throughout the Albano diocese, where I have seen extraordinary results among the people. Those good priests have worked for them with such diligence, charity, disinterestedness, and prudence that everyone is extremely edified by them. It is my duty to thank you, as I now do, assuring you that I am particularly grateful for this, and that, whenever the occasion presents itself, I shall not fail to make it public for the benefit and propagation of this holy Institute.

1340. - TO A BISHOP

I received the letter you did me the honor of writing. I have read and reread it, Excellency, not to examine the questions you put to me but to admire the judgment you make on them, where something greater than the human spirit is apparent. Only the Spirit of God, dwelling in your sacred person, could unite justice and charity to the degree you intend to observe in this matter. So I have only to thank God, as I am doing, Excellency, for the holy inspirations He has given you and for the trust with which you deign to honor your useless servant.

The things you propose to me are so far above me that only with great embarrassment can I even consider giving the opinion you are asking of me. I shall not fail to obey you, Excellency, while telling you....

1341. - TO FATHER DINET¹

April 14, 1651

I ask you to send me four or five copies of the letter from our Prelates to the Pope;² I have given out all the others. The Bishop of La Rochelle³ has excused himself from signing the one I sent him, until he knows if the party we are fighting will issue a circular letter. "If so," he says, "I will sign it."⁴ The Bishop of Dax⁵ tells me he will gladly sign it and will get the Bishop of Bayonne⁶ to sign. I have had no reply from the Bishops of Alet and Pamiers.⁷ I fear the packets may have been lost; that is why I want to send them some others.

1342. - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT, SISTER SERVANT, IN HENNEBONT

Paris, April 16, 1651

My good Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter brought me great comfort because of the consolation good M. Eudo, your father and benefactor,¹ is giving you. I am writing him a note of thanks for his great charity toward you and Sister Geneviève,² and I ask Our Lord to give you His Spirit in order to do His work well.

We are going to send you some help. One of your Sisters will leave here this week to go to Nantes, God willing, and from there to Hennebont. I hope you will give her a cordial welcome.

I am very worried about Sister Geneviève's ailment. I ask Our Lord to restore her to health and to keep you in good health, since you use it so well in His service. I am sure that living so far away and the difficulty of the dialect³ are a little troublesome for you, but we find cause for suffering wherever we are. God has made this necessary everywhere, and the state of those who serve Him is most subject to it; so, the better you serve Him, the more likely His Goodness will try you. He sanctifies souls by crosses, just as He has redeemed them by His own Cross.

Your soul will be blessed, Sister, if you bear patiently the troubles of mind and body His Providence sends you, or which come to you from within and without. They can come to you from all quarters, and those persons who console you today may humiliate you tomorrow.

Let us be steadfast, Sister, in wanting God's Will to be accomplished in us. Let us be ready to make good use of tribulation and of all the divers events of life so as to attain that blessed life, where we shall realize that God does us a favor in allowing us to suffer while serving Him. Ask Him for this light for me in advance.

I assure you that I offer you to Him very often because I am, in His love, dear Sister, for you and for our good Sister, whom I greet affectionately, your most affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Anne Hardemont, Daughter of Charity,
Servant of the Poor of the Hennebont Hospital, in Hennebont
1343. - TO N.

April 22, 1651

Vincent de Paul writes of the many services rendered by the Missionaries to the distressed people of the provinces ravaged by the scourge of war.

1344. - TO A SUPERIOR

What you write me requires some explanation. What you are saying is true of those who want everything to give way to them, nothing to oppose them, everything to go their way, people to obey them without comment or delay and, in a manner of speaking, to be adored. This, however, is not true of those who love contradiction and contempt, who consider themselves the servants of others, who govern in the light of how Our Lord governed. He put up with the

boorishness, rivalry, and lack of faith of His companions, etc., and said that He had come to serve and not to be served.¹

I know, Monsieur, that this same Savior helps you to act with humility, forbearance, gentleness, and patience, thank God; and that you have only used these terms² to express your difficulty better and to persuade me to relieve you of your office. We shall try, therefore, to send someone to replace you.³

1345. - TO PIERRE NIVELLE, BISHOP OF LUÇON

Paris, April 23, 1651

Excellency,

Some time ago I took the liberty of sending you a copy of the letter which most of our Bishops of the kingdom wanted to send Our Holy Father the Pope to entreat him to pronounce on the points of the new doctrine.¹ I sent it for you to sign, if you wanted to be included among them. Since I have not had the honor of receiving any reply, I have reason to fear that you did not get it, or that a harmful document, which the adherents of this doctrine have sent everywhere to dissuade our Bishops from this plan,² may have given you second thoughts about this proposition.

For this reason, Excellency, I am sending you a second copy. I beg you, in the name of Our Lord, to consider the need for this letter because of the extraordinary division taking place in families, cities, and universities. It is a fire that is raging daily, affecting minds, and threatening the Church with irreparable devastation, unless it is promptly remedied.

The present state of affairs does not permit us to expect an ecumenical council. Furthermore, you know how long it takes to assemble, and how much time was needed for the last one.³ This remedy is too remote for such a pressing evil.

Who, then, can remedy this evil? Doubtless, it must be the Holy See, not only because other means are lacking but also because, in its last session,⁴ the Council of Trent refers to it the resolution of any difficulties arising from what it had decreed. Now, if the Church is canonically assembled in an ecumenical council like that one, and if the Holy Spirit is guiding the same Church--and this cannot be doubted--why would we not follow the light of this Spirit, Who makes known how we must act in these uncertain circumstances; namely, to have recourse to the Sovereign Pontiff? This reason alone, Excellency, leads me to include you along with the sixty bishops who have already signed this letter, in addition to several others who are to sign it, without any other preliminary agreement than a simple suggestion.

If someone felt he⁵ should not declare himself ahead of time on a matter about which it⁶ must be the judge, the response could be given him that, for the above-mentioned reasons, it would seem that there is not to be any council; consequently, it cannot be a judge in the matter. But let

us suppose the contrary: recourse to the Pope would not be an impediment. In times past, the saints wrote to him in opposition to new doctrines and were still present as judges at the Councils in which they were condemned.

If, by chance, someone were to reply that the Popes may impose silence on this question, not wanting people to mention, discuss, or write about it, they might also be told that this does not apply to the Pope, who is head of the Church, and to whom all the members must refer. It is to him that we must have recourse for reassurance in doubts and agitations. To whom, then, could we turn, and how would His Majesty be aware of troubles that arise, if they were not referred to him⁷ for a solution?

If someone else, Excellency, feared that a delayed or inconclusive reply from our Holy Father would increase the boldness of the opponents, I could assure him that the Nuncio said he had word from Rome that, as soon as His Holiness sees a letter from the King and another from a large number of our Bishops of France, he will pronounce on this doctrine. Now, His Majesty has decided to write, and the Chief Justice⁸ has said also that, provided the Bull from the Holy See does not state that it was given on the advice of the Inquisition of Rome,⁹ it will be accepted and verified by the Parlement.

But what will be gained, a third person may say, even if the Pope does pronounce, since those who uphold these new doctrines will not submit? That may be true of some, who were part of the cabal of the late Monsieur [de Saint-Cyran],¹⁰ who not only had no intention of submitting to the decisions of the Pope but did not even believe in Councils. I know this, Excellency, because I knew him well, and those persons may be as obstinate as he, blinded by their own judgment. However, of the others who follow them only because they are attracted by new things, or because of some bond of friendship or family, or because they think they are doing the right thing, there are very few who will not back out rather than rebel against their own lawful Father. We experienced this with regard to the book about the Two Heads¹¹ and about the Catéchisme de la Grâce.¹² As soon as people heard that these had been censured, they never mentioned them again.

Consequently, Excellency, it is greatly to be hoped that as many people have their eyes opened about this as they did about the above, and that others be prevented in good time from joining such a dangerous faction. The example of a man named Labadie is proof of the dangerous character of this doctrine.¹³ He is an apostate priest, who was considered a grand preacher. After causing great harm in Picardy and then in Gascony, he became a Huguenot in Montauban. In a book he wrote on his alleged conversion,¹⁴ he declared that, having been a Jansenist, he found that the doctrine upheld there is the same belief he has embraced. In fact, Excellency, the ministers, speaking of those people in their

sermons, boast that most Catholics are on their side and that they will soon have the rest.

Since this is so, what should not be done to extinguish this fire, which gives the advantage to the sworn enemies of our religion? Who would not attack this little monster, which is beginning to ravage the Church and will, in the end, destroy it, if it is not suffocated at birth? What would so many brave, holy bishops today not want to have done, if they had lived in Calvin's time?

We see now the mistake of those of that period, who did not strongly oppose a doctrine which would cause so many wars and divisions. Furthermore, there was a great deal of ignorance then, but now that our bishops are more learned, they are also more zealous. The Bishop of Cahors is one of these; he wrote me recently that he had received a slanderous libel against that letter.¹⁵ "This," he says, "is the spirit of heresy, which cannot tolerate just corrections and reprimands, and attacks immediately with violent calumnies. We have joined battle at last, and I have always felt that it had to come to this." Because I had asked him to take care of his health after an attack he suffered, he said: "I assure you that I shall do so, if only to stay in the fight, which I foresee will have to take place. I hope, with God's help, that we shall overcome them."¹⁶

Those are the sentiments of that good Bishop. We are sure that yours are identical, Excellency, since you preach and have others in your diocese preach the universal teachings of the Church. Undoubtedly, you will be happy to request that our Holy Father have the same done everywhere to repress these new opinions, which correspond so much with the errors of Calvin. Indeed, what is at stake is the glory of God, peace in the Church and, I venture to say, in the State as well. We see this more clearly in Paris than can be imagined elsewhere; otherwise, Excellency, I would not have bothered you with such a long discourse. I most humbly ask your goodness to pardon me, since this same goodness gave me the confidence to be so bold.

1346. - SOME PRIESTS OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[April 1651]¹

We cannot begin to tell you how many sick persons have been healed, how many distressed have been consoled, how many bashful poor² have been saved from despair because of your alms. Without them, everything would have perished both in town and country.

The alms you sent us from Paris during Holy Week have rescued several young women from the imminent danger of losing their honor. We spent Lent in the rural areas, in the corporal and spiritual assistance of the poor inhabitants of one hundred thirty villages. Forty pastors have received ten livres a month. By this means they have been able to reside in their parishes and carry out all their pastoral functions.

We spent seven hundred livres of your alms for sickles, flails, winnowing baskets, and other tools to help the poor gain their livelihood by working at the harvest. Our barley is growing very well, thank God, and with the seeds you sent us we are hoping for great relief for next winter.

1347. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

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1348. - TO SAINT LOUISE

I ask Mademoiselle Le Gras not to go out today. Her good will and obedience will be more pleasing to God than the Sacrifice at which she wishes to assist. If she is in a fit state tomorrow, we shall have the consolation of seeing her.

1349. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

Paris, April 26, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

While waiting to be able to share your letters with the Ladies who are helping the people in the ruined border areas¹ and to find out from them whether you might extend your distribution to Huguenots, as well as to Catholics, and to the poor people who can work on the fortifications, as well as to the sick and infirm. I can tell you that their original intention was to assist only those who cannot work nor earn their living and would be in danger of dying of starvation if someone did not assist them. In fact, as soon as anyone is strong enough to work, tools of his trade are bought for him and nothing more is given to him. Accordingly, the alms are not for those able to work on the fortifications or to do something else, but for seriously ill sick persons, orphans, or the elderly.

I think M. Berthe² must have informed you fully about everything, especially about the way these distributions are made. I will, nevertheless, be glad if the Ladies give orders in line with your suggestions to satisfy the Governor,³ for whom I still have the greatest esteem and reverence. M. Berthe sent me word that he would try to go and see you; perhaps he is in Sedan now. Explain to him your difficulties about separating your Daughters of Charity. I approve in advance whatever you both agree to do.

Please send me, Monsieur, a copy of the marriage certificate of a man named Pierre Thibaut, whose wedding took place in your church six or seven years ago, at the most. I do not remember the name of the woman, who is now a widow and needs a proof in Paris that she was married. Her husband was killed in Vandy⁴ a year or two ago.

I sent you the lives of the saints for the Governor's brother-in-law⁵ a good two weeks ago. Write and tell me whether you received it. Please greet your family for me; it is dear to me because it truly belongs to God. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

It is right for you to pay, on the Governor's orders, whatever you are taxed for the preservation of the city. At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Coglée 1350. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT Mercuès, April 26, 1651 Monsieur,

Monsieur Cuissot¹ told me he had written to you about the care and diligence I took to prevent your men, whom you had sent to Périgueux, from leaving. I was unable to do so, however, because I learned about it too late; the matter had been settled when I was informed of it. I fully realized, from a letter from the Bishop of Périgueux² and the report M. Cuissot gave me on it, that he was not the cause, but that it was Monsieur de Bassancourt³ who got the better of things. I think I told you that, when he returned from Alet, I knew he wanted the seminary directed by secular clergy, as he still does, but that I had dissuaded him from this and got him to resolve to give the direction to your men.

I have the feeling that a report made by the Pastor of Saint-Sulpice on the seminary, seminarians, and those who should be in charge of it⁴ had a great deal to do with this and is perhaps the sole cause. The Dean of Carennac⁵ sent it to me. I am going to write and tell him that I found it a fine piece of work and well drawn up but that I think that putting it into effect is not only very difficult but impossible. He says that not many people are needed to run it--three priests and the Bishop who will be the Superior will suffice--and he goes on to describe the qualifications of these priests and what they should be.

I think I have one of the finest and perhaps the largest group of clergy of any diocese in this kingdom. I am going to ask the Dean of Carennac, who is from my diocese, to name just one priest who has these qualifications. I shall say, furthermore, that I do not think I have come across such a one in fifty years. There is a vast difference between practice and theory.

I have (I think) irrefutable arguments to the contrary to demonstrate that, of necessity, the direction of seminaries should be entrusted to religious Communities. Saint Charles, whom God gave to His Church as an example of perfection for all bishops, acted in this way when he entrusted the direction of his seminaries to Communities.

The Bishop of Périgueux will be here a week from today, and I hope he will stay the whole month of May. We will find out in greater detail what happened.

In the meantime, allow me to ask you, as I now do, to take the trouble to read the enclosed report. In it you will learn of an incident that took place at my synod, the like of which has been unheard of until now in the Church of God.⁶ The report includes only part of what happened there, since it was drawn up in a hurry because I was obliged to come here because of my ailment, and those who witnessed it had to return to their benefices. The leader of those

unionists tried to coerce some priests in my episcopal palace to take letters of approbation from him to act as curates in my diocese.

Never has the town of Cahors--so they say--seen anything like it, so pious and devout was the procession in the morning, in which six hundred pastors and all the clergy of my cathedral church took part. It was so orderly that everyone was moved to devotion. A large crowd of outsiders come every year to see this synod, which is considered the finest in the kingdom. This time, however, it was so large, and there were so many important persons there from inside and outside the diocese, and the squares and streets where the procession passed were so jammed, that it could hardly get through. The windows of the houses were also filled with people watching it go by. But three hours later those unionists and their followers filled this town with such a great scandal that they say the town has never seen anything like it. Pious people were seen coming into my episcopal palace weeping bitterly. Everyone, except those rebels, was deeply grieved and was shouting: "Punish them! Chastise them!"

I am writing to the bishops who are in Paris and am sending the agents the report and part of the proceedings we will have drawn up to be presented to them. I think this affair is of such importance to all the bishops and to the whole Church that I wonder if they will want to inform the Queen about it and take it to the High Council. In the meantime, when you see the Chancellor,⁷ I entreat you to express to him how greatly I, his humble servant, rejoiced at his glorious recall. Take the opportunity to tell him about this extraordinary incident and persuade him to grant us his protection, for which I am hoping. I would be pleased if you would talk to him about it before the bishops do so.

My health has improved because I did what you had ordered me to do; namely, to obey the doctors exactly, but I told them that I myself am the chief doctor. They all admit that they have never seen a better constitution than mine, and they think I will bury the persons who want to succeed me. God will arrange matters according to His own Will, which we shall always adore and to which we shall submit with the greatest pleasure.

Meanwhile, I entreat Him to grant us as much grace as I desire for you. I am, Monsieur, your....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1351. - TO N.

April 29, 1651

Vincent de Paul writes of the services rendered by his men in the provinces which war has reduced to the most frightful state of misery.

1352. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[1651]¹

Mademoiselle Le Gras will please propose only the gist of things, without giving the pros and cons.²

It seems advisable to omit the first proposal and keep to what we said before M. P[ortail] was sent for. I have told him the reasons for this.

Here are the points: (1) the recall of Sisters Chefdeville³ and Carcireux;⁴ (2) whether the new officers should seek the advice of the former ones; (3) the Council.
1353. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT
May 2 [1651]¹

Most Honored Father,

I always do everything so badly that I think this is why I do not take sufficient time to ask you for the advice we so badly need. This leads me to entreat you most humbly to have the charity to send for me at your earliest convenience or to take the trouble to stop by here.

Madame de Saint-Mandé² told some of our Sisters that a meeting was to be held today for the business concerning the babies. I beg you most humbly to take care that the Ladies do not get it into their heads to send them all back to Bicêtre.³ It seems to me that experience in several matters should keep us, with your approval, from deciding on that, and I really would not want us to have to give a refusal. The work appears to be going along so well, Most Honored Father, that I cannot help telling you my fear that, if these Ladies try again to put their noses into everything, they will disrupt the guidance God has granted it now that they hardly ever meddle in it any more.

Friday I sent a list of our needs to Madame de Saint-Mandé to pressure her to get some money. I did so a little reluctantly because of the fear I mentioned to you. Nevertheless, I think that caused the assembly to come to a decision on it.

I entreat your charity to reflect before God on the means of preventing this from ruining anything and to remember that I am, by the order of His Providence, Most Honored Father, your very grateful daughter and most obedient servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the venerable Priests of the Mission
1354. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
May 3, 1651

Now is not the time to discuss your proposal to forbid the Capuchin Fathers to receive your parishioners for the Sacraments during the Easter season. It is advisable to wait until there is an Archbishop in Reims.¹

The practice regarding marriages between Catholics and Huguenots is that you must not perform any without the express permission of those who govern the diocese.

You ask me if, when you need to discuss with a person from the outside a matter about which your companion is not competent, you may go aside from him. Yes, Monsieur, you

should move off a little and take the person a short distance away.

I am edified by your condescension to M. Dufour's opinions. He is a good servant of God and receives grace from Him to give you good advice.

A superior should always remain free to officiate, preach, and perform other public functions or to have them done by someone else he considers suitable. He should never give this responsibility to any individual, except with this provision. So, it is good for everyone to do this on your order but not all to the same degree; those who are more gifted should be assigned to it more often than the others.

You can rest assured that, if I had some correction to give you, I would do so quite simply. However, you are doing very well, thank God, and your leadership seems quite good to me. I do not even recall getting any report to the contrary about you on that point. If I were to receive one, you need not fear that I would be influenced by it; I know you too well. Therefore, Monsieur, you must beware as much as possible of any suspicion, and go straight to God.

No, Monsieur, please do not go and eat at Monsieur Petizon's² house nor anywhere else; that would cause many inconveniences. Moreover, I strongly hope that you will go to the Governor's³ house as rarely as possible. I think the contrary contributes little to the purpose for which you go there. You may visit him now and again, and excuse yourself from dining at his table--not all at once just now, but gradually.

Thanks be to God we have prevented the command of Donchery⁴ from being given to a Huguenot.

Would to God that the reprimands you gave M. Fabert were yet to be given. You went a little too far. Please restrain yourself on similar occasions because, although you may be prompted by a good motive, that still leaves something to be desired. You know he is very wise, and you should realize that he does everything with reflection, weight, and measure;⁵ for all that, to want to require him to adopt customs other than those he now observes would be to accuse him of the contrary. Neither should you think he is not acting sincerely with the Company, for he acts as he judges it advisable.

If we consider ourselves unworthy of good treatment, we shall find that what he does for us is too good for us. As a matter of fact, he is very kind and supportive to us, and the experience of the past gives us promise for a continuation of this. Therefore, the best advice I can give you--and can take myself--is to have great respect for him, defer often to his good guidance, and express deep gratitude to him for the favors he does us; in a word, congratulate him for his devout actions rather than exhort him to do others.

One of your letters, received during my illness, brought me great joy. In it you write that you are ready to leave

your present office, submit to another man, and do whatever holy obedience may indicate for you. I praise God that you are so open to the good pleasure of God. That shows how greatly you desire to be a good Christian and a perfect Missionary, for whom I have great hopes for the edification of the Company.

If the former Pastor was forbidden to hear confessions in his house and is still doing so despite the prohibition, warn him two or three times about this yourself because, since the Vicar-General of Reims has only been installed by the Chapter, he cannot prevent him from doing so and will be unwilling to forbid him to continue.

1355. - TO THE SUPERIOR GENERAL¹ OF THE CONGREGATION OF SAINT-MAUR²

Saint-Lazare, May 4

I take the liberty of most humbly entreating the Most Reverend Father General of the Congregation of Saint-Maur kindly to send me, some time today, two of his Fathers who are familiar with the Saint-Ouen³ affair so I may speak with them about it. I would not make this most humble request if I were able to leave the house; I would do myself the honor of going to discuss it with him in person, but an ailment I have obliges me to stay in my room and leads me to hope I may renew to him by this note the offer of my obedience.

1356. - TO A PASTOR IN LE MANS

May 7, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

In the letter you did me the honor of writing me, I have examined the reasons given on both sides in the little conference between your council and ours, and how you persist in requesting the same thing of us despite the fact that they agreed that we do not owe it in strict justice. Assuredly, Monsieur, if it were merely a question of satisfying you, we would do so entirely and gladly, but you know this would be a breach of the contract, in which you made no reservation concerning the woods. In addition, this violation would serve as a pretext for those other confreres to make a similar request of us or to make other claims.

I entreat you most humbly, Monsieur, to let us leave it at that, as we have done since you did us the favor of adopting us as your own children. At that time, we received a new life, and now you will confirm us in peace, as well as in the perfect acknowledgement of our obligations toward you. For my part, Monsieur, I shall always be full of esteem and affection for you, whom I offer very frequently to God. In Him I am, Monsieur, your....

VINCENT DEPAUL

Addressed: The Pastor of the Hôtel-Dieu of Le Mans

1357. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS¹

[May 1651]²

My most humble thanks, Excellency, for the honor you did your seminary in consoling it with your dear presence and

paternal instructions during the ordination. I thank God for the favor He granted those who had the happiness of hearing you and of observing the ecclesiastical spirit at its source. I hope they will remember this all their lives and that its effects will last for ages to come.

Moreover, Excellency, I received the letter with which you honored me, with joy because it is your letter and with sorrow because of what happened at your synod. In all that, Excellency, I admire, on the one hand, the guidance of God, who tests in this way the virtue of one of His greatest servants and, on the other, the good use Your Excellency has made of this trial. I ask His Divine Goodness to strengthen you more and more in this ordeal so that, by your patience, you will attain the objective of your holy intentions, to the shame of those who have dared to thwart you.

1358. - A SUPERIOR¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

I have admired and still admire your reply. It is as beautiful as it is forceful. I treasure it, respect it, and am applying it to myself.

1359. - THE TOWN MAGISTRATES OF RETHEL TO SAINT VINCENT

Rethel, May 8, 1651

Monsieur and Reverend Father,

If the multiplication and the repetition of requests mentioned in our letters of March 17¹ cause us to overstep once again the limits of propriety, their urgency leads us to hope from your goodness a benevolent indulgence regarding our undertaking. Its only objective is the glory of God in seeking a charitable service for the relief of the poor afflicted people of this town. There is such a great number of the sick here, overwhelmed by such deplorable need, that it is impossible to put it into words. Extortion, wholesale plundering by false friends, demolition of buildings, the felling of fruit trees, rapes, killings, sacrileges, fires set to sacred places as well as to private homes--all these are endured daily: crimes committed at our doorsteps, passing as deeds of adroitness, with no possibility of our remedying the situation.

To recount all this is nothing. No pen, regardless of how prolific it may be, could portray adequately the pitiful state to which the cruelty and the unbridled disorder of the soldiers have reduced this u[nfortunate]² region. In a word, it is a desolation as indescribable as it is inconceivable.

We think that a Father of your honorable Company has represented the above to you, plus the fact that the only things seen and spoken of in these parts are pillage, want, sickness, death, and especially starvation, which is so great that the poor are forced to eat the flesh of animals left exposed in the dump. All these frightful calamities would drive us to despair, if God did not make us see that our faults have drawn upon us the wrath of His justice in punishment of our offenses.

This consideration of appeasing His anger has revived our nearly beaten spirits so we can bear our woes more

patiently. It also obliges us, by a duty of piety in the midst of such wretchedness, to implore mercy of everyone and especially the assistance of your natural goodness. We assure you, as everyone knows (and to our great regret), that there will never be a cause more worthy of compassion, nor any place in the world within the confines of Christianity, where alms may be dispensed more profitably, more fully, and more meritoriously in the eyes of Divine Providence than to the poor needy people of our pitiful town.

Therefore, Monsieur, please be open to the urgent solicitations of our petitions in these circumstances. Through your intervention, give us strength and valor for the fulfillment of our desires. Universal esteem for your merits has earned this power for you. For the love of God, look with compassion on our real misery so that, when the fruits of Christian charity have been distributed more effectively, through your prudent leadership, to those who need them the most, we may be totally obliged to Your Reverence for such kind assistance. We entreat this of you with the full extent of our power. God alone will be the reward of your charitable actions and will help us preserve the memory of your benefits, together with the honor of declaring that we are, in heart and affection, Monsieur, your most humble servants.

THE TOWN MAGISTRATES

1360. - TO THE TOWN MAGISTRATES OF RETHEL
Paris, May 20, 1651
Gentlemen,

I received the letter you did me the honor of writing me, with profound respect equaled by my desire of rendering you my most humble services. Your letter was read yesterday at a meeting of the Ladies of Charity, at which the Archbishop-elect of Reims¹ was present. Everyone was deeply moved by the state of suffering of your town and edified by the goodness of those who are willing to contribute fifty livres a week for the relief of the poorest people. Nothing can be added, however, to the two hundred fifty livres sent from here each week. God grant that this can be continued!

It is incredible how difficult it is for these Ladies to bear the burden of such a great expense, which amounts to more than fifteen thousand livres monthly for Champagne and Picardy. I most humbly entreat you to believe, gentlemen, that I will do my utmost to give you satisfaction and assistance for your poor in the town as well as in the neighboring villages. The intention of the benefactors is that both be visited and helped by the priest of our Company who is there, as far as what is given to him can be stretched, giving preference to the sick poor and the most abandoned over the less needy.

Mon Dieu! gentlemen, how pleased Our Lord is with your concern for the relief of His suffering members! I ask Him to be your reward for this, to bless you and your

government, to give peace to the kingdom, and to deliver His people from the evil they are enduring.

I offer you my obedience with all possible humility, since it is due you, in the love of Our Lord, gentlemen, from your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: The Town Magistrates, Governors of the town of Rethel

1361. - TO JACQUES DESCLAUX, BISHOP OF DAX

Paris, May 21, 1651

Excellency,

I thank you most humbly for consenting to sign the letter for the Pope and for returning it to me. I await the one from the Bishop of Bayonne.¹

I am sending you a report in which you will see the means that were used to remove a Community of nuns from the jurisdiction of Regulars. It seems very well suited to your plan and in line with the information I sent you from the Bishop of Saint-Paul.²

Whatever I can do here and in Rome to be of service to you and for the welfare of the house that needs your help, I shall do most devotedly. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Excellency, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: The Bishop of Acqs

1362. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

May 22 [1651]¹

Most Honored Father,

My inability to express myself clearly concerning what I told you about our good Sister Julienne² troubles me. It is caused by the muddled thinking my mind generates when I need to tell you things I feel obliged to say. I beg your charity not to write to her in such a way that she might think she should stay where she has been for a long time now, since, in fact, you will perhaps not consider this advisable.

I also feel it my duty to tell your charity that I was, and still am, somewhat sorry to abandon those little prayers. I thought the Blessed Virgin wanted me to render her this modest tribute of gratitude. I console myself by telling her what prevents me from doing so, and am determined to try to please her in some other way and to serve her with greater fervor. However, my resolutions are carried out so feebly and are often neglected!

Help me in your charity by often giving me your blessing and presenting me to God, totally unworthy though I be, as a good father does for his prodigal children. You know that I am one of them and am also, Most Honored Father, your most obedient servant.

L. DE M.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1363. - THE TOWN MAGISTRATES OF RETHEL TO SAINT VINCENT

Rethel, May 22, 1651

Monsieur,

You know that urgent need drives those who are suffering to undertake and venture anything in order to strike at the root of their continued misfortunes, or at least to find some sort of relief in their misery. That is the reason for this letter, causing us to turn fearlessly and confidently to Your Reverence so as to move you to compassion by representing the pitiful state of our town. True, the Supreme Goodness is afflicting us with war, famine, and an infinity of illnesses which, for lack of food, have caused the death of several persons. It is also true, however, that at the same time He is opening up a fine, vast field of action for the practice of Christian charity. This leads us to hope for some salutary relief from your zealous piety, the effects of which we began to experience through you and through the care of one of your Fathers of the Mission, who is working here with the greatest possible dedication.

Unfortunately, however, our plans were thwarted and ruined by the arrival of the Navarre regiment, composed of thirty companies. By order of Monsieur de Besançon, who has little love for our town, they arrived at our gates last Friday and, arms in hand, as if we were enemies, first forced their way into the lower part of the town. They plundered, beat, exasperated, and wounded the people, and committed every imaginable kind of atrocity. Then, not content with extorting by their cruelty as much as they wanted from the poor inhabitants, ruined and reduced to begging, they forced them as the crowning blow to sell the poor rags covering their own nakedness and that of their children, while dying wretchedly of starvation. In addition, on that day (a market day) the soldiers of the regiment robbed the vendors on the highways and broke their arms and legs so that no food might be brought into the town.

In a word, the entire region is but one horrendous sight. It is even more horrible to witness so much ruthlessness and to watch things go from bad to worse from one day to the next, without being able to find anyone attentive to our just and lamentable pleas. This failure to find any help, coupled with the duration of our miseries, makes life more inhuman and murderous than a frightful death.

To tell the truth, if we as Christians did not observe the laws of restraint, all this chaos would lead us to end our days in gloomy despair because our increased suffering affects us more acutely since it is caused by persons pretending to be our friends, although by their disorderly conduct they reveal just the opposite.

This is what gives us the strongest grounds for complaint, but all in vain because, until now, no one but Your Reverence and those sent by you has had compassion on our misfortunes. With all our hearts we beg you ardently with redoubled entreaties to publicize our miseries so that, when they reach the ears of the highest powers, with whom

your exemplary life has given you credibility, we may get some help from them.

We implore this kind of assistance from your goodness, asking not only for a continuation of the aid you have already begun to give but also, through you, an increase of charity toward the poor, whose number has increased because of the violence and destruction of the above-mentioned regiment. Urgent need causes us to go beyond the limits of propriety but, since it has no law prescribed to repress its audacity, it bears on its forehead, along with this, its legitimate excuse. This leads us to hope for only good results from you. God will reward you for it, and we shall have the honor of remaining always your most humble and obedient servants.

THE TOWN MAGISTRATES

Addressed: Reverend Father Vincent, General of the Priests of the Mission of Saint-Lazare, in Paris
1364. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT
[May 23, 1651]¹

I would like to know, Most Honored Father, if I may postpone my confession until tomorrow evening, or if Thursday might be more convenient for you, and whether my confession should cover a longer time than the last one almost three months ago.

To give you an account of how I spent today, let me tell you that, since I read the Mémorial of Granada instead of La Guide des Pécheurs,² my mind was paralyzed with fear of the punishments it depicts. However, I was not apprehensive about them because I did not have sufficient fear of God; yet, I seemed to be totally immersed in some vague sort of terror. This passed somewhat during the meditation I made on sin, after reading the first chapter of La Guide, when I realized I had misunderstood. Just the words "God is who is" filled me with peace, although I certainly discovered in myself offenses against His Goodness.

Shall I continue this reading? Shall I await your instructions about my confession--I mean about preparing myself for the period it should cover? I greatly need your charitable assistance in this to be freed from the illusions of my imagination, which I think cause me to sin so often that I am ashamed to say that I am, Monsieur, far from being your most obedient daughter and grateful servant.

L. DE M.

I fear I am too persistent, although I think your Charity will look upon me as a poor person.

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent
1365. - TO JEAN MARTIN,¹ IN GENOA
Paris, May 26, 1651
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The latest letters I have received from Genoa give me reason to believe that by the time you get this letter you will have entire responsibility for the family. Not only

are you replacing M. Blatiron but M. Dehorgny as well, both of whom we are expecting here. So, Monsieur, I ask Our Lord to give you a double and a triple spirit or, rather, the fullness of His own Spirit, so you can do alone the work of two or three.

I ask your pardon for not answering you sooner about your brother. It slipped my mind; moreover, he had promised me he would write to you himself about the state of your affairs, which he did not do, unless he had the letter delivered to you by someone other than us. I was, however, expecting that. Now that I want to recall what he told me so as to share it with you, I cannot remember, so I will have to talk to him again. After that, I will take action in accord with what he thinks advisable, in pursuance of your power of attorney, which has not yet been used. Before you gave it, Monsieur, your brother was pushing to get it; now that he knows we have it, he never mentions it.

I send greetings to the Company with all possible humility and affection. I embrace your soul affectionately and recommend my own to your prayers in common and individually, as well as the soul of one of our good priests, who died in Richelieu. He is referred to as M. Monceau the younger to distinguish him from his brother, who is still with us and is living in the same house.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1366. - TO A SUPERIOR¹

We are sending Monsieur...to replace you, in response to your request. I hope the family will see in your example the submission and trust each man owes to his Superior.²

1367. - TO NICOLAS PAVILLON AND ÉTIENNE CAULET

[June 1651]¹

Excellencies,

I have received with the respect due to your virtue and dignity the letter you did me the honor of writing toward the end of May in reply to my letters concerning some questions of the times. I found in it many thoughts worthy of your position in the Church, which seem to incline you to adopt an attitude of silence with regard to the present disputes.² Nevertheless, I shall still take the liberty of pointing out to you certain reasons which might perhaps lead you to think differently, and I entreat you, Excellencies, prostrate in spirit at your feet, to allow me to do so.

First of all, you express some fear that the decision we seek from His Holiness may not be accepted with the submission and obedience all Christians owe to the voice of the Sovereign Pastor and that the Spirit of God may not find hearts sufficiently open for Him to bring about true union among them. I will readily point out to you that, when the heresies of Luther and Calvin, for example, began to make their appearance, if their condemnation had been delayed

until their followers seemed disposed to submission and union, those heresies would still be regarded as indifferent matters to be followed or rejected and would have corrupted more people than they did.

So then, if these opinions, whose harmful effects on people's consciences we see, are of this nature, we shall wait in vain for those who disseminate them to concur with the defenders of the teachings of the Church. We must not hope for that; it will never happen. To delay obtaining their condemnation from the Holy See is to give them time to spread their venom. It is also to deprive some persons of rank and deep piety of the merit of the obedience they have solemnly declared to render to the decrees of the Holy Father, as soon as they see them. They only want to know the truth and, while awaiting the fulfillment of this desire, they continue to remain in this party in good faith. In so doing, they swell its ranks and strengthen it, attached to it by its apparent good and the reformation its members preach. This is the sheepskin with which the real wolves always cover themselves in order to deceive and seduce souls.

Second, Excellencies, you say that the zeal of each of the two parties in maintaining its own opinion leaves little hope for perfect union between them. Yet, this goal must be pursued, which obliges me to point out to you that no union can be attained when there is a diversity and opposition of opinions in matters of faith and religion, unless a third party is consulted. When there are no Councils, this can only be the Pope. Anyone who is unwilling to bring about union in this manner³ is incapable of union and, apart from that, the latter is not even to be desired. Laws must never be made compatible with crimes, no more than lying should be in harmony with the truth.

Third, this uniformity you want to see among the bishops would be most desirable, provided it were not prejudicial to faith, for there must be no union in evil and error. However, if this union should take place, it would be up to the lesser party to join the greater one, and the member to be united to the head, as is being proposed. At least five-sixths have expressed a willingness to submit to what the Pope says in the absence of a Council, which cannot meet because of the wars. If, even after that, division and--if you wish--schism still exist, then the blame should be placed on those who do not want any judge and are unwilling to submit to the majority of bishops, to whom they do not defer, no more than they do to the Pope.

This brings us to a fourth reason, which serves as a reply to what you so kindly tell me, Excellencies; namely, that each party believes that right and truth are on its side. I recognize that, but you are well aware that every heretic has said the same thing and it has still not saved them from the condemnation and anathemas fulminated against them by the Popes and the Councils. Union with them has not

been the means of curing the evil. On the contrary, fire and sword have been applied to them, sometimes too late, as could happen here. True, one side accuses the other, but the difference is that one asks for judges and the other wants none, which is a bad sign. I repeat, they do not seek a solution from the Pope because they know this is possible, and they make a pretence of asking the Council for one because they think this is impossible in the present state of affairs. Even if they thought it might be possible, they would reject it, just as they rejected the other.

In my opinion, to see the bishops at variance would not be a source of division to freethinkers and heretics, any more than it would be a scandal to good people. Besides the fact that only a very small number would be unwilling to sign the letters written to the Pope on this matter, it was not extraordinary in the ancient Councils that all the members were not of the same opinion. This also shows the need of the Pope's being informed since, as Vicar of Jesus Christ, he is head of the whole Church and, consequently, Superior of the bishops.

Fifth, people do not see that, since the fires of war are burning almost everywhere in Christendom, the Pope is prevented from handing down a decision with all the necessary conditions and formalities prescribed by the Council of Trent, which refers the choice of them entirely to His Holiness. Many holy prelates of old consulted and appealed to him, as a rule, in doubts of faith, even when they were assembled, as we see in the writings of the holy Fathers and in the Church annals. Now, far from anticipating that a failure to accept his decision is something to be presumed or feared, it is, rather, a means of distinguishing the true children of the Church from the self-opinionated.

As for the solution you propose, Excellencies, of strictly forbidding both parties to make dogmatic assertions, I beg you most humbly to consider that this has already been tried--but to no avail--and has only served to give greater leeway to error. Because the latter was being treated on a par with truth, it used this time to put down roots and spread. Only too late were attempts made to uproot it, since this doctrine is not simply a matter of theory but of practice as well. The result is that consciences can no longer bear the trouble and unrest arising from this doubt which is being formed in the hearts of individuals; namely, whether or not Jesus Christ died for them, and other similar questions. When certain persons here heard that others, to console the dying, were telling them they should trust in the goodness of Our Lord, who had died for them, they told the sick not to count on that because Our Lord had not died for all.

Allow me also, Excellencies, to add to these considerations that, since those who profess the new teaching see that people fear their threats, they are

increasing them and are making preparations for a vigorous rebellion. They make use of your silence as a powerful argument in their favor and, in a pamphlet they are publishing, they boast that you share their opinion.⁴ On the other hand, those who hold fast in simplicity to the ancient belief are weakening and becoming discouraged, seeing that they are not being universally supported. And would you not be very sorry, Excellencies, if some day, contrary to your holy intentions, your name might serve to confirm some in their stubbornness and shake the faith of others?

As for referring the matter to an Ecumenical Council, how can one be convoked during these wars? Forty years elapsed from the time Calvin and Luther began to disturb the Church until the Council of Trent was held. So then, there is no prompter remedy than recourse to the Pope. The Council of Trent itself refers us to him in the last chapter of its final session, of which I am sending you an excerpt.

Once again, Excellencies, do not fear that the Pope will not be obeyed, as he should be, when he has made a pronouncement. Besides the fact that this reason for fearing disobedience is present in all heresies, which consequently would have to be allowed to reign with impunity, we have a very recent example in the false doctrine of the two so-called Heads of the Church,⁵ which came from the same source. When the Pope condemned it, his decision was obeyed, and now there is no further discussion of that new opinion.

You, Excellencies, know all these arguments and others better than I, who would like to learn them from you, whom I revere as my Fathers and as Doctors of the Church. Surely that is why there are, at present, few bishops in France who have not signed the letter previously proposed to you,⁶ or another drafted by one of these same bishops, which has been highly approved. I am sending you, therefore, a copy of it because the latter one may perhaps be more to your liking.⁷

1368. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, June 16, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have the consolation of writing to you alone, contemplating you holding the place of three persons. Yes, Monsieur, I am speaking to your heart alone with all the breadth and tenderness of mine, which indeed cherishes you dearly. However, I like to think that in writing to you I am also writing to Messieurs Dehorgny and Blatiron because you are substituting in their duties, and it seems to me that they are acting in you while they have come here to work for the good of the whole Company. This thought, joined to the attachment God has given you for the Company, will help you bear patiently the burden they have left you.

I ask Our Lord, Monsieur, to redouble your strength, to sustain you with the essence of His Spirit, to gladden you with the hope of His glory and the success of your work, and

to fill the family with peace and confidence in His divine guidance. These are my wishes, but only God can cause you to experience their ardor and effects. I often address them also to Him, particularly during the retreat I am now making, which I recommend to your prayers and those of your little community. Prostrate in spirit at their feet and yours, I embrace them in spirit.

I think I should tell you that your brother came here with the intention of withdrawing your power of attorney and making use of it. I did not dare to give it to him since it was made out to me, but I signed a receipt for forty or sixty livres for the Hôtel de Ville of Paris so that he could withdraw the money. I felt I would not be going against your wishes, since my wish is to please and serve you in whatever way God may ask of me with regard to His best servants. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1369. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[June 1651]¹

Most Honored Father,

I most humbly ask your charity kindly to see if this letter may be sent to Montmirail.² Monsieur Georget and Mademoiselle Amaury³ came here today to ask for Sister Jeanne-Baptiste⁴ for another four months. They seem very dissatisfied with Sister Nicole⁵ but could not say why. Madame Fouquet⁶ was present, and I am sure she noticed a little feeling involved in this. I tried to speak to them with all due respect and told them that the matter in no way depended on me. I also tried to explain to them everything your charity had instructed me about the parishes of Saint-Étienne⁷ and Saint-Roch.

They said they did not think you would grant their request. They claim they have urgent need of her because they think Sister Nicole has some very conspicuous faults. I told them to speak more clearly to you, telling you what these are, and that I did not know your wishes in the matter. The man told us frankly that she wanted to leave the Company and that all this was so we could keep her in it. He added several other things, which are groundless.

Madame Fouquet should really speak with you and tell you the Pastor's opinion. I think he knows only what these two persons have led him to believe is necessary for their Charity. If you think it appropriate for me to have the honor of seeing you to explain things in greater detail, please do me the favor of letting me know. I am, as always, Most Honored Father, your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Monday evening

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1370. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[June 1651]¹

I think, Mademoiselle, that something should be done to try to break off communication between the Ladies at Saint-Jean and our dear Sister Jeanne-Baptiste. This should be done either by order of the Pastor,² or M. Georget, or both of them and the Ladies who are Officers, since they have all been stirred up by her Sister companion. Are you in a position to ask M. Georget to see you as soon as possible, and that good Sister as well? Perhaps it might be advisable for you to ask the Officer³ who is so attached to her to come and see you also.

The interview with M. Georget and the Sister will apprise you of the situation. If need be, you could tell M. Georget you have been informed that certain persons at Saint-Jean are writing to this Sister and that you do not know if it is the Ladies, or a young man who wants to marry her. Tell him that if it is the young man, this will cause her to forsake the resolution she took before God, and repeated several times, to live and die in her state of life, and there is reason to fear that God may punish her for failing to keep her word to Him. If the Ladies are the ones asking for her, they are doing a great [injustice]⁴ to the other Sisters of the Company by the bad example she will give them. In addition, there is reason to fear she may act like those girls at Saint-Roch, one of whom got married and did her duty so badly that she made herself miserable, which obliged the Ladies to dismiss her and to come back to the Charity and ask for other girls. Tell him, too, that she is doing very well in the vicinity of the devastated regions, where Providence has placed her.⁵ Some of the inhabitants go to the hospital where she now is, and she nurses them well, by the grace of God. There is reason to fear that, if she is removed from there--that is, from the place where He has put her--His Divine Goodness might take from her the grace He has given her, with which she does the good she is accomplishing. Tell him that what caused you to send her so far away is the information you received that this young man was bothering her.

These are my thoughts on the subject. I also think that, when all is said and done, we have to resign ourselves to the loss of that creature and of all the others God will allow to abandon their vocation.

1371. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT

[1651]¹

For several weeks a very large number of poor people in La Thiérache² have had no bread to eat, not even that made from barley bran, which is what those who are better off are eating. The former are being fed only on lizards, frogs, and wild herbs.

1372. - TO FRANÇOIS DE SAINT-REMY, IN CHÂLONS

Paris, June 21, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

My most humble thanks for the honor you and your brother¹ wish to pay me.² I am most grateful to you for this, but you would distress me immensely if you acted upon it. Letters of dedication are written in praise of those to whom they are addressed, and I am totally unworthy of praise. To speak truly of me, you would have to say that I am a farmer's son, who tended swine and cows, and add that this is nothing compared to my ignorance and malice.

From all that, Monsieur, consider whether such a wretched person as I should be publicly mentioned in the way you propose. It would be the greatest displeasure you could ever cause me. Yes, Monsieur, I would feel it so deeply that I do not know whether I would ever get over it. I shall still be utterly grateful that you even thought of it, and I assure you that, if an opportunity arises to serve you and your family, I shall do so with all my heart.³

As for your desire to find a suitable place in Paris where your brother may stay to study at the Sorbonne, I will make inquiries of the Penitentiary⁴ and will let you know.

It is true that there was some heated discussion on the new opinions⁵ during a meeting at the Sorbonne, but two-thirds of the Doctors--the oldest and the best--were in favor of the common teachings of the Church, which are very far removed from those of the present day. We must hope that, since the latter have been stirred up at other times and then settled down, God will not allow them to come to anything now and will soon stifle them as before. I ask this of Him with all my heart and I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur de Saint-Remy, Archdeacon of Langres, Canon and Counselor in Châlons
1373. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, June 23, 1651
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your most cordial letter, which, like your previous ones, gave me great pleasure. I daresay it gave me even a little more because I see you accepting fully the absence of Messieurs Dehorgny and Blatiron, despite the heavy burden they have left you for a little while and because of your attachment to your vocation and your duties. I give boundless thanks for this to the Infinite Goodness of Our Lord, Monsieur. I ask Him to give you a twofold share of His Spirit: the first share to unite you to Him, to act in His holy presence and for love of Him; and the other, for the guidance of the souls entrusted to you.

We are expecting the above-mentioned priests¹ any day now. We will send them back to you as soon as we can, although I am apprehensive about the very hot weather. However, we will see that they are in a covered coach or carriage so that they will be less uncomfortable.

The bell is ringing just now to announce someone's arrival; perhaps it is they. No, it is some other people. I ask Our Lord to bring them to us in good health. God is giving us rather good health right now, thanks to His Divine Goodness. I am, in His love, for you and your whole family, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Martin
1374. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, the last day of June 1651
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

God grant that your hopes and prayers may draw down on the Company the Spirit and blessings of Our Lord and that the graces I ask of Him for you may be given you in abundance! Above all, may He animate you with a twofold share of His Spirit to bear well the double duty you have! I present you often to Him for this end but never without a special sentiment of esteem and affection.

I delivered your letters to Messieurs Blatiron and Damiens.¹ I am sure they will answer you.

We are all well, thank God. I am, in Him, for you and for your whole family, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Martin
1375. - TO GABRIEL DELESPINEY, SUPERIOR, IN TOUL
July 1, 1651

With all my heart I shall ask God to sanctify you. What does it matter to us whether this be in calmness or in tribulation! We know, of course, that the latter is the best and the shortest way.

1376. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Chancelade, July 2, 1651
Monsieur,

I had asked you to remind the Queen of what Her Majesty had deigned to promise me regarding my successor in my diocese. When you spoke to her about it, she told you that I might choose the person I judged most appropriate for the service of God, and she would have him approved by the King. At the very time you sent me this word, I had prayers said throughout my diocese and elsewhere that God might be pleased to make known to me the one who would be most agreeable to Him for such a great and important responsibility.

After seriously considering those who came to my mind, examining their qualifications, and consulting persons of broad experience and piety, I have selected the Bishop of Sarlat¹ for the following reasons: he is a Prelate who leads a holy life, is exemplary, very detached, of outstanding piety and solid virtue, very learned, and he preaches well; he is most zealous, very intelligent, has good judgment, robust health, a strong body, and is hardworking and vigilant. He has long experience in heading a diocese, has

done so with everyone's approval, and has a fine reputation in this province. He shares my principles for the direction of his diocese and for seminaries, and is neither too old nor too young.

In a word, I know no one like him in the surrounding areas, with the qualities my diocese requires, nor who even comes near possessing them. In addition, he is considered a very worthy Bishop by all who know him. I beg you, therefore, to complete the good work you have begun so well, since the Queen has been pleased to grant this grace to me and my diocese, and please waste no time in doing so.

I am sending you the letter I am writing to Her Majesty. I ask you to take it to her and explain the reasons compelling me to choose the Bishop of Sarlat. Because I cannot ask for a Coadjutor, being in excellent health and determined to die in office, the King will have to assign him to me and I will have to give my consent to this, as I now do by this letter. I await your pleasure in sending me a form, which I ask you to do so that this may be granted by a public act.

Monsieur Sevin, brother of the Bishop of Sarlat, to whom he is writing about it, will assist you in this and in whatever he can do for the carrying out of this business. You can tell him about it, recommending that he keep it secret.

This is essential here, so please do not mention it either to my Officialis, to Fathers Parrot and Vitet, or to anyone else apart from the Queen and those who have to deal with the question. On this occasion you will be rendering a great service to God and to your Congregation, which this distinguished Prelate loves as much as anyone in this kingdom except me, who esteem and cherish it more than everyone else put together. Please keep me posted on this subject and the outcome of your negotiations.

You wrote to remind me about my agreeing to appointing an abbot in my place.² Please believe that I ardently desire this but, because I see clearly that having this election before the decision of the Abbot of Grosbois has been annulled would mean losing this Abbey, I am obliged to put it off until then. All the good monks in that house feel the same way, as you will learn from the letter the Superior of the house is writing to you, entreating you not to mention this to Fathers Vitet and Parrot nor to anyone else. Believe that I am always, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1377. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

July 5, 1651¹

Most Honored Father,

The way Divine Providence has led me to speak to you on all occasions causes me on this one, where there is question of carrying out the Holy Will of God, to speak to you in all simplicity. It is about the critical situation which, as experience has shown us, might hinder the firm establishment of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, if indeed God has not made it clear that He wills to destroy it entirely

because of the general and individual faults which have become more clearly apparent in it for several years now. Wretch that I am, in truth and before God, I believe that, if I am not the sole cause of this, I am at least the major one because of my bad example, negligence, and lack of zeal in being faithful to carrying out my duty. This, then, is one of the principal needs for the future: to provide--beginning right now--a person who is a better example. The second need is that the way of life should be set down in writing and given to places where there are Sisters capable of reading it and keeping it reverently, not showing it or giving copies of it to persons outside. In order that each member of the Company may become familiar with it, we could have it read monthly in Paris by the Sister Servant. The Sisters of the parishes could assemble there every two weeks for this purpose, some at one time and the others two weeks later.

For the Sisters in rural areas, where it might not be judged appropriate to give it to them either because they do not know how to read well enough or because we are not very sure of them regarding this, it could be read to them at the time of the visitation and whenever they come to the house.

Since there will always be persons in the Company who are somewhat ignorant, and whom practice leads to a way of acting, there must be, for each article, an explanation of the intention with which it is to be carried out.

It would seem that weak and fickle persons need to be aided by the prospect of a solid establishment to assist them in overcoming temptations they may encounter against their vocation. Without the basis of this establishment, it would seem impossible for the Company to subsist or for God to derive from it the glory He seemingly wants rendered to Himself in it. This basis is the need for the Company to be erected under the title of either Company or Confraternity, entirely subject to and dependent on the venerable guidance of the Most Honored Father General of the venerable Priests of the Mission, with the consent of their Company. United with them, we will then share in the good they do, so that the Divine Goodness, through the merits of Jesus Christ and the prayers of the Blessed Virgin, may grant us the grace of living in the spirit with which His Goodness animates their honorable Company.

These, Most Honored Father, are the thoughts I dared not conceal from you. I commend them entirely to the judgment God wills your charity to make concerning them, as His Goodness has granted me the grace of doing for the twenty-six years since His Mercy has placed me under your holy guidance in order to do His most holy Will.² This has made me, in the way He knows, what I must be all my life, Most Honored Father, your most humble daughter and very grateful servant.³

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the venerable
Priests of the Mission
1378. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, July 7, 1651

Monsieur,
The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!
Well! Is it not a great source of consolation and likewise
an obligation to thank God that the absence of Superiors is
causing no laxity in your family but rather an increase of
piety and virtue?¹ These are the very words of your letter,
and they have filled me with joy and gratitude for the
goodness of Our Lord, who, to take the place of the absent,
has established Himself in the midst of your soul, where He
diffuses spirit and life to all the members of that little
body. I ask Him to continue to animate your soul and the
community and to grant the grace to all of you in general
and each in particular to respond to the holy intentions of
the Cardinal-Archbishop.² We often offer to God the Holy
Sacrifice of the Mass that He may sanctify his dear soul
more and more and preserve him for a long time to come for
His Church.

I shall not fail to write to him when M. Blatiron returns and
will continue to pray God and have others pray for H[is]
E[minence], in gratitude for the incomparable kindness Our
Lord has given him toward the Company, even to the special
care he has taken for its lodging, as you mentioned to me.
Nothing makes me more keenly aware of God's infinite bounty
than that of this holy Prelate.

We shall soon send you the person whose duty you are doing;³
his arrival will allow you to take a little rest. In the
meantime, please take care of your health. Tell the entire
little community that I embrace it warmly and wish for it
the fullness of the Spirit of God, to whom it has given
itself and in whom I am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.
VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa
1379. - TO JEAN BARREAU, CONSUL, IN ALGIERS
[1651]¹

Monsieur,
God alone, who sees the depths of our hearts, can cause you
to experience the joy of mine at the long-desired news of
your liberation. We have thanked Him for this more
fervently than we have in a long time for any benefit we
have received from His bounty. I have shared this news with
your father, who was greatly consoled by it as by the good
use you made of your captivity. Whenever I think of it, the
gentleness of spirit you have manifested comes to mind,
causing me to find submission to God and patience in
suffering ever more beautiful and amiable.

I cannot repeat to you enough, Monsieur, how blessed you are
to have suffered in this way for Our Lord Jesus Christ, who
has called you to Algiers. Fifteen or twenty years from now
you will understand better than you do at present the

importance and effects of this, and even more so when God calls you to give you your crown in heaven. You have reason to consider the time of your imprisonment as spent in a holy manner. As for me, I look upon it as an infallible sign that God wishes to lead you to Himself, since He has made you follow in the footsteps of His only Son. May He be forever blessed for this, and may you be more advanced in the school of solid virtue, which is practiced in an excellent way in the midst of suffering, and which keeps good servants of God in fear when they have nothing to suffer! I entreat His Divine Goodness that the calm you enjoy at present may fill you with peace, since the storm was unable to disturb you. May it last as long as is suitable for the perfect accomplishment of God's plan for you!

Far from your acting contrary to my intention by giving away the thousand livres you borrowed, I esteem it as nothing in comparison with your freedom, which is dearer to us than all else.

1380. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA

Paris, July 14, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

We shall soon be sending M.Blatiron back to you, in compliance with the wishes of those gentlemen in Genoa and your own.

The proposal about the Jesuit novitiate would not be something to be rejected, given its conveniences and spaciousness, if it were not so far from the town and so hot in summer. My opinion is that you should follow the advice of the Cardinal and our friends. In the meantime, I will discuss with M.Blatiron this matter and the desire of the members of the Genoa Conference¹ to have a priest of the Company present for their talks. M.Blatiron will bring a copy of the rules and practices observed by the Paris group. When it has been read by those members, you and he will see with them what adaptations will have to be made for this association.

I praise God that the family is doing better and better, and I pray that your soul may go on growing in light and blessings to give ever greater edification within the Community and outside of it. I send greetings to everyone and am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

M.Blatiron has just given me some reasons why that house should not be purchased, and they seem irrefutable to me. Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa.

1381. - THE TOWN MAGISTRATES OF RETHEL TO SAINT VINCENT

Rethel, July 17, 1651

Monsieur,

The hope of a modest harvest was giving respite to our troubles, had not the large number of soldiers, increasing

daily, cheated us of just a small crop of barley and oats, which had been sown to prolong the life--more odious than death--of a countless number of persons dying of starvation. The constant passage of our enemies distresses us beyond measure. What is also true, however, is that those who say they are on our side, but whom we can call our false friends, are committing so many barbarous and cruel acts by their unbearable licentiousness that it is impossible to put this into words. Their malice is so great that they leave the grass on the prairie and let the horses graze on the little green grain that is left for human subsistence. In short, by their generalized brigandage and the unlimited stealing of work horses and other farm animals, they seem to have conspired to bring about the desolation and complete depopulation of the whole countryside. In a word, the poor region, especially the town of Rethel, is a stage on which horrible necessity openly and publicly plays its role. It is with regret that we so often repeat to you the tale of the miserable state to which we are reduced. We are constrained to do so because, without your continued assistance, we foresee the loss of so many poor persons. This obliges us all the more because necessity urges us to make use of the precept God has prescribed for us from His holy and sacred lips, when He commanded us in the following words: "Seek and you shall find; ask and you shall receive."¹ We have put this divine commandment into practice, and it has been followed by the expected results, for the relief of a people more worthy of compassion than any in all the inhabited lands of Christendom.

It is said that, when an excellent worker finds an area in which he can exercise his skill, this is a type of bliss. [It is] a great happiness for those who need it to find one of this caliber. You have encountered...this party in us, and we have found in you such a favorable reception in our necessities that we would feel guilty of the utmost ingratitude if we delayed any longer to thank you for the good services rendered us by you and the virtuous Ladies of Charity. We take the liberty of thanking them and of expressing to them, through you (since we cannot do this properly in person), our appreciation for their gifts, and also to obtain from their generosity the continuation of their charity. We do this especially because only their perseverance will give a glorious ending to the work which, by their piety, they have joined to yours, so happily begun. As we were about to close this letter, we received news from Paris that you have given a favorable reception to our latest letters and have taken the trouble to see the Ladies about what is contained in them, and they have promised to favor us with their influence regarding the five-year rebate on our taxes. Your kindness on this occasion will give us the liberty to redouble our importunate entreaties and to implore you, by the merits of the Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to obtain from them, for the salvation of the

people, the continuation of their good will. The reward of their virtues and of your merits will be a life filled with every blessing and a crown of glory in a happy eternity. We wish this for you with all our hearts and hope that we may have the honor of remaining forever your most humble and grateful servants.

THE TOWN MAGISTRATES

Addressed: Very Reverend Father Vincent
1382. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, July 21, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very glad that the agreement about the Jesuit novitiate has been broken off because M. Blatiron told me that, for many reasons, it is not for us. This is conceivable, since those Fathers do not want to remain there.

I am even more pleased that you are giving your brother the amount he asked of you to become a medical doctor. Since, however, it is on condition that he does not use it for anything else, I shall try to find out in greater detail what his intentions are and what he is doing. I shall do whatever you order regarding him on this occasion as on all others.

I thank God for the union existing in the family and for the progress it is making. These are the results of your good leadership, which I ask His Divine Goodness to bless more and more and to fill all of you in general and each one in particular with the sweetness of His holy love. I am, in and by this love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa
1383. - TO JACQUES LE SOUDIER, B¹ IN SAINT-QUENTIN
July 22, 1651

It grieves me greatly that M...forgot himself and wrote you the letter you sent on to me. I am even more surprised that he has told me nothing of this and has never complained to me about you. But what do you expect, Monsieur? People are made in such a way that even the holiest ones are liable to offend one another. Look at Saints Peter and Paul, and Saint Paul's dealings with Saint Barnabas. The angels themselves contradict one another at times because each has its own limited insights to which it holds fast.

I will ask this priest his reason for doing what he did. In the meantime, Monsieur, I beg you to cast from your heart the bitterness his letter may have left in it.

Whom shall we put up with if we cannot tolerate a priest and our own brother, who is guilty only of being too quick to believe false reports? Better for him to have unburdened his heart to you as to his good friend than if he had kept this resentment inside him and gave vent to ill feelings. I hope that some good will come from it and that, once the truth has been recognized on both sides, you will cherish one another dearly. I expect this of you and of him as

well, and ask you to take steps toward it whenever you have the chance to do so.

1384. - TO NICOLAS BONICHON,¹ IN CAHORS

Paris, July 22, 1651

Monsieur,

I received one of your letters after M.Cuissot's² departure. If it has taken me a while to tell you that it gave me great joy, it is due to my business affairs, which have not allowed me to do so until now. Yes, Monsieur, I am greatly consoled by all you share with me, because of the goodness of your soul, which is so close to God that, for love of Him, it is dedicated unremittingly to the holy love of the neighbor. The result is that, conversely, His Divine Goodness is communicated to you more and more, blesses your courage, and draws glory from your works. I thank Him infinitely for this and ask Him to accomplish perfectly His designs upon you, to give you an ample share in the Spirit of Our Lord and, through you, to diffuse it within the family and outside of it. I cannot express to you adequately the desires of my heart for your greater sanctification, nor how tenderly I cherish you. Take good care of yourself, Monsieur, in order to serve our amiable Savior better.

We shall send M. Cuissot back to you as soon as we can, for his absence means extra work for you, and his presence will console you as it does all of us here, without exception. Do you sometimes offer me to God? I dare to hope for this, since I am, in Our Lord....

1385. - EDMÉ JOLLY¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, July 24, 1651

What you do me the honor of writing me in that letter, Monsieur, confirms more and more what I had realized from the preceding one; namely, that people have given you reports about me that are very flattering but not quite true. May God in His goodness be pleased to have this serve as a goad to incite me to work at becoming what you think I am, since I am very far from it!

I must entreat you most humbly, Monsieur, with all possible respect, not to attribute to me any of the good progress of the affairs of the Company because, if I had the time to tell you all the mistakes I have made in pursuing them, you would easily see that I deserve no words of praise.

Nevertheless, I am so vain that I still take pleasure in the praise which is in no way due me. I hope your charity will remove this occasion that my lack of virtue--or rather my sins--gives me of displeasing God.²

1386. - TO SISTER MARIE-MADELEINE, IN VALPUISEAUX¹

Paris, July 25, 1651

Dear Sister Marie-Madeleine,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was very glad to receive your letter and to learn that you are feeling better. May God restore you to health so that you may use it in the service of the poor, who do not have

it! I recall very well that you are alone and I shall see Mademoiselle Le Gras presently about sending you a Sister as soon as possible. In the meantime, I ask Our Lord to take the place of a dear companion for you, and I ask you not to stray far from Him.

I know that Claudine Pellieux's departure has left you without a Superior and a Procurator of the Charity. When we go there, we will put some other persons in her place. Perhaps it will be I myself, if God so wills, if not one of our own men. In the meantime, the second in charge should be requested to act as Superior.

When you run out of money to live on from the sale of your cow, I will have some given to you.

You ask me whether you will still be taking as a boarder the Bretonvillers² farmer's little girl. I think so, if you have no other reason than her scabies for returning her to her parents, provided, however, that her father gives her a bed so she can sleep by herself there.

Mademoiselle Le Gras is well, thank God, and so is her little Community.

Pray to Our Lord sometimes for me, as I do for you. I am, in His love, Sister, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Marie-Madeleine, Daughter of Charity, in Val-de-Puiseau

1387. - MONSIEUR SIMONNET, PRESIDENT AND LIEUTENANTGENERAL OF RETHEL, TO SAINT VINCENT
[Between 1650 and 1655]¹

Unquestionably, we can find in the charities you promote the first form of Christian devotion since, in the early Church, Christians had but one heart and would not permit any poor person among them who was not given relief and assistance.... You do not allow this either, Monsieur, but provide for their needs in an orderly, zealous way through the priests of your Congregation. You put them to work in all the surrounding areas, where the poor are reduced to consuming animal feed and even to eating dogs, and I myself have seen the proof of this. They have saved the lives of a countless number of persons and have consoled and assisted others until their death. These are the effects of your charity.

1388. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, July 28, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This letter is being written out in the street in Paris, where I now am, because I have no other time to write to you. I do so, nevertheless, to thank God for your health and for His blessings on your leadership, which is apparent in the fine way the family conducts itself and does its work. I embrace it along with you, humbly prostrate at the feet of Our Lord, to whom I offer you often and tenderly, hoping to have a share in your prayers.

We shall be sending M. Blatiron back to you one of these days. He spoke to me about a parish you mentioned to him, and I told him to let you know his opinion and mine. I shall never deviate from the sentiment of perfect esteem and utmost gratitude God gives me for H[is] E[minence],¹ whose goodness to us is unrivaled.

I am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.
VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1389. - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT, IN HENNEBONT
Paris, July 30, 1651

My good Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter of the first of this month was a consolation to me for several reasons. I praise God that your health has improved and that Sister Barbe is well again. I was really worried about her illness and still am about yours, although I hope you have now recovered from it completely¹ and that all of you are in condition to serve the poor well.

In gratitude that God has preserved you for that, offer yourselves anew to Him; make a continual sacrifice to Him of your thoughts, words, and actions, willing and asking Him that all might be for His glory and the good of the hospital. By this means His Divine Goodness will make you worthy of the incomparable charity which good M. Eudo² exercises toward you. His love for the poor makes him take such good care of you so that you will take good care of them. Continue, my good Sisters, to have great respect for him and to follow his good advice.

You, Sister Anne, please take good care of your Sisters, as Sister Servant. They should do the same for you, as daughters of Our Lord, whom they should esteem in you and you in Him. In a word, live together as having but one heart and one soul³ so that by this union of spirit you may be a true image of the unity of God, since your number represents the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity.

I pray for this to the Holy Spirit, who is the union of the Father and the Son, that He may be yours likewise and give you profound peace in the midst of contradictions and difficulties, which can only be frequent among the poor.

But remember also that this is your cross, by which Our Lord calls you to Himself and to His peace. Everyone has a high opinion of your work, and good people acknowledge that there is no other work on earth more honorable or holy, when it is performed faithfully.

I think it is a good idea for you to make the retreat, since God gives you the desire to do so, provided that the poor do not suffer from this and your worthy Director agrees to it. Your Sisters can do likewise in turn; remember me in your prayers.

Mademoiselle Le Gras is well, and her little Community is increasing in numbers and in virtue.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, my good Sister, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Anne Hardemont, Daughter of Charity,
Servant of the Sick Poor, in Hennebont
1390. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA
Paris, August 4, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

This note is just to keep up our little exchange of letters and to assure you of our prayers and our good health.

M. Blatiron is in a hurry to leave, and I hasten to recommend his journey and my soul to your prayers and to those of your community, for whom, and for you in particular, I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa
1391. - TO ANTOINE SCONIN, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF SAINTE-GENEVIÈVE¹

Saint-Lazare, August 9, 1651

Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your great kindness gives me the confidence to entreat you most humbly to be good enough to recommend M. Médus, an Irish priest with a Bachelor in Theology,² to one of your Fathers, Chancellor of the University,³ who is in charge of the examination for Master of Arts, that he might do him the favor of accepting him as examiner in preference to anyone else. This is asking a great deal of you, Reverend Father, but, besides the fact that he is a very fine man, I have been asked to do this by some persons of outstanding virtue and learning, who will share the obligation he will have toward you. I, on my part, will take it entirely upon myself to acknowledge it, when the opportunity arises, by my humble services, along with all the other obligations we have toward you.

I entreat you with all my heart to honor me by your orders, with the same liberty with which I dare to inconvenience you. I am, in Our Lord, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1392. - TO FRANÇOIS DE SAINT-REMY, ARCHDEACON OF LANGRES
August 9, 1651

François de Saint-Remy had written to Saint Vincent informing him that a thesis on philosophy, written by his brother, Pierre, was being sent to him. The Saint thanks him for it.

1393. - TO PIERRE DE SAINT-REMY

August 9, 1651

The Saint thanks Pierre de Saint-Remy for his letter and his thesis on philosophy, which he was very pleased to receive.

1394. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

I can understand that the man you told me about has offended you, and I am very annoyed that he forgot himself like that. However, you must not consider what he did as coming from him but rather as a trial which God wishes to make of your patience. This virtue will be even more a virtue in you who are more sensitive by nature and have given less cause for the offense that you have received. So, show that you are a true child of Jesus Christ and that you have not meditated in vain so often on His sufferings but have learned to overcome yourself by bearing with the things that cause you greater indignation.

1395. - TO SISTER HENRIETTE GESSEAUME,¹ IN NANTES
Paris, August 20, 1651

Dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very happy to have the opportunity of recommending myself to your prayers, as I now do, and to indicate to you the Will of God, who is calling you to Hennebont. I have asked Sister Anne Hardemont to come from there to Nantes to work in your hospital, and I am asking you to take her place as Sister Servant. I hope you will get the approval of the Fathers of the Poor for this.

I beg Our Lord to give you great humility and cordiality toward our two Sisters who will be with you, great charity toward the poor, and perfect submission to M.Eudo, founder and Director of the hospital. He is a good servant of God, and you can have complete confidence in him. I also ask God to bless your leadership and to sanctify your dear soul more and more.

Remember me to our Sisters in Hennebont and pray for me, all of you. I am, Sister, in Our Lord and in His glorious Mother, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Your brother² is in Crécy-en-Brie; he is very well and God is blessing him there.

Addressed: Sister Henriette, Daughter of Charity at Saint-René Hospital, in Nantes

1395a. - TO MOTHER ANNE DE COMPANS, ABBESS OF VAL-DE-GRÂCE
Saint-Lazare, August 22, 1651

Reverend Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am the one who had the Archdeacon of the Bishop of Soissons¹ make the overture of which you are aware.² Having received a favorable reply to this, with the reservations you sent to me, I notified the Queen³ of it by letter, since I was unable to have the honor of seeing her because I was not feeling well. Yesterday Her Majesty sent Monsieur l'Argentier⁴ to tell me how happy this made her and to find out what should be done. She has put him in charge of handling this affair, as he is now doing.

I praise God that Monsieur de Verthamon⁵ is also working on it. I did not have the honor of seeing him and do not know when I shall have this pleasure because I am not yet in a

fit state, although I feel better than I did yesterday,
thank God.

I humbly recommend myself to your prayers and am, Reverend
Mother, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and very
obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Since writing this letter, I have received from Monsieur
l'Argentier the letter I am sending to you.

Addressed: Reverend Mother Abbess of Val-de-Grâce
1395b. - MONSIEUR L'ARGENTIER¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

Monsieur,

So as not to bother you in your present state, I shall
inform you by this letter that, on leaving your house, I
went to see the Bishop of Soissons. I told him the
arrangements you had made with the Queen. He replied that
he has such deep respect for Her Majesty and such total
obedience to her wishes that he will follow her wishes in
everything, which is in conformity with your good plans. He
instructed me to notify Her Majesty of this on his part and
to give his full assurance on behalf of the good nuns
regarding what is being planned.

For this purpose, starting tomorrow, if Her Majesty
approves, the Bishop of Soissons will consult confidentially
with the most famous lawyer to find the easiest way to make
a success of the affair in a way that will please Her
Majesty. She knows that the Bishop of Soissons has no other
desire than to please her.² As for me, my hope will always
be that you do me the favor of believing that I am forever,
Monsieur, your most humble and very obedient servant.

L'ARGENTIER

Paris, August 22, 1651

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the Priests of the
Mission, at Saint-Lazare

1396. - TO FATHER FRANÇOIS BOULART¹

Paris, August 23, 1651

Reverend Father,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I shall not fail to remind the Queen and the Council of
Ecclesiastical Affairs of what you did me the honor of
writing me about Saint-Vincent de Rueil Abbey, as soon as I
am well enough to go out, if God grants me this grace. I
hope this will be in a few days;² in the meantime, however,
you must get someone to speak to Her Majesty about it.

I most humbly entreat you, Reverend Father, to let me know
if the Prior, M.Laisné, brother of the Attorney General of
Dijon,³ is staying at your house and how he is using his
time. It was thought advisable for him to go and spend
three months there to learn how to live according to the
Rule at Val-des-Choux,⁴ where he is supposed to reestablish
regularity, once the King has confirmed the request the
monks have made to have him as their General. Please do not
tell him anything of what I am writing you about this, but
do me the charity of praying to God for me. I am, in His

love, Reverend Father, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1397. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA

Paris, August 25, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I am glad that, until M. Blatiron arrives, plans are not going ahead for that big building, which, as you say, would cost up to one hundred thousand livres.

I thought I had replied to Signor Antonio Morando¹ and am surprised that you tell me the contrary. Please offer my apologies to him, all the more so since, because of my present illness, I am not well enough to offer them there in person and to acquit myself of this little duty. I shall do so as soon as possible.

I shall give your brother all the assistance I can, in line with your intention. He has been ill but is feeling fine now.

I am writing to M. Blatiron, thinking he will be arriving in Genoa at the same time as my letter, if not sooner. God grant that he will be in good health and will find you all similarly in good health! As for myself, I am disposed to live and die, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, as your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1398. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, August 29, 1651

Monsieur,

Regarding what I had told Fathers Vitet and Parrot about my requesting you to ask the Queen to order the General of Sainte-Geneviève, them, and me to settle the dispute existing among us, on the advice of some Bishops and State Councillors, they wrote advising me that the monks of Sainte-Geneviève could have the appeal heard as a writ of error in the Parlement whenever they please and that this would be putting our adversaries in agreement, which is what they want. Still, this is a shame for us, with such a good cause as we have. Lastly, if the Queen¹ allows commissioners, it is to be feared that after the majority they will be unwilling to act without a new commission.

That is what is in their letter. From it you see the truth of what you have been told: that they do not want to see this affair come to an end but rather are still delaying it. I thought I should keep you informed of this so that, if it pleases the Queen to grant us this favor, you would pay no attention to what they tell you. If Her Majesty knew the battles I had to wage in our Estates of this region² to have her orders to me carried out, I am sure she would do so. I had to act so forcefully and with so much intense application of mind to do that and to break up the opposing cabals that I was sick over it and still feel the effects.

I am not sure if you heard that I was appointed delegate with all possible honor. That did not prevent me from experiencing very great concern and difficulty in making up my mind to go, or rather to know God's Will in the matter. I think I have been praying constantly for a good three months to ask God for the light to recognize what He desires of me in this.

After very careful consideration, I have decided to go. The letters written to me from Paris by various persons of great piety, urging me continually to go, the unanimous desire of the good people of this area, and the earnest entreaties made to me, have helped me considerably. However, what I saw happen in our Estates has served more than anything else to make me decide on it, so now I no longer have any problem with it. The consolation I shall have at seeing you and conferring with you will greatly alleviate the pain I shall experience at being so far away from my diocese.

In the meantime, I feel it my duty to tell you that the Toulouse diocese is in a worse state than people believe. I think you know about the Archbishop's death.³ You are aware that Jansenism has taken root there. I believe it advisable for you to inform the Queen of this so that Her Majesty will reflect carefully on making a good choice to fill such an important post. It is doubtful that anyone in these parts or there is qualified, even though there are some prelates of great piety and virtue. Nevertheless, it is felt that they do not have all that it takes, plus the fact that the ones who are the most pious and who want to do their duty would not accept because of the Parlement, which always opposes the plans of the Archbishops and makes most of their good services unavailing.

I do not know if you recall that, when there was question of filling the office of Archbishop of Bordeaux, I told you that whoever was appointed would be unhappy and would be sorry about it. I have heard that this good Prelate⁴ has regretted it ever since. I would be the most mistaken man in the world if the person who accepts the office of Archbishop of Toulouse does not do likewise; you will see. I assure you that, if I were not what I now am, I would prefer to spend my whole life there as parish priest rather than as Archbishop, and I think that those who want to do their duty feel the same way. May God inspire the Queen to choose a person according to His heart! In the meantime, believe that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors
1399. - TO SISTER MARIE-MADELEINE IN VALPUISEAUX
Paris, September 4, 1651

My good Sister,
The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!
François Alan told me you are very uneasy about being alone so long, and I have no doubt of that. However, I thank God for it because it is an indication of your sense of modesty

and your attachment to all the practices proper to the Daughters of Charity.

I have been ill for two weeks now, but one day before that I had made arrangements with Mademoiselle Le Gras to send you some relief, and she had me see a Sister who is a fine girl, in view of sending her to you. Mademoiselle Le Gras is in the country now but she should be back this evening. I shall tell her tomorrow to send you a companion immediately. We will send her with the things you requested of Brother Lequeux,¹ who has not been here for several days.

In the meantime, please be patient and continue to do as you have done until now. I hope Our Lord will fortify you more and more for His service, since you put all your strength and time into the relief and consolation of the neighbor. This is the grace I ask of Him. Please present me to Him. I am feeling better, by His mercy, and I am, in His love, Sister, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Marie, Daughter of Charity in Val-de-Puiseau

1400. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

Paris, September 6, 1651

Pressured by the Bishop of Meaux¹ to introduce into a mission practices contrary to the customs of the Company, this Missionary consulted Vincent de Paul, who replied as follows:

"...I have nothing to reply to this, except that we would be very happy to please him, but you know our reasons for being unable to do everything he wants."

1401. - TO LOUISE-MARIE DE GONZAGUE, QUEEN OF POLAND

September 6, 1651

Madame,

Here at last are our Missionaries, come to prostrate themselves at the feet of Your holy Majesty to offer you their most humble services. There are only three or four of them,¹ Madame, although the plan was to send you eight or nine. We thought that these would be enough in the beginning, until Your Majesty does us the honor of commanding us to send you others. They do not know the language of the country, but, since they speak Latin, they can begin immediately to work at forming young seminarians in piety and the practice of virtue and in all the other things they have to know and do.

Your Majesty could have them take about twelve to begin with, and at the end of a year they will be trained workers, whom our men can take on the missions to instruct the country people. Most of the latter are ignorant of matters necessary for salvation and, because of that, are in danger of being lost, according to certain saints.

The Bishops in France oblige their seminarians to remain a certain length of time in their seminaries, before advancing to Holy Orders. If Your Majesty approves of this plan, Madame, and the Bishop who agrees to put it into

execution in his diocese will do as they do, yours cannot but succeed as well as theirs. The only expenses will be lodging, furnishings, and the upkeep of the Missionaries because the seminarians will pay their own room and board.

We have not had seminaries in this kingdom very long, Madame, yet, great progress has been made in them. One of the Bishops² did me the honor of writing to me recently that he could not be more pleased at seeing his clergy reformed by means of our seminary, established only eight or ten years ago and directed by four priests of our Company.

We hear wonderful things here about the saintly life of the Archbishop of Vilna.³ Perhaps, Madame, he will be glad to have this holy work in his diocese, unless Your Majesty wants to have it begin in Warsaw so you can watch it develop and have better knowledge of its size and results.

If God is pleased to bless Your Majesty's holy intentions for the complete happiness of your great kingdom (which can boast of having one of the best Queens in the world), you will add to the blessings your presence has brought to it an infinity of other benefits: advancement in virtue in the ecclesiastical state, instruction of your poor subjects and, what is more, Madame, the establishment of a new and holy religious Order--that of the nuns of Sainte-Marie.⁴ This will offer other young women the means of consecrating themselves to God there and will serve as a remedy to the disorderly life of fallen women. Lastly, the sick poor will be assisted by the Daughters of Charity, whom Your Majesty is requesting and who are ready to go.

What good works can be undertaken, Madame, which are not included in the above, and what kind of situation could exist in the kingdom which would not experience the effects of your incomparable piety?

Speaking of the Sisters of Sainte-Marie, Madame, they also are prepared to leave at the first order. True, the evil spirit, foreseeing the good they are to do, has stirred up resistance on the part of their relatives, who had the Superior prohibited from sending their daughters so far away. This was done legally by the Officialis,⁵ and then by authority of the Archbishop of Paris,⁶ but this obstacle will be easily removed if Your Majesty will kindly write to the said Archbishop and get the Queen⁷ to say a word to him about it.

I beg Our Lord, Madame, to draw glory from your plans and to sanctify your dear soul more and more. These are the graces I shall ask of Him all my life long. I am, in His love, Madame, the most humble, most obedient, and most grateful servant of Your Majesty.

1402. - TO CARDINAL DURAZZO, ARCHBISHOP OF GENOA

[September 1651]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Prince,

Prostrate in spirit at the sacred feet of Your Eminence, I most humbly ask your pardon for my delay in renewing the expression of my deepest gratitude for the great benefits

you continually shower upon your Missionaries. I had told M. Blatiron, as he was leaving Paris, that I would be writing to Your Eminence and that my letter would arrive in Genoa ahead of him. I instructed him to present it to Your Eminence as soon as he arrived there, but the illness which gripped me shortly afterward prevented me from doing so. Now that I am in better health, however, I offer Your Eminence, with all possible humility and affection, infinite thanks for all that you in your admirable charity are doing for us. I speak here not only in my own name but in the name of the whole Congregation, which will never forget Your Eminence, and whose duty it will ever be to pray to the almighty and most high God, as it often does, to be Himself your reward and our thanks.

Ah! how many things M. Blatiron has told us about Your Eminence's saintly life! I am not surprised, therefore, that the kingdom of God is being extended with so many blessings and so rapidly in Your Eminence's diocese and that the Priests of the Mission are filled so abundantly with grace, not only in their missions, their ministry with the ordinands and in the external seminaries, but also in their Internal Seminary,² which shares in the graces with which heaven enriches Your Eminence and which gives promise of workers for Italy. There is no doubt that this fullness of grace, incapable of being confined within the limits of Your Eminence's diocese, is overflowing into many others.

May God be pleased to add many more years to Your Eminence's life, and may you see the happy fulfillment of all your desires! This is our ardent wish and our continual prayer to God, to which I dare to add the renewed offers of my service and obedience. I dedicate to Your Eminence both my own person and our Congregation in general, with the respect and submission due to one of the foremost, holiest, and greatest Princes of the Church.

I am the most humble and devoted servant of Your Eminence.

1403. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
September 8, 1651

I have been informed that you have a Brother who is upset and is upsetting the other men because he wants to become a priest.¹ Since restlessness usually stems from pride and from being discontented with one's lot in life, efforts must be made to put this Brother back on the right path, get that idea out of his head, and dispose him to love the state in which God has placed him. Otherwise, it is better for him to leave the Company than to persist in supposing he can have something we cannot grant him.² Once well-regulated Communities have accepted persons among them for the state suitable for them at that time, they never allow them to pass to another one--and with good reason--for, given man's natural propensity for change, only inconstancy and disorder would be the result.

1404. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA

Paris, September 15, 1651
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You are always giving me added reasons for considering fortunate those who work under such a holy Prelate as yours.¹ You see his kindness and the admirable example of his piety and zeal. We hope he now has good M. Blatiron near at hand, although we have had no news of him or the others who have gone to Italy, since they left Lyons. We pray God for their safe arrival and that He may be pleased to erect an edifice of honor and joy for the Cardinal in the heavenly Jerusalem in recompense for the one he is planning to build for his poor Missionaries. Mon Dieu! Monsieur, what strong reason we have to concern ourselves greatly with his preservation, having no better means of acknowledging our infinite obligations toward him!

I praise God for the success of your theology debates. I hope your ordination will be amply blessed by God and that He will grant your seminarians the grace of serving effectively for this purpose from now on.

Never have we had so many ordinands as we do at present. They say there are ninety or ninety-two of them. This, together with other business that has arisen, is keeping us very busy. Please pray for us. I am feeling better and better, by the grace of God, in whom I am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1405. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saturday, at four o'clock [September 1651]¹

I very humbly thank you, Mademoiselle, for the unequalled corporal and spiritual assistance you and your Daughters have given me. I beg Our Lord to be your reward for it; it is for love of Him that you have done it.

I share your grief over your son's² illness. We must hope that Our Lord will preserve him. I pray with all my heart for this and that He will give you a share in the generosity His Divine Goodness gave to our worthy Mother de Chantal in similar circumstances.

I am also very worried about your sick Sisters and earnestly ask God to sanctify and glorify them. Moreover, the death of so many martyrs was the seed of Christianity; I hope it will be the same with regard to your Sisters. God has instituted and guided this Little Company; let us allow Him to act and let us adore His divine and loving guidance.

Since those gentlemen feel that Sister Cécile³ should be recalled and since the reasons they give⁴ are quite convincing, I think consideration should be given to this. What do you think about Jeanne Hardemont⁵ or Julienne?⁶ The character of the former is somewhat to be feared and there are certain things to be desired in the latter.

The Bishop of Le Puy⁷ is here and is taking the pen from my hand.

1406. - TO SAINT LOUISE
Saint-Lazare, September 19, 1651
Mademoiselle,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I am not writing to you myself because, whenever I take the waters, it hurts me to write, especially in the morning.

Thank God M. Le Gras has accepted the remedies; I beg Him to bless them.¹ You would do well to call in M. Riollant and M. Vacherot,² if he has no objections, because I do not see any who are more capable than they. I approve of your having sent a Sister to nurse him, and I think two are needed so they can relieve one another. You would do well to go and see him but please do not sleep there; it will be enough for you to spend two or three hours with him.

Very well, then, Mademoiselle, continue your prayers in honor of the glorious Virgin, but only during his illness; we will talk about them afterward. I have given instructions that the carriage should be kept ready to take you--provided that a horse, which was on its last legs yesterday or the day before, is in condition to go. I ask God to give you an ever greater share of the gentle acquiescence of the Most Holy Virgin regarding the state of her only Son, Jesus Christ, in whom I am, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1407. - TO SAINT LOUISE
[September 1651]¹

I share your anxiety about the Bailiff's illness, Mademoiselle, and I express to you and your son the same hopes I did yesterday, namely, that you will obey the doctor. Mais quoi! who can overcome a longstanding, deep-rooted inclination? After all, people think that doctors kill more patients than they cure, since God wants to be acknowledged as the sovereign physician of our souls and bodies, especially with regard to persons who do not use any remedies. Nevertheless, when one is ill, one should be submissive to the doctor and obey him. Perhaps, Mademoiselle, what you consider harmful is really good for him. I beg of you, let us be submissive to the good pleasure of God.

It is unwise for you to go to see him today because you have taken that remedy. I am going to send Brother Alexandre² there and will inform him of what you pointed out to me.

1408. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[Saint-Quentin, 1651]¹

The suffering of the poor is beyond description. If the cruelty of the soldiers caused them to seek shelter in the woods, hunger has caused them to come back out. They have taken refuge here. Almost four hundred sick persons have come and, since the town could not give them any assistance, it sent half of them away. These have gradually died and are lying along the highways; those who stayed with us are

so scantily clad that they dare not get up from their rotten straw to come and find us.

1409. - TO LOUIS THIBAULT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINT-MÉÉEN
September 30, 1651

Please do not be annoyed by M.... Not everyone can be perfect, nor should the weak always be transferred to the other houses. They must be borne with when, like him, they are God-fearing and willing to do good. In a gentle way, get what you can from him.

I am very sorry to hear about the illness of Brother Patriarche,¹ whose mind has failed. It is unwise for you to oblige him in this condition to undertake a journey of a hundred leagues,² as you would be doing by sending him here. Please keep him there and do everything you can for his illness. If he becomes too difficult, lock him up. Your house is large enough to find a little corner for this.

If you say that you will be criticized for this, then we should always live boxed up so as not to be subject to any difficulty. Besides, what can people say? Granted, this is a slight humiliation for the Company, but is it not better that only Saint-Méen be aware of it than to advertise it wherever this Brother might pass? People would not fail to ask who these persons were, and would know soon enough that they belonged to the Mission. Furthermore, Monsieur, it is only right that, since your family has benefitted from the service of this good child, it should bear with him now that he is ill.

It happened in one of our houses that, in the absence of the Superior, the Assistant and the consultors spent a large amount of money. Granted, it was for good things, but they were extraordinary things. It is of this that I am advising you, and I ask you to tell the members of your house that no building should be done, no lawsuits initiated, and no extraordinary expense incurred which exceeds six écus, without the order of the Superior General, or of the Visitor when he is residing in the Province.

I ask you also to inform those whom you consult for the good order of your house and business that keep strictly confidential everything proposed in your little meetings, for reasons you can understand.

1410. - TO SISTER ANNE HARDEMONT, IN NANTES

Paris, October 1, 1651

Dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received three letters from you, together with the one from good M. Eudo. I was happy to see all of them, and I praise God that you were prepared to return to that place but realized that it is inadvisable. That is my thought, as well.

We shall send a Sister from here, if Sister Henriette¹ does not go. That depends on her reply to the letter I am writing to her. In the meantime, I am asking her not to leave Nantes, nor you either, until you hear from me, if

such is the wish of the Administrators. You will lighten the burden of our Sisters and contribute by your good example to their carrying out their service of the poor and the little Rule because therein lies the Will of God for them, which is all to which we should lay claim.

I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in O[ur] L[ord], Sister, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Anne Hardemont, Daughter of Charity and Servant of the Poor, in Nantes

1411. - TO SISTER HENRIETTE GESSEAUME, IN NANTES

Paris, October 1, 1651

Dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter and am greatly consoled to see you prepared to go wherever Providence will call you. This is how the daughters of Our Lord should be in order for His holy Will to be done in and through them.

For all that, I am asking you to let me know whether you prefer to stay in Nantes rather than leave there, or if you are indifferent, or if you still want us to withdraw you from there.

In the latter case, Mademoiselle Le Gras and I have decided to send you to Hennebont for a while, in line with the first plan, and I ask you to go there as soon as you receive this letter. If, however, you are satisfied to continue to serve in the hospital where you now are, let me know right away and stay there until you hear from us. In the meantime, I ask Our Lord to bless you more and more.

I am, in His love, Sister, your very affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Henriette, Daughter of Charity and Servant of the Poor of the Nantes Hospital, in Nantes

1412. - MONSIEUR SOUYN, BAILIFF OF REIMS, TO SAINT VINCENT [Between 1650 and 1655]¹

I think you have been shown the report I sent to Paris about the state in which I found your charitable work here and the corporal and spiritual assistance you are procuring for the rural poor. In this you are following the pattern of our Divine Master and Savior and are becoming increasingly a more perfect imitator of Him.

Two of your priests have come to this town. One of them has come to get money from the alms because he could not find any in the places where he has been staying, which have been stripped of everything; the other has come to pick up part of the grain he bought here and have it taken to Saint-Souplet to feed its poor. So, each is working successfully under your auspices for the relief of the poverty-stricken, while you are busy there enkindling the divine fire which produces that gold now being distributed throughout Picardy and Champagne for the assistance of the afflicted poor.

I await here Monsieur..., to whom you have confided the overall direction of such an important work, to set up our winter quarters--I mean for the hospitals and the maintenance of poor pastors. Our barley granary, a product of your charity, is still being filled, so we will be able to make several distributions during the bad weather.

Continue this charitable care, Monsieur, which preserves mortal life for so many poor people. In addition, it procures for them the happiness of eternal life through all the spiritual assistance rendered them and, in particular, through the administration of the Sacraments, which would doubtless come to a halt in many parts of our diocese without your help.

1413. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR, IN SEDAN
October 7, 1651

I praise God for your patience regarding the person¹ who is so good at dealing tactfully with the Governor's² zeal. For this reason, it is better to defer his leaving office for a while yet. Not every kind of person is acceptable to that good nobleman. You know how hard we have found it to satisfy him on this point, and the changes that had to be made to keep us in his good graces. Otherwise, the Company could do no good there--or very little.

So, Monsieur, I ask you to see that he is respected by those who mind the delay regarding another Superior, so that everybody will adjust to this situation, until God gives us the opportunity to remedy it to everyone's satisfaction.

1414. - TO HUGUES PERRAUD¹
October 15, 1651

Thank you for the advice you gave me. Since it came from a charitable heart, it has to be good, and I will try to make it effective, God willing, by the use I shall make of it. However, Monsieur, let us remember that we will never find complete satisfaction in this valley of tears, regardless of the place or state in which we may be. On the contrary, Our Lord allows us to encounter many sources of difficulty and disappointment in order to detach us from the world and cause us to seek God alone, in whom is to be found the fulfillment of all our desires.

O Monsieur, how happy we shall be if He grants us the grace of abandoning ourselves fully to His guidance, and if the difficulties along the path by which He leads us please instead of disheartening us and, instead of distancing us from our Sovereign Good, draw us closer to Him! To this end, we should help and support one another and strive for peace and union among ourselves. This is the wine that cheers and strengthens travelers along this narrow path of Jesus Christ. I recommend this to you with all the tenderness of my heart.

1415. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
October 18, 1651

You pleased me by asking me to send a reply to M...'s letter; I am enclosing it here. If his nephew wants to

enter our Congregation, he must be told all the difficulties to be found in it, the obedience he must practice, the detachment he must have, and the suffering to be endured. If his mind is really made up, let me know his character traits and the state of his health. If he is only twenty-two years old, I find that a little young, and, if he has only done humanities, he is not far advanced in his studies. However, he can compensate for that by piety and other good qualities--if he has them.

1416. - TO CHRISTOPHE MONCHIA¹

October 20, 1651

Most Illustrious and Respectable Lord,

Your Lordship's exceeding kindheartedness toward the members of our Congregation living in Genoa makes it a duty for me to express my deepest gratitude to you. M. Blatiron has often repeated in his letters that Your Lordship is to be numbered among their outstanding benefactors, and that just recently you had provided additional means for promoting the glory of God and the welfare of the diocese. Such acts merit the eternal gratitude of our little Congregation. Therefore, in my own name and in that of the Company I would like to offer you my most humble thanks.

And since there is no way I can thank you for your charity, I earnestly ask the greatest and most high God to supply for my weakness and to be Himself Your Lordship's immense and abundant reward. He certainly will be so because He is the end toward which all Your Lordship's actions tend. He will attribute to you a large part of the results our men will obtain from their labors by the Divine Mercy, thanks to the substantial assistance that comes from you and tightens the bonds of special reverence and respect which they owe to Your Lordship and your family.

These are my sentiments, extremely devoted as I am to Your Goodness. Oh! how great will be your joy at the salvation of an almost infinite number of souls won over to God because of Your Lordship's excellent action! Oh! how happy the man of means who uses his wealth and his life for the greater glory of God, from whom he has received them! May the Eternal Goodness be forever praised for this! May your beloved soul be increasingly filled with that Holy Spirit for the good of the whole Church and the special consolation of those who live with you!

If God were to allow our humble services to be acceptable to you, we would be greatly honored and most happy to render them as often as desired. May Your Lordship accept them, such as they are, from your most humble and devoted servant.

1417. - NICOLAS PAVILLON, BISHOP OF ALET, TO SAINT VINCENT Alet, October 26, 1651

My very dear Most Honored Father,

I learned on my return from a second journey to take the waters that you had been seriously ill but that Our Lord has been pleased to restore you to health. I felt it my duty to do myself the honor of writing to you to express the joy and

consolation we have experienced in this, since you use your health in such a holy and useful manner, Monsieur, for the service of His Church.

This letter is to assure you that I wish with all my heart that I could give you the satisfaction you desire with regard to the second letter addressed to His Holiness, which you so kindly sent us.¹ The Bishop of Pamiers and I reflected seriously on it once again before God and discussed it together, but we maintain the same opinion we expressed to you in a previous letter. I still have great respect, as I should, for the charitable, cordial, and paternal message in your letters, but we are convinced that the conciliatory spirit we had simply proposed to you would perhaps contribute more to the glory of God, the peace of the Church, and the reconciliation of mind and heart on both sides, while waiting for God to grant greater openness for the resolution of all these difficulties.

I entreat you, Monsieur, kindly to do me the favor of remembering my needs in your holy prayers and most Holy Sacrifices and to continue to honor me with your friendship. I am, in the love of Our Lord and of His holy Mother, Monsieur, my very dear Most Honored Father, your most humble and very obedient servant.

NICOLAS, B[ishop] of Alet
1418. - TO NICOLAS BAGNI,¹ NUNCIO IN FRANCE
Saint-Lazare, October 27, 1651
Excellency,

In accordance with Your Most Illustrious Lordship's orders, I have made inquiries about the qualifications of Father Michel du Saint-Esprit. I questioned three different monks of the same Order, one of whom is Father Léon, and they assured me that Father is very learned and virtuous, and most anxious to go to foreign lands to extend the empire of Jesus Christ. He is preparing to do so and even to bring some other Fathers with him to work toward his goal. I was also told, Excellency, that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide has given him faculties for this and twelve hundred francs for their maintenance. He left for Brittany just two days ago, fully determined, as soon as he returns here, to leave for Memphis, otherwise known as Grand Cairo.

This is what I learned about him yesterday, Excellency, going expressly for this purpose to the monastery of the Calced Carmelites. If Your Most Illustrious Lordship wants me to get further information, I shall gladly do so, Excellency. I have no greater consolation in this world than to obey and please Your Most Illustrious Lordship because of my very great respect for you. It will, however, be very difficult for me to find anyone outside his Order who knows him well enough to tell me anything more certain about him.

I most humbly entreat Your Most Illustrious Lordship to pardon me for not coming in person to give this report; I have a meeting this morning, which deprives me of this

honor. It also deprives me of being entirely at your command to do whatever you wish, since God has given you sovereign power over me. I am, in His love, Excellency, Your Illustrious Lordship's most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Since writing this letter, Excellency, I have seen a man who knew this Father in Rome. He told me he is a good, wise monk, but a little ambitious and has even resorted to some cunning in the matter in question. In the beginning he requested only to be Vicar-General of the Bishop of Memphis; since then, however, in order to act on his own authority, independently of the Bishop, he has asked for faculties for himself and three or four of his companions.

1419. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, November 2, 1651

Monsieur,

Abbé de Marmiesse, the representative of the clergy,¹ wrote me that the unionist priests of my diocese were willing to do whatever the Archbishop of Bourges,² the Bishops of Senlis,³ Lodève,⁴ and Périgueux,⁵ you, M. de la Marguerie, and the representatives of the clergy might order, and they want my consent for that, which I gladly give. This is an affair that involves all the Prelates, so I feel sure they will take care to maintain what is due to the episcopal character and dignity. I have no doubt that you and M. de la Marguerie will do likewise.

I am not sure if you recall that, when I wrote telling you that these men had met and formed a union, you sent me word that you were very worried about the possible consequences which you had apparently foreseen. That is why it is absolutely necessary to break up this association, which has very harmful consequences for all the Prelates. Any gestures of submission they might make without this would not mean a thing to me. We would be forever starting over, and if they did not do so, others would. This is the duty of the representatives, to whom I am writing here. In the meantime I shall remain, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1420. - TO THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA

November 3, 1651

Madame,

Monsieur de la Roche, son of Monsieur de la Roche, Counselor in the Parlement of Bordeaux, is coming to pay his respects to Your Majesty and to offer you his service. The first-mentioned is one of the wisest and best priests I know and is among the most zealous in the service of the King.

The division existing among the nuns of Longchamp¹ has given several persons the idea of requesting that Abbey of Your Majesty. However, since it is not up to the King to bestow it because it is elective, Your Majesty is most humbly entreated not to let herself to be taken by surprise. Both factions are asking for the Reform, but it can be put

in place there only by authority of the Pope, who must be petitioned for this. It is to be hoped, Madame, that it may please Your Majesty to have the Ambassador² present this petition to him. Madame de Brienne is supposed to ask her husband to discuss this with Your Majesty.

Disorder has existed in this house for a long time, Madame, so this is a blessing God is presenting to Your Majesty to contribute to the restoration of peace and His service there, in line with the resolution you have taken to support similar projects.³ I have no doubt, Madame, that His Divine Goodness will, in turn, bless your wise government more and more. This is my daily prayer to Him. I am, in His love, Madame, your most humble, obedient, and faithful servant and subject.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1421. - TO N.

November 4, 1651

And what are we doing if we are not doing God's Will?

1422. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, November 8, 1651

Monsieur,

I received your letter of October 8. We shall await the Queen's return, since you think it advisable, for the Sainte-Geneviève business. In the meantime, I am very much obliged to you and thank you for the care you have taken with M. de la Marguerie to put an end to the business with our unionists. I entreat you to give a favorable reception to my opinions and reasons which I indicated to you in a letter I had my Vicar-General write to my Officialis, with orders to show it to you and M. de la Marguerie.

In all sincerity, I must tell you that everyone who has seen the articles of the unionists was amazed at them and indignant that our Officialis would allow them to be discussed, since they were slanderous libel, and he knows better. Also, they dealt with my synodal statutes, which have nothing to do either with the Council or the Parlement. They have to go before the Pope, who has never been willing to listen to unionists, regardless of how strongly they insisted, but he has listened to us. The clergy has nothing to say about synodal statutes; only the cathedral Chapter is to give its opinion, which I am not obliged to follow. Moreover, I will never allow anyone to talk about this; the consequences would be too damaging. Our Officialis was very wrong in allowing it to be discussed. That is neither here nor there in the lawsuit. His behavior is very blameworthy. Personally, I think he meant well, but I am very familiar with his mentality and way of acting.

I have signed the request M. Treffort presented to me, in the format he wanted. The advice given you was very good. M. Treffort did not agree with our appointing M. Doronce, the representative of our Officialis, because of all the soldiers who are looting the whole countryside, but I have appointed an upright priest nearby whom he mentioned to me.

I assure you that on this occasion, as in any circumstances in which I can be of service to you, I shall prove to you that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1423. - LOUISE-MARIE, QUEEN OF POLAND, TO SAINT VINCENT

Louise-Marie, by the grace of God Queen of Poland and of Sweden, etc., Grand-Duchess of Lithuania, Russia, Prussia, etc., born Princess of Mantua and Montferrat de Nivernois, etc.

Monsieur Vincent,

It was a joy for me to see the Missionaries you sent me, who delivered your letter to me.¹ I hope they will bear the fruits I have always expected of them. I am now sending them to the Bishop of Vilna² to get his approval because they will be residing in his diocese, on one of my estates in Lithuania, where they will open their seminary. In time, I hope to be able to have priests from it for other places and for Warsaw itself and to do the things you foresee for me in your letter. They will send you a report of their journey and arrival here.

If God grants me the grace of not dying in childbirth, I shall write the letters you mentioned to have the Visitation nuns come this spring.

In the meantime, I recommend myself to your prayers and ask God to keep you in His holy care.

Written in Warsaw, November 13, 1651

LOUISE-MARIE, Queen

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, in Paris

1424. - TO MATHURIN GENTIL, IN LE MANS

November 22, 1651

The compassion I feel for you in your hardships makes me ask Our Lord often to be your strength. The Le Mans house is greatly indebted to you for the trouble you take for it and the good example you give it. It is to be hoped that you will add to this the following: not to undertake any building project or major renovations without an express order from the General; for minor repairs the permission of the local Superior is required. This is in conformity with the Rules and customs of the Company.

M. Lambert has clearly recognized this and, before he left for Poland, he expressed some regret for having told you at the time of his visitation that you could do and undo whatever you saw fit, without asking the Superior's advice. This is a big mistake; therefore, I am rescinding that permission, and I ask you to adhere strictly to the practice of the other houses, which is in conformity with the Rule and with what I have just said.

I am sure you will accept this advice since it comes from someone who loves you tenderly, and you will be even more glad to discontinue all spending because you have less money to pay your fees, and we have less to help you. You know we have advanced large sums on your house, paying about a

thousand écus a year against it to Abbé Lucas¹ and others. For all that, you say you cannot meet other expenses. How is it, then, that you almost always have workmen who are moving, renovating, tearing things down, building up again, making general repairs, and carrying off a great deal of money for days of labor and supplies! You will tell me that the farms are on the verge of ruin and need repairs. This is only too true, Monsieur, but that is not where you have the work done; it is in the house, which does not need it. However, you must make up your mind to turn your attention to these small holdings and ask permission as soon as possible to sell some wood to cover the necessary expense.

May God grant us the grace to contribute to good order, to use well the modest means God gives us and, at the same time, to practice holy poverty!

1425. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Feast of Saint Catherine¹ [1651]²

Most Honored Father,

I have found no document concerning the establishment.³ I do recall that one day⁴ your charity took the trouble to read us the petition you had presented to the Archbishop of Paris, followed by the reading of our Rule and, thinking that it should remain with us, I asked you for it. I believe the reason we never received it is that something else still had to be done to it.

My wretchedness and my awareness of the obstacles I place in the way of grace for this Company have often caused me to reflect that, in order for its establishment to be complete, it is to be hoped that another person might replace me. Serving as an example by her virtues and her exact observance of the Rules, she would help all the Daughters of Charity form good habits. I have thought several times that Providence was delaying the establishment for want of that.

The reasons causing me to wonder a number of times whether God willed the establishment or wanted to allow the work to continue, so long as it would not do away with itself by notable disorders, are: first, the premature deaths of so many good subjects, who could have been a great support to it. Another reason is that once the Sisters see themselves established they might elevate themselves too far above what they now are and become self-important in their duties. A third or fourth reason is the experience of already having three or four who left to get married and, consequently, had these ideas, which are bordering on impurity, when they were in the Company. That is an offense which would bring about the entire ruin of the Company, if it persisted in it, since it must be established with the aim of honoring Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, who are purity personified.

One final reason is the individual faults of our Sisters and their slow advancement in perfection, especially in mortification of the senses and passions.

What may allow us to think that God wills the establishment is the intrinsic goodness of the work, the blessings His Mercy has bestowed on it until now, the guidance of Divine Providence in forming every part of it, the freedom Superiors have to rid the Company of subjects who could destroy it and, similarly, the freedom each individual has to leave.

Another reason that might lead one to believe that God wills the establishment is that, since the principal of the temporal goods concerns another work, it [the principal] might be sought after in the future, and sufficient reasons might be found to propose the general destruction [of the Company]. In this way the glory God wishes perhaps to draw from it would come to an end sooner than He had intended, if we had been faithful to Him.

The strongest motive to persuade people that the establishment is necessary is that, if it is not done by the founder God used to begin it, there is no reason to believe that his successors would ever dare to do so.⁵

I beg God in His goodness to continue to enlighten and guide His work, to eliminate the obstacles to it, and to make known His Will concerning the thinking of the women who would like to be associated with it.

I have gone on too long--I most humbly ask your pardon for this.

Enclosed is our first set of Rules and, I think, the one which was presented to the Archbishop--or at least a similar one. To my great shame, I do not practice it. I am also ashamed to call myself, Most Honored Father, your most humble daughter and very obedient servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

I think Brother Ducournau⁶ should be able to find the copy and the original of the petition that was presented, together with the Act of Establishment, which I believe we never had.

¹ Addressed: Monsieur Vincent
1426. - TO PIERRE WATEBLED, SUPERIOR, IN SAINTES
November 26, 1651

I am deeply grieved by the disturbances that have arisen there, and I ask Our Lord to change the state of affairs for the better.¹ In the meantime, we must honor His patience and make many acts of abandonment to His good pleasure and of acquiescence to the effects of His justice. I praise God for the interior peace you are maintaining in yourself and in your family. I am sure you earnestly ask this of Him for the entire region and the whole kingdom, as well as the grace for the poor people to make good use of the afflictions of the war.

I see that you are not sure of what you should do. You must remain steadfast, Monsieur. It would be a great wrong for you to leave and an irreparable scandal to the town and the Company. If you were to abandon the house, I do not think people would ever be willing to welcome us back. Fear

not; calm will follow the storm, and perhaps soon. If you no longer have any income, you will not be neglected--you will not starve to death; we will assist you as much as possible. You still have some provisions and are drawing some of your income. We panic at first, but God does not always allow the evil that is feared to happen. Ever since war has broken out in Lorraine, Flanders, and along our borders, the religious houses have held their own. Not that they are not suffering, but they are surviving and are gaining a great deal of merit by their patience. Not one of you has yet had any reason to lose your composure.

I ask Our Lord to be your protector and consolation, to keep you united among yourselves, and to grant you the fidelity proper to the practice of virtue, especially of prayer, recollection, mortification, and conformity to the Will of God. Place all your trust in Him and keep up your courage. Our houses in Agen and La Rose are in the same difficulties as you, and so is the one in Cahors--or close to it.

1427. - TO JEAN-BAPTISTE GILLES,¹ SUPERIOR, IN CRÉCY
Paris, November 28, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I praise God that you have arrived safely in Crécy.² I ask Him to bless you abundantly and, through you, your little family and its works.

I shall have the pictures and books you want sent to you, but I feel it my duty to tell you, Monsieur, that we are living at a time when no unnecessary expenses should be incurred. Public misfortune surrounds us on every side. It is to be feared that it may reach us also, and even if it should not, we must be compassionate toward those who are enduring it. Perhaps, once you have laid in your provisions and taken stock of all domestic and related needs, you will be of the same mind about economizing the meager funds you have found.

As for the horse, for the reasons I gave you I will not send it back to you, but I will send you the price of one, with the help of God. I might add that, since your stay there is not definitely settled, it is unwise for people to see a horse at the house again because of the unpleasant consequences that might have--not for you but for those who will come after you, who might make ill use of it. You would hardly have thought of asking for one if your predecessor had done without one, as the others have always done. If you leave this good example, no doubt people will more willingly do without one in the future.

When you need one, you can get one locally, as has been the custom. There are enough around, and your journeys will not be so long and frequent that your mounts, poor as they are, will not do. You could even bargain with someone to supply you when you need one, or to take you and the other

members of the family in a covered carriage, when you go to and return from a mission.

I am well aware that you can say to me, "Physician, heal yourself,"³ because I used a horse in the past and now I use a carriage. This is true, to my great shame, but it is true⁴ also that necessity has obliged me to do so. However, if you advise me to act otherwise, Monsieur, I shall do so.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Gilles, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Crécy
1428. - TO SISTER JEANNE LEPEINTRE, SISTER SERVANT, IN NANTES

November 29, 1651

I read your letter with the special consolation I usually have whenever I hear from you. It seems to me that your leadership improves every day and is producing additional results as well as we could wish. I ask Our Lord to be Himself His own thanks for this and for the calm you are enjoying after all the storms and troubles that have buffeted your little bark.

We must love Our Lord deeply and, along with that, keep ourselves in readiness to endure other upheavals and new added setbacks. Man's condition is never the same; he is humbled, then exalted; sometimes at peace, sometimes persecuted; enlightened today and plunged into darkness tomorrow. What is to be done? As I said, let us be prepared for whatever may happen. When we suffer, hope that God will deliver us; when He treats us gently, store up the gentleness and patience in order to make good use of the trials that will ensue.

In a word, Sister, we must give ourselves to God in all respects, and hope that His Will may be done. We must conform ourselves to it in both unpleasant and pleasant circumstances, which constantly succeed one another. This requires us to be ready for anything and completely detached from ourselves.

O my God, who but You alone will give these things to us? We humbly ask them of You through Your Son Jesus Christ. May God grant us the grace to be always faithful to His lights and to our little spiritual exercises!

I recommend myself humbly to your prayers....

1429. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

O Monsieur, what a consolation for me to think of you, so totally given to God and to your vocation, which is truly apostolic! So then, love this happy lot which has fallen to you and which should draw down on you an infinity of graces, provided you are truly faithful to using the initial ones. You will doubtless have much to combat, for the evil spirit and corrupt nature will join forces to oppose the good you want to do. They will make difficulties seem greater to you than they really are and, to sadden and discourage you, will do their utmost to convince you that grace will fail you in

your need. They will incite certain men to contradict and persecute you, and perhaps these will be the very persons you consider your best friends and the ones who should support and console you.

If that happens, Monsieur, you must take heart and look upon it as a good sign, for by this means you will have a closer relationship with Our Lord who, overwhelmed with sorrows, saw Himself forsaken, repudiated, and betrayed by His own men and, as it were, abandoned by His own Father. Oh! how happy are those who bear their cross lovingly in imitation of such a Master!

Remember, Monsieur, and firmly believe that, regardless of what may happen to you, you will never be tempted beyond your strength. God Himself will be your support and your courage, all the more completely since you will have no refuge or trust but in Him alone.

1430. - TO GILBERT CUISSOT, SUPERIOR, IN CAHORS

Paris, December 9, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have received two letters from you since I last wrote. You tell me that the Archdeacon¹ is asking you for an annuity on the farm, which you say has been paid. If this is so, make it clear to him that you do not owe it. Get his friends to speak to him and, if necessary, the Bishop of Cahors.² If, after all that, he sues you, defend yourself, but beforehand you must take the steps I have just mentioned.

Perhaps his late uncle³ did give you the student you mentioned to be educated and fed in your house, in accordance with the foundation. By accepting the gift of his farm,⁴ the Company assumed this obligation, but neither he nor you can oblige this young man to enter the priesthood.⁵ If he began to wear the cassock and to place himself under your guidance in that capacity, it does not follow that he must continue, since, being older now, he is better able to make up his own mind.

If, then, he is inclined to another state of life but still wants to continue his studies in town and take his meals at your house, you must allow this and leave him free. I think the Archdeacon wants it that way, and my opinion is that this is how you should act. However, be careful about taking other children into your house, if they have no intention of giving themselves to the Church and do not wear a cassock. As for that boy, however, you cannot put him out.

I asked you to find out what the Bishop thinks about your buying the house and adjacent garden⁶ so that, if he is in favor of this, you will be acting according to his wishes, even though you give in payment the land you have in town.

God be praised that you have been led to hope for five hundred livres for your domestic needs! Let us allow Him to

act. His Providence will never fail us as long as we do not fail in His service.

I shall write to Agen to find out if they can give you Brother Dupuich⁷ and, if they can, I shall see that you have him.

I have no objection to sending a Brother to be on guard duty and to work on the fortifications, if it costs you too much to send a layman there, but he should be dressed in gray.

I am writing a note to Brother Dubourdieu,⁸ which I am sending to you to give to him or keep, as you see fit. I am sending the note unsealed so you can read it, with a seal to close it.

I thank Our Lord for blessing your leadership and giving peace to the family. May His Divine Goodness continue to bestow on you and them the abundance of His grace.

I recommend myself to your prayers and I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1431. - A BISHOP TO SAINT VINCENT
1651

The mission is one of the most important and most necessary benefits I know, for the greatest ignorance in the world exists among the poor people. If you could see the extent of it in my diocese, it would move you to compassion. I can say in all truth that most of the Catholics are so in name only and simply because their parents were--not because they know what it means to be Catholics. This creates a thousand difficulties for us, especially since we cannot put any order in the diocese without those who do not like this order saying that they are as satisfied to go to a sermon as to Mass.

1432. - TO A NUN
December 18, 1651
Reverend Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very embarrassed by the honor you have paid me of sharing the good thoughts God has given you for the welfare of the house in question. I am most unworthy of this because of my ignorance and sins. Nevertheless, since you ask me, I will tell you that it is indeed desirable that regularity be reestablished there, and I think God's guidance of you until now and your present dispositions give us reason to believe that He is counting on you to make certain efforts to contribute whatever you can to this undertaking. If so, you have reason to hope that He will give you greater light and strength as the work progresses than you are experiencing in its beginning.

I ask this of Him with all my heart and I would welcome the opportunity to serve you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Reverend Mother, your....

1433. - TO BROTHER JEAN-PASCAL GORET,¹ IN BAZOCHES²
December 19, 1651

I thank Our Lord that you have recovered your health and are using it in the service of God and the poor. I ask Him to give you a share in His humility and obedience. These are the virtues necessary to practice the others well and to go straight to God, to whom we often recommend the work He has given you to do.

You tell me that our good Daughters of Charity looked after you while you were sick. I am glad to hear it, and I am sure you are very grateful for this. However, dear Brother, it is to be hoped that this gratitude will not be expressed by visits or a great many words; it will suffice to see and speak to them only in passing, when necessity requires it. You know how we act with them here, so please do likewise.

1434. - TO MARGUERITE DENIAC, SUPERIOR OF THE DAUGHTERS OF NOTRE-DAME,¹ IN RICHELIEU
December 20, 1651

I was very sorry to see in your letter how distressed you are because our priests can no longer serve your house. I was obliged to ask you to dispense them from doing so, and I entreat you again by this letter, with all possible respect and affection, to relieve our Congregation of an example that would be prejudicial to it both in its consequences and in its substance, since it is contrary to the resolution we took from the very beginning never to assume the direction of nuns. We foresaw that this would be a hindrance to our primary function, which is to give missions for the instruction of the poor country people who, for the most part, are ignorant of matters necessary for salvation. Their need in this respect is greater than that of nuns, who rarely lack priests and directors.

That is the only motive we have had because, of course, dear Mother, God knows how greatly we esteem your virtue and your holy Community, to the point that we would consider ourselves fortunate to serve you, if we were not engaged in other duties incompatible with that. You need a priest who does nothing else. If our house were to give you one, it would be depriving the poor country folk of the assistance he could render them.

If you ask me why, then, we began by providing you with one, and why I permitted it, we did so because of the need you had of one in your new foundation, and our intention was to withdraw him as soon as possible. Besides, you are too fairminded to claim that, because we have served you for several years, we are now obliged to keep it up.

If you say that your financial difficulties do not allow you to support a confessor, I reply that we also have our difficulties, which certainly prevent us from continuing to provide one for you. That would oblige us to find another worker to send on missions in his place.

Perhaps you have heard that I myself serve as spiritual Father to the Daughters of Sainte-Marie in Paris, and that by so doing I am the first to act contrary to our

resolution. My reply to that, dear Mother, is that I had been in this duty for [two] years² before God was pleased to bring our Little Company into being, having been given this responsibility by their holy founder.³ That is why it was thought I should continue. Nevertheless, I have not failed to do my utmost to be relieved of it, and I even stopped going there for almost a whole year. In the end, however, I had to yield to a higher authority, who ordered me to continue.⁴ Then, too, it is only as Superior, which obliges me simply to go to each house about once a month; the rest is taken care of by letter.

In any event, Reverend Mother, I can assure you that none of the other houses renders any service to nuns. Not that we are not being urged to do so and would be highly honored to oblige, but what can we do? Everyone must carry out his own duty and refrain from what is not proper to him. I entreat you once again to allow us to act in this way.

1435. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, December 21, 1651

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

And may countless thanks be rendered to Divine Providence for having brought you so safely to Poland to a King and Queen who are so devout!¹ May God be also blessed for the charitable welcome Their Majesties have given you, their zeal for the salvation of their subjects, the parish confided to M. Desdames, and all the help you are receiving from them for your foundation! I am unworthy of thanking them in any other way except by prayers to God. May He Himself be their thanks! You can imagine how fervently I offer them to God, and I shall have the Company offer many prayers and sacrifices for their preservation and prosperity, as you desire.

We have been greatly consoled by all the things you tell us. I was especially touched by the kind manner in which M. Fleury² welcomed, instructed, and assisted you, and how M. Drogo also spared nothing in this. I am writing a note of thanks to the former and will do the same for the latter at another time. If I had occasion to be of service to them, God knows how eager I would be to do so. You can give them every possible assurance of this, and be assured yourself of our entreaties to Our Lord that He may grant you the fullness of His Spirit for the perfect accomplishment of His plan for you and for the Company.

I have nothing to say about what you have to do, except to tell you to have great confidence in the Divine Goodness and to take care of yourself for His service, since you are in the midst of a bountiful harvest in a place where the laborers are so few.

May God preserve and bless those you brought with you! May He multiply their number aplenty for the service of the ecclesiastical state and of the country people so that Jesus Christ may establish His reign in both! Once again, entrust

yourself confidently to His guidance and prepare your own guidance for all sorts of events in order to make good use of any that will be unfavorable to you. I have no doubt that you will experience some; otherwise, I would wonder about the outcome of the work.

If God does not allow you to do either a little or a great deal for others, you will be doing enough by adoring His ways and remaining at peace. Our perfect happiness consists in doing His Will in the true wisdom of desiring nothing other than that. God often wants to build lasting benefits on the patience of those who undertake them; that is why He tries them in many ways.

You know all that, but here is something you do not know: thanks be to God, nothing new has happened here. Our families in Paris and elsewhere are about the same, as far as their health and duties are concerned. Only the Troyes house has had any sickness. Everyone there has been affected and almost all of them at the same time. M. Ozenne³ and one or two others still have quartan fever. The house in Saintes has had its share of the common affliction of the town, caused by the civil war. God continues to bless the Genoa house, and our men in Rome are devoting themselves to the missions even more than in the past; this is a consolation to me.

Here, however, is some sad news--if it is true. They say that Limerick has been captured by the Parliamentarians and that the Bishop and about thirty priests have been taken. We have good reason to fear that Messieurs Brin and Barry are among them.⁴ We are awaiting more definite news but, whatever their situation, I recommend them to your prayers.

Our men in Barbary continue to do good work. M. Le Vacher the younger⁵ has arrived in Algiers. Brother Huguier,⁶ who is in Tunis, has been in chains for two or three weeks; it is costing almost four hundred écus to get him released. This came about because he was not careful enough with his papers. A slave took a patent from him, which serves as a passport for those who have been set free and are returning to their country. He thought he could use it for his own escape. For that reason, they humiliated him in this way.

We are just about finished with preparations for ordination, and the solemnity of Christmas is almost upon us. I ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of entering fully into the love and practice of the virtues resplendent in His holy birth and to be more than ever the life of your life and the unifying bond of your little family, whom I embrace tenderly.

Just one more remark: the poverty of the border areas still persists, and we have the same workers there. I forgot to tell M. Alméras to write to you; I will do so at the first opportunity. He is Superior of Saint-Charles Seminary,⁷ as we are now calling the petit Saint-Lazare. M. Gilles is in Crécy as Superior.

I ask Our Lord to act as Superior in you and through you, and to fill your hearts with faith, hope, and love.

I am, in Him, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I embrace you, Messieurs Desdames and Guillot,⁸ and Brother Casimir,⁹ prostrate in spirit at their feet and yours.

O Monsieur, how much I mind your absence! I feel as if I have lost my right arm.¹⁰ I beg you to offer me often to God and to His guidance, Monsieur, and to take care of your health.

1436. - TO ACHILLE LE VAZEUX, IN ROME¹

December 21, 1651

I thank God that you are looking out for everything. I had already heard from others about the proposed new Congregation called "Missionaries for the Indies," under the tutelage of M. de Ventadour.² We have nothing to say against the nature of the thing, which is good and praiseworthy. On the contrary, we should be very glad that there are men who give themselves to God to serve Him in this way.

As for the person himself, everyone knows he is of high rank. He was a Duke and has become a Canon of Notre-Dame de Paris; he is a very fine man. However, it is advisable to prevent them, if possible, from being called "Missionaries," pointing out the inconveniences that arise when two or several different Companies have the same name. Please make it clear that this confusion of names is very prejudicial to us. We have had only too great experience of it.

Because M. Authier's Company was called "of the Blessed Sacrament for Missions," we were almost expelled from Annecy, especially since they are at the Collège des Savoyards in Avignon against the will of the people. The latter, thinking that we and they were one and the same Congregation, turned against us and, in the heat of things, tried to drive us out of their region. The Chambéry Senate has even refused absolutely to approve our foundation, so I think that, in the end, we will have to leave Savoy.³

Let us go from this to another example. One day a priest went to the Lyons hospital and did not find it as well run as it should have been, according to his way of thinking. So, he wrote a letter to the Cardinal of Lyons,⁴ exhorting him to put an end to the disorder in that house; otherwise, he would suffer from it some day, and to that end he was summoning him before the judgment seat of God. Since he signed the letter "Priest of the Mission," this good Prelate took it that he was one of our men, although it was not so. He complained about this everywhere and attacked us for it. I went to see him and gave him clear proofs that this priest was not a member of our Company, but he was never willing to believe it. Ever since then, he has thought badly of us.

Here is a third example. Some time ago, the Bishop of Béziers⁵ asked us for a few priests to work in his diocese. A priest who had lived with us, whom we had sent away

because he had a weakness for wine, learned of this. He went to see this Bishop, saying that I had sent him. The Bishop welcomed him and put him to work, but he recognized soon after that he was a drunkard and, from that time on, lost any esteem he had for the Missionaries.

You can judge from all that the painful consequences that may ensue from having similar names for two or several Companies. The Chancellor⁶ had clearly foreseen this, for, when the Bull for M. Authier's establishment was presented to him for the King's authorization, he flatly refused, without my saying a word or having anyone else mention it. He said that there was already a Congregation of Missionaries in France.

Since God has been pleased to bestow a certain blessing on ours, new Societies desiring to do what we do are happy to take our name as well. Thus, the faults of others will fall on us, and ours will be blamed on them. Also, it is no use to say that the Company will be called "Mission for the Indies" because ours is also for the Indies, as well as for elsewhere. Do not the Jesuits and other religious Communities send people there also? However, they are distinguished by their own name and not by "the Mission."

So, as I told you, I knew that there was some activity here to get that work started, but I did not know that it would be pursued in Rome, even less that there was any hope of having it erected as a Congregation.

I have also learned that a certain abbé, who is such in name only, is its Director and is forming the men of that seminary in the parish in Gentilly,⁷ which he has taken for this purpose, and that M. de Ventadour will be the Prefect General of those missions and, as it were, the Patriarch of America. He will have full authority from the Pope, and no one will be permitted to go there for priestly functions without his permission. If this were the case, there would be great reason to fear that disorder might arise; there is already cause for division.

A large fleet is being fitted out here for that land. A Doctor of the Sorbonne is going there, taking a number of good priests with him, and he is determined not to be in any way dependent on anyone except the Holy See. This plan was conceived long ago and will be carried out sooner than the other one because the money and the ships are almost ready.

You might inform the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation⁸ about all that and tell him, as if it were coming from yourself, that, before he grants anything with regard to this so-called establishment, it is most advisable for him to write and tell the Nuncio⁹ here to make careful inquiries about the qualifications of this abbé, who is supposed to be in charge of that seminary.¹⁰

Show this letter to M. Dehorgny.
Addressed: Monsieur N., Assistant of the Rome house, in the absence of the Superior

1437. - TO A MONK OF SAINTE-GENEVIÈVE

Saint-Lazare, December 21, 1651
Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have seen the decrees we have obtained against the monks of Saint-Victor, of which I am sending you an excerpt.¹ You will see in the first one a clause which apparently does not further your plan. It states: "without prejudice to the Congregation of Saint-Victor with regard to the houses dependent upon it." I would like to think, nevertheless, that they may be useful to you and that we had other good documents to assist you. I am, in every way, for you and your holy Congregation, in the love of Our Lord, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1438. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

Feast of Saint Thomas¹ [1651]²

Most Honored Father,

I could not let this day go by without reminding your charity that it has been twenty-six years since Providence placed me in the state of corporeal widowhood and granted me the grace of desiring to be united to Him for time and for eternity. Please give me your blessing for this, and do me the charity of offering me anew to His Goodness. If I were not so unfaithful to my holy angel, he would have inspired you to do so this morning.

I am returning to you the letter from the chaplain in Nantes.³ I feel I am not mistaken in thinking that some people in that place have the idea that withdrawing our dear Sister Jeanne⁴ would be advantageous. Would you consider, Most Honored Father, sending her to Saint-Malo? Excuse my readiness to tell you my thoughts. I am sending you the letter from our dear Sister Jeanne and the one from Sister Henriette⁵ who, as you see, is quite willing to go to Hennebont.

I do not know if your charity has taken the trouble to read the letter from the Pastor of Nanteuil, which I am also enclosing. I think he is annoyed that Madame de Schomberg, the Maréchal's wife,⁶ is listening to our Sisters who, I believe, are opposed to his putting a beggar as watchman at the Hôtel-Dieu. They fear that the disorders which have long existed there will continue. Enclosed is the letter the Sisters wrote to me about this. I shall send it to Madame de Schomberg, if your charity judges it appropriate.

Allow me, Most Honored Father, to ask you, for the love of God, if I may make my little review to you before Christmas--Friday, Saturday, or Sunday which is Christmas eve, at whatever time you like.

We have here Mademoiselle Guérin,⁷ your former neighbor at the Bons-Enfants. In the space of a month she lost--in the eyes of the world--two very virtuous and promising children. One was a professed monk at Sainte-Geneviève; the other was a Counselor in the Parlement. She would like very much to have the honor of seeing you. You know she is

someone who will take only the time your charity can give her. I am, though unworthy, Most Honored Father, your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE M.

The young man who came from Nantes asked to be remembered to your charity.

I almost forgot to send you most humble greetings from Monsieur and Madame de Liancourt⁸ on their return from La Roche-Guyon.

1 Addressed: Monsieur Vincent
1439. - TO MATHURIN GENTIL, IN LE MANS
Christmas Eve, 1651

Prompted by the loving mystery we are about to celebrate, I am writing to wish you the blessings it brings to men of good will.

What I wrote you about repairs is not to forbid them altogether but to say that they must be necessary, and the Superior must consent to them; that is, the General, when they are major, and the local Superior, when they are simply minor and ordinary. Does that not seem reasonable to you? I did not include in the countermand in my last letter the project for the trees nor planting the garden because no major expenditure is involved there. So, you may continue but always with the consent of the Superior.

Please do not think that I am influenced by reports, especially in your regard. I am well enough acquainted with the depths of your soul and the uprightness of your intentions.

1440. - TO N.
January 2, 1652

It is very difficult right now to find seven or eight thousand livres, which are being distributed monthly in Champagne and Picardy, and this is only a fourth of what used to be given last year.

1441. - A PRIEST OF THE MISSION TO SAINT VINCENT
[Saint-Quentin, 1652]¹

The famine here is so bad that we see men eating dirt, chewing on grass, stripping the bark off the trees, and tearing up and swallowing the miserable rags that cover them. But what is horrifying--and what we would not dare to mention if we had not seen it--is that they are devouring their own arms and hands and are dying in this state of despair.

We have three thousand poor refugees and five hundred sick persons, not to mention the impoverished nobility and the bashful poor of the town, whose number increases daily.

1442. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION, IN MARSEILLES

The words that Reverend Father let slip give us reason to rejoice at not having been the occasion for his calumnies¹ and to thank God for this. Happy will we be if He finds us worthy of suffering for justice' sake,² and if He grants us the grace of loving humiliation and returning good for evil!

1443. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[January 1652]

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, the most humble petitioner, places before Your Eminences the fact that for several years the Consul of the town of Salé in the kingdom of Fez in Africa has urged him many times to send some priests of his Congregation to that town for the service of Christians, both freemen and slaves,¹ who are there. Up to the present, he has been unable to satisfy the zeal and piety of this Consul. Now, in face of these same constant requests, the said petitioner represents to Your Eminences the desire and need of that Church so that, with the consent and under the authority of this Sacred Congregation, he may send some of his priests there and, as soon as possible, give information on the qualifications of the subjects, with the approval of the Nuncio of France. And he will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.²

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1444. - TO THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA

January 16, 1652

Madame,

M. de Guénégaud¹ did me the honor of telling me that at the time Your Majesty passed through Fontainebleau you did me the favor of inscribing on the register of officers of the house of the Duc d'Anjou,² in the duty of ordinary gentleman-in-waiting, the person I had the boldness to recommend to you. However, since I learned of this only much later, I was unable any sooner to pay Your Majesty the highest homage of my gratitude. It is indeed so great, Madame, that I consider myself unworthy of thanking Your Majesty for such a favor. Therefore, I ask O[ur] L[ord] to be Himself your thanks and reward. I have not yet received the commission for it; I am taking the liberty of requesting it of M. Guénégaud. I hope that, if necessary, Your Majesty will consent to order him to send it to me.

We continue to pray and have prayers offered constantly to God for the King and Your Majesty, that He may be pleased to be your guidance and sanctification. I have the happiness to be, in His love, Madame, Your Majesty's most humble, most obedient, and most faithful servant and subject.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1445. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA

Paris, January 19, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

If I am deprived of your letters, I am not deprived of the consolation of knowing about the good services you are rendering to God, at times by the instruction of the clergy,

at other times by missions, and always by the exercise of His love in all the ways His best servants are accustomed to honor Him. I thank Him infinitely for this and for the blessings He gives to your work. O Monsieur, how good God is to us, so long as we are faithful to Him!

How are you? Please send me a few words on the state of your health and--when you get the chance--let me know if I should continue to give your brother receipts on the house in town to collect the rent you have on it. I already gave him two or three, each for forty-three livres fifteen sous, the amount for each quarter. He says he needs the money, and I believe him because it is a bad time.

Once again, I ask Our Lord to be your all in all and that I may be, eternally in His love, as I am in this life, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa 1446. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
January 19, 1652

Your letters put me to shame, making me see that you are working continually while we are doing so little here. More than once a week I tell the Company what you are doing, to excite them to the conquest of souls and to take up the struggle against nature, in imitation of you.

I am greatly consoled that Messieurs Duport and Le Blanc already have tongues sharp enough to cut the children's bread,¹ especially the former, who you say is ready to go and give missions. May God be blessed for that, and may He be pleased by His Grace to animate them with the same zeal which animates their Superior!

The spirit prompting M. Valois² with the desire to go to the aid of his country seems too strong for us to venture to resist him. If this impulse persists with the same intensity, let him go. Perhaps God will find his sacrifice so pleasing that He will draw glory from it and will work through him some extraordinary grace for such an afflicted kingdom. So many good Catholics there should not be left without assistance; the more they are persecuted, the stronger they hold fast to their faith.³ If M. Molony⁴ wants to go with him, we will assign him as his companion and will do all we can for the consolation and salvation of their homeland.

You say you are worried about the Corsica mission and do not know whom to send with M.... I think you will be making a good choice in M. Duport, a capable, zealous man of God, who preaches well and very successfully. You can even put him in charge, if you see that M...will not object. Rest assured that he will make no faux pas because he has very good judgment, prudence, and discretion. With all that, he is very gentle and cordial. Think it over; if you need other workers, we shall send you some.

I pity that poor Brother who has left you, if he is planning to become a priest,⁵ because I have hardly ever seen

any men succeed in the priesthood who previously had another vocation in which they did well. On the contrary, I have known holy men in the military, not to mention those in other professions, who were doing wonders there, but once they entered the priesthood, they did almost no good in it.

God grants grace for one state of life that He refuses in another. A Brother who would have the Spirit of God residing in his state would undoubtedly lose it if he left it. God is not fickle; He wills that each person should remain in the state in which He has placed him. Anyone who abandons it has no guarantees.

1447. - TO JEAN GICQUEL,¹ SUPERIOR, IN LE MANS
January 21, 1652

The present miseries of this region, and those we have reason to fear,² lead us to consider vacating this house. Perhaps we shall send you either our seminarians or our students along with their teacher because wheat and meat cost much less in Le Mans than in Paris. Please let me know if you can feed them for forty or forty-five écus apiece. Talk it over with the Procurator of your house.

1448. - TO FATHER FRANÇOIS BOULART, AT SAINTE-GENEVIÈVE
Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I do not recall the name of the parish of the late M. Flamignon, a former monk of this house.¹ It is a league away from Châteaudun; your Fathers there can tell you. I do not know whether he personally occupied any other benefice, except for a chapel called Sainte-Radegonde,² which is in the parish where he was Pastor, and that he was at law against the Seigneur who is--I think--M. de Nouveau. One of your Fathers, who saw him during his illness at his request, could tell you what he said. If I knew anything else, I would gladly tell you. I am, Reverend Father, in the love of Our Lord, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Reverend Father Boulart, at Sainte-Geneviève
1449. - TO FATHER GEORGES BARNY, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE
ORDER OF GRANDMONT¹

January 24, 1652

Most Reverend Father,

It will soon be six months since the Comte de Brienne² sent me a letter from the King to have delivered to Your Reverence. I did not do so at the time because I was seriously ill, and I have not done so since then through the negligence of the person who looks after my papers.³ He did not mention this letter to me until two days ago. I most humbly ask pardon of Your Reverence for this delay.

The reason His Majesty wrote to you is that it was decided to do so at the Council for Ecclesiastical Affairs.⁴ At the time, a priory of your Order in the Lodève diocese became vacant, and one of your good monks named Father Frémont⁵ was considered for a pension, on condition that he reestablish the primitive regularity there, as he has done

in some of your other houses.⁶ This pension would pass from him to his successors in the observance of the above-mentioned Rule. When a reply was made to the Queen, Her Majesty expressed great joy and ordered me to see that it was carried out, which makes me guilty of not having done so until now.

There is reason to hope that the good God wishes to make use of you, Most Reverend Father, to restore such a holy Order as yours, which has been very distinguished in the Church and a blessing to the kingdom. Under your government it has begun to diffuse the same odor it diffused in its primitive way of life, which good people would like to see reestablished. The King wants to do his part in this, and it seems like this is God's plan, since He has given you that good monk as a most suitable instrument to be used by Your Reverence. You will do so very effectively if you agree to make him your Vicar-General to govern the houses in Époisses, Thiers and Lodève,⁷ with authority to receive novices and professed monks in the above-mentioned primitive observance, all under your authority and holy guidance.⁸

This, I believe, Reverend Father, is the subject about which the King is writing to you. I am sure Your Reverence will comply with his wishes in such a reasonable matter, which tends to the glory of God and the administration of a body of which you are the head. Furthermore, through you and your ministers, Our Lord will cause His religious spirit to permeate it and to reign in it for centuries to come. By this means also He will make you and your zeal worthy of commendation to posterity, in addition to the merit Your Reverence will have before God. I ask Him to preserve you and to grant me the grace of rendering you my obedience on some suitable occasion because you are a Prelate whom I esteem and respect highly. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Most Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, Unworthy Superior of the
Congregation of the Mission
1450. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, January 24, 1652
Monsieur,

Since writing to you, I have reflected on the note you added to your letter, and I thought it advisable for you kindly to write me in detail about its contents by the next mail. You said that, after signing the propositions that were sent, you learned that a notation had been added to the article concerning the eight hundred livres "for which provision will be made at the next synod." You felt obliged to point out to me that, in the contract by which you assumed the obligation of running the seminary, it is stated that, since I was expecting my clergy to contribute eight hundred livres annually for the support of six priestly seminarians, you committed yourself to maintain them for the above-mentioned sum and that it was decided nemine reluctante¹ by a general vote of my synod that the eight

hundred livres would be paid annually to the said seminary. The money would be taken from the contributions given for the auditing of the accounts. You said that this decision had been confirmed by letters patent from the King and has been put into effect since then, so you ask me not to allow anything to be changed and to reflect that, if this were to happen, nothing would be assured. You hoped for this from my integrity and my love for my seminary and clergy, who are the beneficiaries of this.²

If you think it fitting to write to me, do not be stopped by the words set down here. They are simply to let you know my sentiments, which I submit to yours. In the meantime I shall remain, Monsieur, your....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1451. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

January 25, 1652

The daughter¹ of Mademoiselle Gionges has no sign of a vocation for the Charity; how can you expect her to remain in it? She has not worn the habit since she has been there; and, what is worse, is unwilling to do so. She gets up when she pleases and does almost nothing. Yet, she is maintained like the others. This is a relief for her parents but a burden to that Little Company, which is poor and cannot feed a girl who does not work and does not intend to stay, except perhaps only as long as the bad weather lasts. Now, as you know, it is not right for a girl like her to eat the bread of the other poor girls who are working for God and for the sick poor.

1452. - TO GUILLAUME DELVILLE,¹ SUPERIOR, IN MONTMIRAIL

January 25, 1652

It is not at all proper for women to be in our houses in rural areas, any more than in the towns. There was an elderly woman at Orsigny,² who was upright and very helpful, but because our Brothers were there, people found fault with this, and we sent her away immediately. I am not saying that you did anything wrong by getting one for La Chaussée,³ since there was a need and we had none of our men there, but to keep one at Fontaine-Essarts⁴ is out of the question. It is better to get rid of everything in the household, except for a plow which you can keep for the crops. So, sell your cows and everything else involved in the work, unless you can find some good boy to look after things.

1453. - TO BALTHAZAR GRANGIER DE LIVERDI, BISHOP OF TRÉGUIER

January 28, 1652

I have nothing to say, Excellency, about your suggestion to me regarding confessions in the seminary chapel and the priests you are forming there. It is up to you to arrange matters as you please. As for our men, however, I beg you most humbly to allow me to represent to you that our Bull expressly forbids us to hear confessions of persons outside the Company in the places where we live, except for those who make retreats in our houses.¹ None of our houses acts otherwise, except those that have parishes, as in Sedan and

Richelieu; or pilgrims, as in Saint-Méen and La Rose. The reason for this is to avoid the attachments to which this practice would commit us, and to keep our priests always available to work for the salvation of country people.

Town dwellers do not, as a rule, lack spiritual assistance. Nevertheless, Excellency, I wanted to find out if our older men thought it appropriate to waive this Rule in consideration of you, but they all felt that inconveniences would arise from contravening our Bull and our custom in this matter. That is why, Excellency, we most humbly entreat you not to allow our Missionaries to give this bad example to their confreres. Since several of them are already inclined toward working in the towns and for the rich rather than the poor, it is to be feared that, once they became accustomed to that, they would no longer be willing to go to the rural areas in search of the lost sheep.² In this way, they would make themselves useless to the Church of God and incapable of rendering obedience to the Bishops.

1453a. - TO JEAN-JACQUES OLIER

Saint-Lazare, Easter Sunday [Between 1643 and 1652]¹

Abbé Olier is most humbly requested by his servant Vincent to listen to the complaints against one of his parishioners, brought to him by M. Maheut, the bearer of this letter. The latter is the brother of a monk of this house who, because of that, is an old friend of mine. Please help him to be compensated for the wrong being done to him. The Abbé is aware of the obligation we have to be of service to the relatives of those of this house who adopted us as their own children. He knows also that no one in the world is more his most humble servant than I.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Abbé Olier

1454. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

[Beginning of February 1652]¹

I have just received your letter of January 1, and you can imagine how much it consoled me, seeing that you are still in good health. You mention, however, another letter written two weeks before that one, which I have not received. So, I do not know what you did in Vilna,² what kind of welcome the Bishop gave you there, whether he is well-disposed or ill-disposed toward the Company, whether it is likely that you will keep the parish, and whatever else you wrote me and do not mention in this last letter. Nevertheless, because of the distance and the danger that all the letters may not reach us, it is advisable to repeat briefly once or twice the contents of the preceding letter, when the matter is important. Please do this and send me a copy of the lost letter as soon as possible.

As for the rest, I thank God for all the graces He has bestowed on you, especially the willingness He gives you to follow His orders, your fine leadership within the Company and outside of it, and the satisfaction our dear confreres

give you. I ask Our Lord to bless them more and more through you and through Himself and to animate your dear soul with the fullness of His Spirit so that it may be diffused according to His plan for you and them. We pray God also for the safe delivery and preservation of the Queen and will take care to continue to do so.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1455. - TO LOUIS THIBAUT, IN SAINT-MÉEN
February 6, 1652

In this letter Saint Vincent says that he was designated by Saint Francis de Sales himself as Superior of the First Monastery of the Visitation in Paris.

1456. - TO A PRIEST

I hope that, since the last letter you wrote, God has scattered those clouds that were troubling you. That is why I shall just say a few words in passing about this.

It seems you have begun to doubt whether you are among the predestined. My reply to this is that, although it is true that, without a special revelation from God, no one has infallible signs of his predestination, nevertheless, according to the testimony of Saint Paul, there are some signs so definite for recognizing the true children of God that there is almost no room for doubt. And I see all those signs in you, Monsieur, by the grace of God. The very letter in which you tell me that you do not see them reveals some of them to me, and my long acquaintance with you reveals the others. Believe me, Monsieur, I know no other soul in this world who belongs more fully to God than you, nor any heart further removed from evil, nor any that aspires more to good.

"But," you will tell me, "it does not seem so to me." And I reply to you that God does not always allow His own to perceive the purity of their interior amidst the promptings of corrupt nature, in order that they might constantly humble themselves; and since by this means their treasure remains hidden, it may be in greater security. The holy Apostle had seen wonderful things in heaven but did not consider himself justified because of that, for he saw in himself too much darkness and too many struggles. Still, he had such great confidence in God that he believed nothing in the world could separate him from the charity of Jesus Christ.¹

This example should suffice for you, Monsieur, to remain at peace in your dark moments and to have perfect and total confidence in the infinite goodness of Our Lord. Wishing to complete the work of your sanctification, He invites you to abandon yourself into the arms of His Providence. So then, let yourself be led to His paternal love, for He does love you. Far from rejecting such a good man as you, He never even abandons a wicked man who hopes for His mercy.

1456a. - TO SISTER ANNE-MARGUERITE GUÉRIN,¹ VISITATION NUN
February 13, 1652²

Dear Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Our dear Mothers who came from outside to discuss the affairs of your holy Order with our Mothers and those relieved of office³ of your monasteries in this city, in accord with the desires of your Annecy monastery,⁴ were unwilling to accept the reasons you gave me this past Monday for not coming. They want me to see you about this and are absolutely determined not to settle the matters that have been proposed to them, unless you are present. They are also determined not to go home before you come. They pleaded so strongly with me that I could not refuse them the order, which I am sending you in this letter, to return here with our dear Sister de Chandénier⁵ today, Sunday, in this coach which we are sending you.

So, dear Sister, come at the time I indicate to you, no matter what difficulty to the contrary is put before you. If, after you do what you have to do here, the Pastor of Saint-Nicolas⁶ feels you could render some services to our dear Sisters of the Conception, it will be up to him to order what he pleases.

As for me, dear [Sister], I entreat you to renew the offers of my most humble services to your dear Mother Superior⁷ and her dear community. We expect you today, then; please do not fail in this. I am, in the love of Our Lord, dear Sister, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1457. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, February 16, 1652
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Two weeks ago I wrote you our little news items; I received yours at the same time, which greatly consoled us but not entirely, since I did not read what has happened there since you arrived, and I did not receive the preceding letter in which you say you informed me of matters. I await a copy. I am also worried that, being able to write to us every week, as you have been doing, you did not do so. Since your last letters, some have arrived here from M. de Fleury and others, which have filled us with joy and gratitude for the Queen's safe delivery of a fine Prince.¹ We have thanked God for an event greatly desired and equally desirable. We shall continue to pray often that the Majesty of God will preserve and bless that good Queen and this young Prince. We have also learned that you are living near the King's palace and celebrate Mass daily in his chapel. For this we have likewise thanked God.

As soon as I heard all this good news, I exhorted the Company to thank God for it. Learning it from you would have been too great a consolation for us. May God grant that we may soon receive some of your own dear letters! Please send us as many as possible because some get lost and, of the many, one or the other will reach us.

We are in the midst of ordination. M. Watebled gives the morning conferences and M. Blampignon² takes the ones in the afternoon. We have recalled the former from Saintes in order to empty the house;³ it was [pil]laged⁴ along with the town, which is in the power of the Prince.⁵ The town of Angers has declared itself for him, so we are in great danger of not getting back anything we have there.⁶

The rest of our houses are going along as usual. Rome and Genoa are working at giving missions. The sick men at Saint-Méen are getting better. Brother Guy⁷ has paid the price for them all, since our good God has called him to Himself. You knew him but we did not.

We are anxious to know what money we have received from the salt tax, to be used for the Richelieu house, whether for buildings, repairs, acquisitions, consignments, legal expenses, fabric, or other provisions. If you can recall, please tell us what you know or how we could find out. M. Le Gros⁸ has written to M. Maillard⁹ about it; I do not know what his answer will be. If you cannot give us this information, at least let us know the amount Saint-Lazare owes the Richelieu house. It is not quite clear on our books; perhaps you will remember.

We are still hoping to send some relief to M. Nacquart this spring. However, I have not yet decided who will go.

We have completely changed our recreations to conversations, and are trying to incite the Company to punctuality, recollection, silence, and the practice of solid virtue. Everyone seems to like it.

We have ten or twelve workers out on two missions, despite the ordination retreat, of which M. Demonchy¹⁰ is the principal director.

I tenderly embrace your dear family and, prostrate at their feet and yours, I ask Our Lord to unite you more and more in His amiable love and to grant all of you the grace of doing His most holy Will always and in all things. Please ask the same of Him for us and particularly for me. I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission now in Warsaw, Poland

1458. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
February 16, 1652

You are right in thinking that money given to the Congregation for Masses or for other purposes cannot be diverted in favor of our relatives. One day, one of my nephews came from one hundred fifty leagues away to see me. Since he was poor and had no money to return home, I consulted M. Duval¹ to find out if I could give him a little something out of our money. He told me that, in conscience, I could not do so without the Company's consent. This obliged me to go and ask alms for him, and with the six écus that were given me I sent him off.² God knows how consoled I

would be for you to assist your good sisters; however, since that cannot be done in the way you propose, I prefer to send them something from the first money we receive. Let me know by whom I can do this.

1459. - THE TOWN MAGISTRATES OF RETHEL TO SAINT VINCENT
Rethel, February 23, 1652

Monsieur,

As our misfortunes are increasing instead of diminishing, we feel strictly obliged to express to you our gratitude for the acts of charity you are doing to make them more tolerable for us. They have reached such a point that most of the poor are living only on a little oat bread, which those who are better off find rather difficult to give them in alms.

We have previously thanked you most humbly for the care you take to come to our aid. We now implore you once again to keep it up, assuring you that our wish for you is your continued well-being, since we are obliged to call ourselves, Monsieur, your most humble and grateful servants.

THE TOWN MAGISTRATES

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Priests of the Mission of Saint-Lazare, Paris

1460. - TO JEAN GICQUEL, SUPERIOR, IN LE MANS
February 28, 1652

I have heard that M. Guesdon¹ is dictating lessons to his seminarians. This is contrary to the custom of the Company and a somewhat ineffective way of teaching, since the students rely on their notes and do not exercise either their judgment or their memory. In this way, their minds remain empty while they pile up papers which they will perhaps never look at again.

In the past, one of our men in charge of a seminary² wanted to dictate lessons, but we dissuaded him. I do not think this is ever done in Spain or Italy; as a result, the Spanish are very scholarly and delve more deeply into learning than people do elsewhere. Tell Monsieur Guesdon for me to please act likewise. It will not take him long to recognize the usefulness of this piece of advice.

You tell me that the rumor about the arrival of some regiments³ is forcing everyone around Le Mans to hide whatever they have in the town and that you, trusting in God, are moving nothing, or very little. I am glad, Monsieur, that you have such trust, but neither should one tempt God. We foresee that other soldiers will be passing through Le Mans; this leads us to think that it would be a good idea for you to put in a safe place the silver and the finest vestments in your Church, your dishes, your major furnishings, the linen and beds you can do without, as well as deeds and important papers, wheat, oats, etc. You could send all that to one of your friends in town.

As for yourselves, you must not leave the house but wait there for the protection of God, who will not allow any

misfortune to befall you. I ask this of His Divine Goodness.

1461. - NICOLAS PAVILLON, BISHOP OF ALET, TO SAINT VINCENT
My very dear and most honored Father,

Since you procured for us the happiness of having the Abbés de Chandénier¹ come into this diocese, I felt obliged to tell you, on their return to you, about the admirable edification they have given here and the remarkable progress they have made in piety. I entreated them, my very dear Father, to assure you of the fond remembrance I have and shall have all my life, please God, of my very great obligations toward you. I hope you will add to these that of constantly offering to God, especially at the holy altar, my very great needs and those of this poor diocese.

I am, with all possible respect and affection, in our dear Savior, my very dear and most honored Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

NICOLAS, B[ishop] of Alet
Alet, February 28, 1652

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

1462. - TO GUILLAUME DELVILLE,¹ IN MONTMIRAIL
February 29, 1652

Despite the reasons you had for your haste in signing the farming leases, I persist in telling you that you should have informed me about this and waited for my reply. Even if the opportunity had been lost, I think that would have been for the better, especially since these are farmers who probably will not pay, as is common in that region. If you farmed that land yourself, you would have lost nothing. It would have been easy for you since you had the horses, implements, and all the things desirable to assure a good yield from the farms. Moreover, you are still obliged to maintain a plow in good condition and, consequently, to remain in almost the same difficulties; and all that for titled lands, which are not extensive enough to keep one plow occupied.

I am surprised that Brother François objects to taking care of the farmyard and the things connected with it, such as the cows and the dairy. If I am not mistaken, he used to do that here at this house. I am also surprised that he says he did not come to the Company for such things. He should remember that we enter it to do whatever obedience ordains and not to live in it according to our own will.

1463. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, March 1, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I finally received your letter of December 18, relating what took place during your sojourn in Lithuania. I had good reason to be anxious about its delay, since its reading brought me inexpressible consolation, seeing the consolations you received there from God, who blessed this

visit, and from those whom you went to see, especially the Archbishop of Vilna,¹ who welcomed you so cordially, edified you so greatly by his piety, and honored you with several fine gifts. I ask Our Lord to be his thanks for all that. I am sure you thanked him on behalf of the Queen or had her thank him herself, since it was out of consideration for her that he treated you in that way.

I received, at almost the same time, your letter of January 23 or 24. That was last Friday, after our packet was taken to Madame des Essarts.² She had heard that there was a Franciscan named Father Berthod³ in town, who manages the affairs of Poland in the absence of the Resident,⁴ and that he was the one who received and sent dispatches, and the person I should contact for the speediest and safest delivery of ours. I was obliged to have someone go to see him and find out the day and the hour for picking up your letters each week and to send him ours on time. So, he fixed Thursday morning for me to send someone for your letters and Friday evening to bring him our replies. Following this arrangement I received your letter of January 30 yesterday.

Like you, I blushed with shame when I saw what was said to you about the dirt and disorder in the churches in France and the acts of irreverence being committed in them. I am sure that, seeing just the opposite in the churches in Poland, this has affected you quite differently than when you were here. It is indeed a great evil to which people do not give sufficient attention because they have become inured to it. Your letter caused me to reflect on it and I have perceived, first of all, that the solution to it is painful but nonetheless necessary. I am determined to do something about it, beginning with ourselves here, and recommending it to all our houses. Then I shall continue with the ordinands, retreatants, and at our meetings with the diocesan clergy; in a word, in every way I can.

As for Notre-Dame, beyond the solution attempted to reform the priests who go there to celebrate Mass and whom we were instructing at the Bons-Enfants, I do not know what else can be done. This [instruction] has been discontinued because of the misfortunes of the times, which at present are greater than ever and seem to make this means impossible. And I see no other, unless some Communities in Paris, such as the Oratory, Christian Doctrine, and ourselves, are willing to join forces, and each send five or six persons to serve the Masses in the above-mentioned Church two days a week. In that way the acts of immodesty and lack of devotion there may be prevented. I shall seek advice on this; please ask God for light and grace as to how to go about it.

I have nothing special to say in reply to your three letters, nor any advice to give you on your present situation. I ask Our Lord, who knows what He has destined for you, to guide you toward this by the most suitable ways.

As for news, everything here is as usual. Our poverty is increasing with the public calamities. The disturbances causing them have deprived us all at once of an income of twenty-two or twenty-three thousand livres, for, in addition to the loss from the aides,⁵ the coaches are no longer running. One of the things that might help provide us with bread next year is the Rougemont farm,⁶ which we are tilling ourselves, along with the one in Orsigny,⁷ if God protects them from damage and pillage, and the harvest lives up to its promise. God is always open-handed to those who call upon Him and generous to those who hope only in His bounty.

We have yet to see the slightest sign of reconciliation and amendment; attitudes and affairs are getting progressively worse. Still, our confidence is increasing that God will soon give us peace, according to the maxim that where human means fail, divine operation begins.

We have no guarantee that the ship will sail for Madagascar, unless this has been decided in the past three days. I am very much afraid that the year may go by without our going there.

We now have thirty-five priests here. You can imagine how hard it is for us to subsist with such a large community.

I am taking the honor of writing to the Queen and to M. Fleury. The letters are open; read them and deliver or hold them back as you see fit.

Humbly, and with heartfelt tenderness, I embrace you, M. Desdames, M. Guillot, and Brothers Zelazewski and Posny.⁸ Please pray for us and for me who am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Warsaw

1464. - TO THE VICAR-GENERAL OF THE REFORMED PREMONSTRATIENSIS,¹ IN VERDUN

March 6, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I take the honor of renewing to you the offers of my obedience with all possible humility and affection, and of telling you that I had the consolation of seeing the Abbot of Cuissy² here. He told me that you object to his living in Community with his monks and having over them and their temporal affairs a type of direction similar to that formerly exercised by the regular abbots of your holy Order. You also want him to live in a separate building and to have the use of his two-thirds of the revenue without the right to the other third, or the choir and cloister, which will remain under the direction of the Prior, as if the said Abbot were a Commendatory Abbot³ and did not belong to the Reform.

I see several reasons for or against this, Monsieur. Since I cannot put them in writing nor can the question be

settled by letter, I feel that some Doctors and good Order priests should be consulted to examine everything and give their opinion on this dispute. However, since they cannot be brought to Verdun, where you are, the desirable thing would be for you to take the trouble of coming to Paris for this purpose. By so doing, in the uncertainty of such an important matter, you will be placing yourself in a position to know the Will of God. By the fairness of your line of action, everyone will see that you are seeking His glory. Furthermore, instead of being disedified at seeing a reformed Abbot sequestered from the other monks, in no position to observe his Rule and apparently leading a scandalous secular life, the public will praise your conduct, if you submit it to the advice of wise persons. Even the Queen, who made him an Abbot so that he might introduce and preserve the Reform in his abbey, will have good reason to continue with her plan of choosing abbots from your Reform.

Lastly, Monsieur, we hope to have the happiness of seeing you here as soon as possible to avoid a seeming division in your holy Reform. You know I have dedicated my humble services to it, and I will consider as a blessing the opportunities you give me to render them and to witness to you personally the esteem and respect God has given me for you. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1465. - TO NICOLAS BAGNI,¹ NUNCIO IN FRANCE
Saint-Lazare, March 7, 1652
Excellency,

The Consul of Salé,² a town in Africa in the kingdom of [Fez],³ has asked the Superior of the Marseilles house for a priest to act as his chaplain and to assist the poor slaves. I wrote to the Superior of the Mission in Rome, asking him to propose the matter to the Sacred Congregation, which he did.⁴ This led the same Sacred Congregation to request Your Most Illustrious Lordship to inquire into the qualifications of the person and the office.

However, Excellency, I have since learned that Father Canto, a Recollect Father, or other members of the same Order who were formerly responsible for that mission, are petitioning Rome to be newly reestablished there. This removes from us any thought of sending men there. It also inspires us with the desire that our Excellencies of Propaganda Fide should know that, when other workers can be found, who are willing to go to the places to which we are being called, we will withdraw so as not to break the bonds of charity nor depart from the opinion we must hold that others will do better there than we.

With all that, Excellency, we most humbly thank the Sacred Congregation for its attention to our proposal, and Your Most Illustrious Lordship for the honor you have done me in letting me know about this matter.

Thank God, we--and myself in particular--are entirely submissive to the wishes of both you and them. I have the happiness of being unreservedly, in His Love, Excellency, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1466. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

March 9, 1652

It is unwise to revoke your consent to exempt from tithes that arable land, enclosed and owned by a Huguenot townsman. Although this may be a surprise or, rather, an act of condescension toward the Abbot of Mouzon, the former Pastor,¹ nevertheless, the revocation would be ill-received right now and might produce bad effects. The right to recovery will always remain if the matter demands it, so it is better to defer it.

In similar circumstances, you should listen to the proposal and make no decision on it but ask for some time to think it over, or to write to me about it, or to share it with your community. No one can object to this delay.

I think it is a good idea for you to go to the synod and to inform the Vicar-General of the opinions of M...and the sermon he gave on them. Then, entreat him to tell you how he would like you to act in future with regard to this priest and whether or not you should refuse to let him preach in your pulpit.

1467. - TO EMERAND BAJOUÉ¹

March 10, 1652

Monsieur,

Almost two weeks ago I received a very short letter from you, which was both a great consolation and a source of admiration, seeing how well you are keeping in the midst of work as long and hard as yours. God must surely have a hand in it; otherwise, how would you dare to undertake, or be able, with so few workers, to sustain such a heavy mission as Villeneuve,² after giving three or four others! I thank His Divine Goodness for all that, Monsieur, and for the graces He has granted these poor people through you, and I ask Him to draw His own glory from it.

Amidst all this joy, I still greatly fear that you are taking on too much and will ultimately break down. That is why I beg you with all my heart to take care of your health. M. Ducasse³ has written me two or three times from Mont-de-Marsan, where he now is, and in one of his letters he led me to hope that he would go to help you manage that big mission in Villeneuve. I do not know if he did so and whether you have brought it to a successful conclusion.

We shall try to pay the Pastor of Saint-Louis the three hundred fifty livres of your letter of exchange. This, however, will not be easy because the public disturbances have already deprived us of more than twenty thousand livres income. As a result, almost all we have left is what we get from Saint-Lazare and a few farms, which is not even one-sixth of what we need to live on.

You tell me you are also afraid of losing all. Blessed be God for everything! Still, I ask Him not to permit this, or to grant us the grace of acting in our needs as Our Lord acted in His, while He was on earth.

I have no other news to give you. We are well, thank God, and the Company is going along as usual here and elsewhere, except in Saintes and in your area because of the troops who are causing disorder wherever they go. I am sure you are earnestly asking God for unity and peace in the kingdom, the remedy for so many evils.

Mademoiselle Le Gras was at death's door but, by the grace of God, she has recovered. God continues to bless her Little Company as well as the leadership of M. du Chesne⁴ at the Bons-Enfants, which is full. Saint-Charles Seminary is also doing well under M. Alméras, who is still not feeling very well.

I often receive news of M. Lambert and his little band, who are in good health, at peace, and in hopes of working effectively in Poland.

Our men in Barbary are well. Those in Italy have given quite a few missions this year, and God has blessed them in an exceptional way. I ask Him to increase His blessings on you and your work. I am, in His love....

1468. - TO A BISHOP

[1651 or 1652]¹

I really am distressed, Excellency, that the misfortunes of the times are depriving you of the revenues of your abbey. I find it very hard to tell you what I think in the matter both because I am not in a position to be of service to you and because of the political disorder in the kingdom. Nevertheless, Excellency, it seems to me that the present state of affairs should induce you to put off the visit to the Court until things are a little clearer.

Several of our Bishops are in the same plight. The Bishop of...has not only lost all his current income but also all the provisions he had been putting aside for the future. Although he is highly respected at the Court--and rightly so--when he made a journey here, thinking he would receive compensation, he got no satisfaction. The Bishop of [Sarlat] who remained in his diocese, brought his town back to obedience to the King, when, in the early disturbances, it had declared itself for the opposing party. For this he was greatly praised at the Court and opened the way for some expression of gratitude.

Although you do not have the opportunity of rendering similar service to His Majesty, still, your presence can help appreciably to keep order in the province, given the extent to which you are respected and esteemed. This is something which is most desirable now and which will also be very carefully noted.

I beg you most humbly to accept my simplicity and the offers of my obedience.

1469. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[March 1652]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, humbly represents to Your Eminences that two ships are preparing to leave this Easter with some Frenchmen going to live in America,² who are asking for two priests of his Congregation. Since he has not had time to choose the persons to be sent and, therefore, is unable to submit their names to Your Eminences, he humbly requests that you be pleased to send the usual faculties, without mentioning any names, for these two priests, who will be designated by the writer and approved by the Nuncio of France.³ Please also grant authority to the writer, with the approval of the said Nuncio, to appoint one of them Prefect of that mission, and to give this Prefect the power to grant the same faculties to the other priests who will work with him for the salvation of souls. He will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1470. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[Before March 31,¹ 1652²]

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

By a decree of July 9, 1648, the Sacred Congregation granted the faculties of Apostolic Missionaries on Saint-Laurent Island, commonly known as Madagascar, to Charles Nacquart, designated Prefect of the above-mentioned mission, and Nicolas Gondrée, his companion, both priests of the Congregation of the Mission, to work for the conversion of the unbelievers of that country. Six months after their arrival on that island, having made excellent progress in spreading the holy Faith, the companion of the said Prefect died. The latter now remains the only priest on that island and has written of the great need of evangelical workers. For this reason, Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the said Congregation of the Mission, has asked this Sacred Congregation permission at other times to send some of his priests there, and Your Eminences were pleased to grant them the usual faculties. However, since no ship has sailed for that island since that time, he has not been able to send them.

Now, since a French ship is preparing to set sail at Easter for that island,³ Vincent de Paul humbly places the above-mentioned need before Your Eminences. Since he has not been able to select the men so quickly and to give their names to the Sacred Congregation, he asks that it be pleased to have the usual faculties sent, without mentioning any names, for four priests of the said Congregation of the Mission. These will be designated by the writer and approved by the Nuncio of France, with the authority granted to the said Vincent de Paul, in agreement with the said

Nuncio, to appoint one of these priests as Prefect of the said mission, in the event that the said Charles Nacquart, the designated Prefect, may have already passed, or may pass, to a better life. He will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide for Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1471. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

March 15, 1652

It is true that France is sorely afflicted to such an extent that there are already other provinces almost as devastated as Champagne and Picardy.... The money distributed this month amounts to nine thousand livres, and at Easter we are sending three other priests to Champagne, in addition to those who have been there for so long.¹

1472. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

O Monsieur, what a beautiful adornment for a Missionary is holy indifference, since it makes him so pleasing to God that God will always prefer him to all other workers in whom He does not see this disposition for indifference in carrying out His plans! If we divested ourselves, once and for all, of all self-will, we would then be in a position of being sure of doing the Will of God, in which the angels find all their delight and men all their happiness.

1473. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, March 22 [1652]¹

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of February 19. I was a little disappointed when I opened it and saw only half a page of writing. However, the little there was did not fail to give me great consolation, since it informed me that you and your little community continue to enjoy good health. On the other hand, I was sorry to hear of the illness of the Archbishop of Vilna² and am planning to offer Holy Mass for him tomorrow, God willing, that His Divine Goodness may be pleased to preserve this holy Prelate for His Church. We are continuing our prayers for the King, the Queen, and the little Prince.

I have just left your nephew, who came here to see you. He stayed only two days because he wanted to go home on the coach that leaves today so that they would not worry about him if he were delayed longer. He is married now and God has given him children. He also has two horses and about twenty-four acres of land, part of which he has sown. This would be enough to live on if there were no soldiers in France. When any of them come to him, M. Jouailly³ willingly takes them in, with whatever they bring.

I have never seen anyone who represented better for me the goodness and simplicity of Our Lord than he does. I do not mean a foolish kind of simplicity because he does not

lack intelligence. He embraced me more than six times, kissing my cheek with such cordiality that he seemed to me to be all heart. We spoke a great deal in the Picard dialect but with this difference: he did his best to speak good French and I to speak good Picard.

He told me you would really be dumbfounded⁴ when you heard that he had come here. He was a little disappointed at not seeing you but went off as cheerful and pleased as could be. His good humor has left me quite delighted because it is accompanied by piety and the fear of God. He has a little sister, too, who is also a fine girl.

I add to this news what we have heard from our dear confreres in Ireland. We thought they had been among those whom the English had put to death at the fall of Limerick, but thanks be to God, He snatched them from their hands. We are sure about this for M. Barry, who has arrived in Nantes, and whom we expect here. We also have good reason to hope for the same regarding M. Brin, although we have no guarantee.

They left Limerick together with one hundred or one hundred twenty priests and monks, all disguised and mixed in with the soldiers from the town, who left the day the enemy was supposed to enter it. Our men spent the night preparing for death because there was no mercy for the clergy, but God did not allow them to be recognized as such.

They separated with great sorrow on leaving, one in one direction, one in another; but they felt they had to do this so that, if one were to die, the other might at least be in a position to escape. M. Brin went off toward his native place with the Vicar-General of Cashel, a good friend of theirs, and M. Barry headed for some mountains he mentioned. There, he met a charitable lady who took him into her home and kept him there for two months. At the end of that time, a ship arrived, which, by chance, was going to France, and he boarded it without having heard anything about M. Brin from the time they had separated. However, he thinks it will not be easy for the latter to get back to France because the English hold the seas and because they are in his region; so, he needs prayers.

We have about seventy ordinands here in the house. Messieurs Grimal and Gallais⁵ give their conferences and M. Demonchy has their overall direction.

We are fairly well, thank God. True, I have not been out for a week or ten days because of my little fever, but I think I am over it for now, so I hope to go to the meeting of the Ladies today.

The Collège des Bons-Enfants, S[aint]-Charles Seminary, and our other houses are going along as usual. I continue to offer you to God frequently and affectionately, and am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Poor Brother Lye,⁶ who was in his native place,

fell into enemy hands. They crushed his skull and cut off his feet and hands in the presence of his mother.
Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Warsaw

1474. - TO NICOLAS SEVIN, BISHOP OF SARLAT
March 23, 1652

Excellency,

One of our priests in Cahors told me that you did me the honor of writing to me but, since I have not received the letter, I entreat you most humbly to let me know what orders you gave me in it so that I can try to carry them out. I shall do so always and in all things, unless I am unable. I venture to assure you of this, Excellency, and to take this opportunity to tell you that I see no Prelate in the kingdom so generally esteemed as you are because of your wise manner of acting with regard to God, the State, and the people.

One of our Bishops did me the honor of writing to me recently about an abbey of his, ruined by the war in Saintonge. He was asking my advice as to whether he should go to the Court to seek compensation for his losses. I replied to him¹ that the present state of affairs was too unfavorable for that, despite the fact that he is highly respected by the Queen and the King's Council. I added that his stay at the Court would not be greatly appreciated at this time, whereas his presence in his diocese might be very helpful in the service of the King and the province.

To encourage him to stay home, I gave him two examples: one, of a bishop who felt urged to come to the Estates but saw his town on the verge of declaring itself for the Prince;² and the other, of you, Excellency, whom I named, saying that during the first disturbances, you saw your diocese about to do the same but you held fast and by your fine leadership maintained it in perfect obedience to the King. I also said that you were highly praised for this at the Court, and by this means you have opened the way for some expression of gratitude to you. The best advice I could give him was to do as you did in this time of crisis, when the good servants of God and of the King distinguish themselves from those who are not, and in this way will merit consideration later on.

Your brother did us the honor of coming to dinner here recently. As you can imagine, Excellency, we talked about you and all the good you are doing, which is already known throughout the kingdom. He was greatly consoled by this. As for me, I cannot tell you how much it consoled me nor how fervently I pray to God for your preservation and for the grace of being able to render you my modest services. I hope to receive this grace, along with your blessing, if you are pleased to give it to me, as I beg you, prostrate in spirit at your feet. I am, in Our Lord....

1475. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
March 23, 1652

If you have not yet given official notification to M...regarding the ban on preaching, do not do it; ask the Vicar-General to excuse you and to give it to some neighboring pastor to do. Tell him that this young man has influential relatives in Sedan, who would be offended if this prohibition came from you and would think that you had requested it; that, in addition, the Governor would be displeased if you did this without consulting him, since you usually share with him matters of any importance, and even more so if, after you discussed it with him, he were to tell you he did not want it done; that, in M... 's time, he was annoyed that he had issued an official notification, by order of the Vicar-General of the day, without asking his opinion; and that it is important for the glory of God that you stay on good terms with this fine gentleman....

Since writing the above, I have learned that you had the notification issued by a priest of the house. When you ask for advice on another occasion, it would be well to wait for the reply.

1476. - TO N.

March 23, 1652

Food was so scarce during the siege of Limerick, said the Saint, that "a horse's head was selling for an écu."

1477. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

March 29, 1652

M. [Le Vazeux]¹ has informed me that M. de Ventadour continues to pursue the project of the Mission to the Indies and has sent the Sacred Congregation several objections to the decree obtained by M. [Le Vazeux].² The result is that there is now some friction between that good gentleman and us, for which I am very sorry and had clearly foreseen from the very beginning. I even told M. [Le Vazeux] to entrust this affair to Providence and not to place any obstacle in its way, for fear of opposing the plans of God and of offending many good and important persons. However, he moved too quickly, and the deed was done.

I also wrote him to do nothing of any importance without your advice and mine. Now I see that he is in a great hurry to prevent this work and to find some means of maintaining our little Congregation, imagining that its preservation depends on the destruction of others--as if God Himself, who made us what we are, was not taking the trouble to preserve us.

So, he takes unnecessary precautions, and his natural hastiness makes him incapable of brooking any delays. He is carried away by first impressions and, in his last letter, he went so far as to try to persuade me that our vows are null and void and that it is a mortal sin to make and renew them. This gives you some idea of where his mind is leading him, and where it might go if we let it. One of these days I will send you an official document in which he himself will see how wrong he is. In the meantime, I am recommending to him once again to take no action in

opposition to this new Mission, nor to do anything else of importance except in agreement with you, nor even without writing to me about it and having received my reply.

1478. - TO ACHILLE LE VAZEUX, ASSISTANT, IN ROME¹

Good Friday,² 1652

Every day you give me good reason to praise God for your attachment to the Company and your vigilance regarding its affairs, and I do so with all my heart. However, I must tell you also, as Our Lord told Martha,³ that you are a little too concerned about things and that only one thing is necessary, which is to give more to God and His guidance than you now do. Foresight is good when it is subject to the latter, but it becomes excessive when we are in a hurry to avoid something we fear. We rely more on our own efforts than on those of His Providence, and we think we are doing a great deal by anticipating His orders by our own disorder, which causes us to rely on human prudence rather than on His Word. Not a sparrow nor a single hair of our heads falls to the ground except by His orders,⁴ and you doubt that our little Congregation will be able to maintain itself unless we take such and such precautions or do this or that, and that, if we delay, others will be established on our ruins. "Look," you say, "a new type of Congregation is starting; it must be opposed. Here comes M. Authier to Rome with the intention of getting the best of us because we have no authority to give missions in the towns and, perhaps, because we take vows. We must forestall him; otherwise, all is lost."

That, more or less, is the gist of your letters. What is worse, your quick mind is impatient to do whatever you say and in its zeal thinks it has enough light to see everything without having recourse to the light of others.

You have placed obstacles in the way of M. de Vent[adour]'s⁵ lawsuit, which should never have been done without consulting us. That is what I wrote to you at the time, foreseeing the conflict that resulted from it. If, since then, I have not expressed to you that I disapproved of the way you acted, it is because matters could no longer be remedied.

It would be better to have a hundred ventures under the name "Missions," even were they prejudicial to our Institute, than for us to have thwarted one good one, such as his, under pretext of maintaining ourselves. Besides the fact that this project for the Indies is apparently a work raised up by God, we would offend many important, virtuous persons and would thereby manifest more envy or ambition than genuine zeal. If we are truly zealous, we will be glad for everyone to prophesy, for God to send good workers and new Communities to His Church, and for their reputation to grow while ours diminishes.

In the name of God, Monsieur, let us have greater confidence in Him than we do; let us allow Him to steer our little bark; if it is useful and pleasing to Him, He will

save it from shipwreck. Far from being submerged by the multitude and the size of other boats, it will sail along with greater assurance in the midst of all those fine ships, provided it keeps straight on its course and does not waste its time crossing over into their path.

Continue to write and tell me what is happening and also what you think of things, but do not attempt anything of importance without consulting M. Dehorgny and me.

1479. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

Paris, Good Friday,¹ 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your two letters of February 26, and there were several things in them that consoled me. One item, however, grieved me deeply--the death of the little Prince, of whom God has willed to deprive this earth in order to have him reign in heaven.² We have redoubled our prayers for the King and Queen on this occasion. I do not think I should write any sympathy letter because only God Himself can console people in such losses. Then, too, you tell me that Their Majesties have already conducted themselves in these tragic circumstances as souls perfectly submissive to the adorable judgments of God. I thank His Divine Goodness for this, Monsieur, as well as for the liking He has given the King for your establishment, so much so that he himself has deigned to think about means to make and to strengthen it. I hope God will bless his efforts, since they are directed toward His service.

It is true that I have suffered greatly since I no longer have you here, but I adore the hand of God who has taken you away, and I assent to using this mortification until He is pleased to bring you back. In the meantime, we shall ask Him for a person having the fine qualities you indicate, to go and further the glory of God in Poland.

I sent your letter to M. Gambart,³ with a note for the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, urging them to write to Poland by the next regular mail to console the Queen with the hope of seeing them there soon. I also notified Mademoiselle Le Gras of what concerns her. After these feast days, we shall work seriously on this plan.

Please tell Brother Casimir⁴ that, just as I was about to go to Tenebrae yesterday, I was informed of his return, and during the services I thought of it several times and thanked God for it. Today's services prevent me from writing you a longer letter.

Our little news items are the same as I sent you. I wish you the blessings of the mystery of love which we are celebrating, and the same for your dear family, whom I embrace, along with your dear soul, at the foot of the Cross of Our Lord. I am, in Him, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I embrace in particular Brother Casimir, prostrate in spirit at his feet, with the inexpressible joy of knowing he is with you.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Poland, in Warsaw

1480. - TO BROTHER LÉONARD LAMIROIS,¹ IN GENOA

Good Friday [Between 1646 and 1660]²

I praise God for your health of body and mind. I am sure you are still ailing somewhat, but this is, as you say, in order to exercise patience, without which we advance little in solid virtue. You practice it not only in that respect but in always doing the same duty, and one such as yours where the work is never finished and you have to deal with everyone.³ True, in this you honor Divine Providence, who provides for the needs of His creatures but, since Providence cannot please them all, neither can you do things so well that you do not have to put up with some slight opposition and feel an aversion toward certain persons.

Thank God, you rise above those feelings and show as much gentleness and affability as the hot climate and the heat of the fire allow. Keep this up, dear Brother. Blessed are those who suffer, and blessed will you be for consuming yourself for God, as Our Lord did on the Cross! I wish you an abundant share of the fruits of His precious death so that you may live eternally with Him. Take care to direct your intention to Him so that nothing may be lost in all the work you do, but your labor may be pure gold and your soul richly adorned for its Spouse.

1481. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION, IN TROYES

April 4, 1652

I was very glad to receive your letter. I am sure your father and mother would be greatly consoled to see the whole family gathered together; I, too, would share in their consolation at seeing you pass through here. However, I cannot suggest that you go because Our Lord has left us a counsel quite to the contrary, not wanting one of His disciples to go home to bury his dead father,¹ nor for another to sell his possessions and give them to the poor;² yet, those were very holy, urgent reasons.

He added His own example to this counsel. You know that He returned only once to His own region, and you know what happened to Him then: His own people wanted to throw him off the edge of a cliff.³ I think He permitted this in order to represent to us the spiritual dangers to which we expose ourselves by similar visits, which, in our experience, are greater and more common than I can tell you. At the very time I am writing to you, we are experiencing this with a member of the Company. That is why, Monsieur, you will be doing an action most pleasing to God if you mortify nature by refusing it this journey. What you say about your parents wanting to see you is true, but this desire is natural and not divine; and they will be edified when they

learn that you are depriving yourself of this satisfaction for the love of God.

When you say that, despite all those reasons, your brothers and your uncle, who are monks, will not fail to be present at your sister's profession, I believe it; but you should take into consideration that they are nearer to there than you are and do not have the opportunity you have to gather in the harvest--at all hours of the day you can procure the salvation of souls and win over many of them to Jesus Christ. Consider, Monsieur, whether this holy objective should not be given preference and whether, at the hour of death, you will not feel inexpressible consolation for having held fast to it, when flesh and blood tried to divert you from it. Besides, I have to tell you that the roads are very dangerous in these troubled and disorderly times, and, in all probability, they will be even worse in future.

I also assure you that I myself want to follow the advice I am giving you, as do most members of the Company, who greatly scruple about abandoning the works of God for their own temporal affairs, still more for a fleeting satisfaction such as being at home and visiting with relatives there. When parting time comes, there is nothing but sorrow and tears, and, what is worse, the servants of God are often left with nothing but distractions. Their minds are full of images and sentiments very little in harmony with their state, and they sometimes lose the attachment they had for their spiritual exercises. Monsieur Alméras has not gone to see his father since he has been in the Company, except for one time when he was ill.

I ask you, Monsieur, to reflect on all this and to give yourself to God so as not to interrupt your work as long as He blesses it as He does. Remember that, besides the glory His Divine Majesty will receive from this oblation, you will be more pleasing in His sight, more fit to serve your neighbor, and an ever better example to the Company, which has good reason to thank Our Lord, as I do, for having given you to it and for all the good you do in it.

1482. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

Paris, April 12, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday I received your letter of March 11, which gave me great consolation, not only because it is one of your letters, which all have the same effect, but also because of your fine leadership--or rather God's leadership over you. He has caused you to find favor in the hearts of the King and the Queen and, what is more, disposed Their Majesties to make such a fine royal foundation. Although it is assured only during their lifetime, there is reason to hope that, with time, the State will consent to its being permanent. So, you must allow God to act just as you have done until now.

I thank His Divine Goodness for all these things and for the others you tell me, especially your reply to the Queen on the questions of the day, which is much to my liking and according to the Spirit of God.¹ Although we do not like these novelties, I have nevertheless exhorted the Company to speak neither for nor against them. Because M. Gilles had dwelt on these matters in a conference to the ordinands, I asked him insistently not to do so any more; but being unable to prevail on him in this matter, we sent him to Crécy to remove him from occasions of getting carried away, as he was doing at every opportunity. We also had to withdraw M. Damiens from this duty. He had started teaching theology to our students and had said something about those things in a few of his lectures. I have likewise chastened our students in this regard and will see to it that no one tries it again because what you say is true: it is a great evil for a Community to be divided in its opinions. You have been advised sufficiently about preventing your men from discussing these debates or speaking about them with persons outside the Company.

I have nothing but great praise for your discretion amidst the satisfactions of a fine beginning. You do not expose yourself to the eyes of the Court nor to the dangers of envy and the snares of the devil, unless necessity obliges. In this way, Our Lord, in whom alone we are secure, will be your protector. It is to Him, Monsieur, that you must turn to choose the place for your establishment--I mean to ask Him to inspire the King, the Queen, and the Archbishop of Vilna² about it. Since he wants to have you in his town, he will not fail to consult Their Majesties to see if it is more expedient to have it there than elsewhere. So, just let them act.

Wherever it may be, if there are theology classes, I think it will be well to allow Brother Casimir to go to the lessons, provided he goes to your house for the Office every day. I was very pleased with the Queen's charity to his mother because now he will have no reason to worry about her needs.

I did not tell you that last Friday, after sending my packet to Father Berthod,³ I received yours of March 4, and that very day M. Bouchet sent me the one you sent with him with the bracelets and rings in it, which I have given to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon. As for the elk's foot,⁴ he did not send it to me nor have I sent to him for it. I shall have someone pay him a visit one of these days, in gratitude for being such good company for you and for the other good services he rendered you. I hope, then, to receive that beautiful present, which I shall give to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon from you.

You told me that Brother Posny was sick. Mon Dieu! how is he now? I presume he is better, especially since you did not mention him in your last letter to me. I have

recommended him to the prayers of the Company, along with the little family in general and all that concerns you.

Mademoiselle Le Gras will keep three of her Sisters ready to be sent with the ones from Sainte-Marie. I have talked to them about a confessor; they are having great difficulty finding someone suitable. I sent the Mother Superior⁵ Br[other] Zelazewski's letter and an excerpt from yours regarding the Queen's concern for them.

The voyage to Madagascar has been delayed again. M. Berruyer⁶ came to see me just four or five days ago and told me that the ship they had bought was too old to go so far. In addition, because it was late in the season, they had no time to procure and equip a better one but will have one for September, God willing.

M. Portail is making the Visitation of the Bons-Enfants. M. Grimal is taking his place here, and M. Bayart is looking after the Daughters of Charity. M. Ennery,⁷ who teaches theology to our students, is also their director, and M. Watebled⁸ is the director of our Brothers. Both will give them conferences on Sundays and feast days.

The Company is going along well everywhere, and I am, more than ever, if this were possible, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert

1483. - TO ACHILLE LE VAZEUX, ASSISTANT, IN ROME¹

April 12, 1652

I told you I had seen M. de Ventadour and promised him we would not thwart his plans in any way. I said that our sole concern was to avoid a similarity of names because of the inconveniences this confusion might cause. When I pointed out some that have already occurred, he admitted that we were right and told me he wants only whatever name the Pope will give them. His plan is to open seminaries where the clergy would be formed for the Mission for the Indies. However, they will not be able to go there unless he sends them, in accord with the will of our Excellencies of Propaganda Fide, on whom they will depend. The same holds true for the collège they² have in Rome, which bears their name.

You wrote me that a priest who wanted to go to that country told you that this could not be done, unless one was a member of M. de Ventadour's Congregation. With regard to that, let me tell you that the obstacle he says he encountered may arise from another source; namely, that the Duc d'Amville³ has been made Viceroy of the Indies--I mean of those where France has commerce--and since he did not have a passport issued by the latter, they may perhaps have tried to prevent him from going.

1484. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION, IN SAINT-MÉEN

April 16, 1652

When I realized that you thought your troubles had lessened the esteem I have always had for you, I immediately

decided to assure you that this is not the case. I know that these difficulties which arise and these desires for a change are trials God gives even the saints for their greater sanctification. He is accustomed to put our love for Him to the test and to guide the souls He cherishes through several difficulties in order to help them to merit the extraordinary graces He intends to grant them.

So then, far from conceiving the slightest thought that might put you in an unfavorable light, I consider you, on the contrary, more faithful to God because you resist these temptations and do not curtail any of your usual spiritual exercises. In addition, after explaining your difficulties to us, you accepted the reply I gave you. I thank Him for this, Monsieur, and ask Him that, in proportion to the crosses He allows you to encounter in your vocation, He will strengthen you with His grace. It is a good sign when He burdens us with them and we carry them well, but woe to the person who runs away from them, for he will find such heavy ones that they will overwhelm him.

Perhaps you still desire a change, although you have not written me about this again. That is why we have assigned you to Tréguier, where the Bishop¹ is going to establish a seminary. You can contribute to the advancement of the glory of God there by serving the clergy and, in and through them, to serve all the souls in the diocese who will later be entrusted to their care and direction.

1485. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION¹

April 16, 1652

The Bishop of Tréguier is determined to open his seminary as soon as possible, on his return to his diocese. I think you will be consoled and will thank God if He makes use of you to go and lay its foundations. I have already named you for that place, but in the meantime, Monsieur, please use the time to give yourself wholeheartedly to Our Lord, in the spirit and practices of a true Missionary, so that you will produce results worthy of your vocation.

Alas! Mon Dieu! for a vain satisfaction of coming and going, of making and receiving visits, must God be deprived of the glory you can render Him? For a body that you perhaps gratify only too much, must your beautiful soul stop contributing to the salvation of an infinity of others? If I had ever seen anyone benefit from clinging to his sensuality, I would say to you, "Do likewise; that's all right!" Far from it, however; this is the downfall of all who walk the broad way, which leads many to perdition.²

It is time, Monsieur, for you to follow Our Lord along the narrow path of a life in conformity with your vocation. For almost nine months now you seem to be a little lax, although you have several important obligations for striving for perfection: (1) God calls you to it; (2) He has given you a very good character; (3) He has predisposed you with many interior graces and exterior gifts; (4) He has granted you exceptional blessings in your previous duties. In a

word, His goodness in your regard has been so great as to give you the strength to consecrate yourself in a special way to His service and to that of His Church. Please remember that you started off well and continued even better and that it would be a lack of fidelity to God to let nature get the upper hand again. It would also be an abuse of His grace; you would be exposing yourself to His indignation and would regret it your whole life and beyond.

I am sure, Monsieur, that you are very disturbed by what I am telling you, and that the devil will strive to discourage and upset you, if he can; but I also hope that you will take the resolution to correspond henceforth to God's plans for you and put them into effect without delay, always and everywhere. If you do, Monsieur, rest assured that He will give you more than enough grace for that. I beg this of you by the love He bears you, by the rewards He promises you, by the graces He grants you, and by the good you will do for the clergy and the people. This has been put off too long: lost time can never be recovered, death is approaching, the harvest is great, the workers are few,³ and Our Lord is relying on you.

Remember also that this Divine Savior says that He sanctified Himself so that His own might also be sanctified. He teaches us by these words that, to work effectively for the neighbor, we ourselves must strive for virtue. You are in a position to do so, free from all other cares. Take my word for it; begin with a good retreat and continue in earnest with the diligence proper to reawakening fervor and zeal in you. Then again, the time will also come when the Bishop of Tréguier will give you the opportunity to practice these virtues and to instill them into his clergy. The esteem and affection God has given me for you causes me to speak to you this way. Please accept it and pray for me that I myself may not fall behind in doing what I induce others to do. I assure you that I shall continue to offer you to God for the accomplishment of His holy Will in and through you.

1486. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

April 19, 1652

I wrote you that I thought M. [Le Vazeux] was moving a little too fast in your absence.¹ This was particularly apparent to me in the matter of the decree for which he was petitioning the Sacred Congregation to oppose M. de Ventadour's plan, without waiting for our opinion, nor, I think, for yours. This offended many important persons who have been good to us, and I had to go to that good gentleman with our apologies and assure him that we would put nothing in the way of the seminaries he wants to establish. When I explained to him the inconveniences to be feared from a similarity of names, he on his part promised me they will take only the name the Pope gives them.

They are asking that those seminaries be connected with and dependent on the collège of Propaganda Fide of Rome. If

this work is of God, we would be doing a great wrong in thwarting it; if it is not, God will destroy it whenever He chooses. As for us, we should want everyone to prophesy and for evangelical workers to increase in number. I, personally, think that this is a good means to do so, and I hope wholeheartedly for its success. With all the people in the Church of God, we will never lack work, as long as we are faithful to Him.

M. [Le Vazeux] takes offense at everything. He has ideas that are too advanced and takes unnecessary precautions. We must have confidence in God, be faithful to our duties, and entrust the rest to Providence. That is what I have tried to make him understand. As for his persistence in seeking an extension of our Bull so we can work in towns and in infidel lands, I asked him to suspend these proposals and to await our decision.

1487. - TO PHILIPPE LE VACHER AND JEAN BARREAU

[1652]¹

I have heard about the close bond and the warm charity between you. I have blessed God several times for it and will bless Him for it as often as the thought comes to my mind. My soul is deeply moved with gratitude for such a great good, which gladdens the heart of God Himself, especially since by this union He will bring about an infinity of good results for the advancement of His glory and the salvation of a large number of souls. In the name of God, gentlemen, do everything you can on your part to make this union firmer and more cordial, even into eternity. Remember the maxim of the Romans which states that by union and counsel we can achieve anything. Yes, union between you will bring success to God's work, and only disunion can destroy it. This is the noblest, though the least sought after, work of charity on earth. O Dieu! gentlemen, would that we had a little more insight about the excellence of apostolic works so that we might infinitely esteem our good fortune and correspond to the duties of this state! It would take only ten or twelve Missionaries, enlightened in this way, to produce unbelievable results in the Church.

I have seen the assault of flesh and blood on you. That was inevitable; the devil took good care not to leave you without a struggle. Blessed be God that you have remained firm in bracing yourself against these attacks! Heaven and earth look with pleasure on the happy lot that has fallen to you of honoring by your duty that incomprehensible charity by which Our Lord came down upon earth to come to aid and assist us in our slavery. I think there is no angel or saint in heaven who does not envy you this good fortune, inasmuch as their glorious state allows. I must confess that, although I am the most abominable of all sinners, were it allowed me I would envy you myself.

Humble yourselves profoundly and be prepared to suffer from Turks, Jews, and false brothers. They can cause you trouble, but please do not be surprised at this, for they

can do you no other harm than what Our Lord wills to be done to you. Whatever comes to you from Him will be only to allow you to merit some special favors with which He plans to honor you. You know that the grace of our Redemption must be attributed to the merits of His Passion and that the more God's affairs are thwarted, the better they will succeed, provided that our submissiveness and trust do not falter. Rarely is any good done without difficulty; the devil is too subtle and the world too corrupt not to attempt to nip such a good work in the bud.

Courage, gentlemen! It is God Himself who has established you in the place and duty where you are. If His glory is your goal, what can you fear or, rather, for what should you not hope?

1488. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

April 24, 1652

I approve of the maxim that all licit and possible means should be used for the glory of God, as if God were not supposed to help us, provided we expect everything from His Divine Providence, as though we had no human means.

You asked me if a Capuchin should be allowed to continue to say Mass, hear confessions, and distribute Holy Communion to his women penitents in your church without permission. My reply is: (1) that we should always share the sentiments of the saints, who wanted everyone to be saints and to do the works they did. Would to God, says the greatest among them, that everyone were a prophet!¹ And since Our Lord, the Saint of Saints, has exhorted us to ask God to send laborers into His harvest,² we should rejoice to see that those He has sent are working at cultivating souls, as this good Father is doing. (2) He thinks that the permission he asked you on one occasion to do that in your church gives him the right to continue. (3) This helps to relieve you and your family. With regard to this, let me tell you that several pastors in Paris are glad to have the monks come to help them out. True, this is only for special occasions. (4) If you forbid them to do so without discussing this with you, they will get an express permission from your Superiors in Reims, and in this way will be defying you in your own church. Lastly, if you let them see that this upsets you, they will take offense and talk about it, and people hearing it will accuse you of envy or avarice, for they will see no other reasons.

Consequently, Monsieur, the lesser evil will be to let this Father go ahead rather than demand of him the duty he owes to the Pastor or prevent him from fulfilling the devotional needs of a few individuals, provided, however, that you do not discover any other problems. Nevertheless, if he were to continue to distribute Communion to them at his Mass while High Mass is being said, and the rest of the people--or some of them--receive Communion or are supposed to receive Communion at the latter, that would give an appearance of schism, which must be avoided.

For this reason, it would be well to ask Father to celebrate Mass at another time. However, I think it would be better for you not to say anything to him about this, if he distributes Communion only to one or two important ladies, such as the Governor's wife and someone else. If the number of his communicants were larger and if, after your request, he would not advance or delay his Mass, in that case you might speak very tactfully to each of his followers individually. Explain to them the harm that could come from separating themselves from the general Communion, and persuade them to give this good example to the parish and to receive Communion with the others from the hands of the celebrant [of the High Mass].

As for the parish provided for M..., we must adore the ways of God. Certain things He allows bear more fruit than we expect, and we must always submit to situations like that which are inevitable and have no remedy.

1489. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR, IN SEDAN

April 24, 1652

The departure for Madagascar has been delayed again until the month of September. Since we have waited this long, we can easily wait another four or five months; a great good is worth being long desired. You, who have received from God a strong attraction for this mission, should keep yourself in the same disposition because that is a sign of a calling. Furthermore, the Company has designated you for that place from the beginning and still intends that you go there, which is a second sign. And a third sign is that, you have not only been named in Rome, as I wrote you previously, but have been sent the usual faculties granted to those going to work for the conversion of unbelievers, and we are holding them here for you.

After all that, Monsieur, there is no reason to doubt that God is relying on you for such a holy work. You will do well, then, to keep the resolution you made of not thinking about the Carthusians any longer, especially since you wrote me that, if it is God's good pleasure to make you an artisan rather than for you to transfer to that holy Order, you would willingly do so because you have so much respect and love for the adorable Will of God. Offer yourself anew to Him, since you are a worker whom He is calling to the loftiest, most useful, and most sanctifying service on this earth, namely, that of drawing souls to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and of going to extend His empire in places where the demon has reigned for so long.

The Apostles and several great saints considered themselves most fortunate to spend themselves for that end. Even now we see many monks leaving their cloister and many priests leaving their country to go and preach the Gospel to unbelievers, and if there were none to be found, the Carthusians would have to leave their solitude to be sent there. Consequently, Monsieur, I ask you, in the name of

Our Lord, to wait patiently until the time comes which He has marked out for your departure.

In the meantime, you are serving God very effectively where you are. If it does not seem so to you, all the better. I cannot help being deeply consoled by my knowledge of this, and the Company is greatly edified by it. Just keep on doing what you have done. If this way of life is less agreeable to you than that of withdrawal from the world, you should cherish it all the more because it is more pleasing to Our Lord, since there is more of His love in it than your own satisfaction.

The good will you have shown Our Lord and His glorious Mother will be judged by its effect if, instead of going to Notre-Dame-de-Liesse,¹ you present to them in Sedan the gratitude and prayers you offer faithfully for graces received and desired. What obliges me to dissuade you from that little pilgrimage are the dangers which are being encountered everywhere at present.

1490. - TO REVEREND MOTHER CATHERINE VIRONCEAU DE SAINT JOSEPH, SUPERIOR OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU OF QUÉBEC¹

Paris, April 25, 1652

Reverend Mother,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

It is true that those who did me the honor of conveying to you my esteem for the missions of Canada were right in doing so. I do indeed consider this work one of the greatest to be done in the past fifteen hundred years. Those holy souls who have the happiness of laboring at it are truly apostolic souls, meriting the approval and assistance of the whole Church, especially you and your Community, who contribute to the spiritual and corporal assistance of the poor and the sick. This is the height of Christian charity, and I will consider it a special blessing to help you with it, if some day God is pleased to grant me the grace to do so.

For me to do that at present, dear Mother, is, however, absolutely impossible because of the misfortunes of this country, stemming from the past wars and present divisions of this kingdom, which are reducing the provinces to a state of complete desolation. A number of charitable persons in Paris are trying to remedy the situation, helping by their care and their alms to prevent people from dying of poverty. Since, however, these alms cannot suffice for that, it would be of little use to speak to them about the needs of Canada. I am sure, dear Mother, that the needs of your hospital are great, after the losses inflicted on you by the Iroquois there and the considerable reduction of your revenue from the coaches here. I can certainly verify the latter because several of our houses, which depend on them for their meager subsistence, are having a hard time getting half of what they got from them before.

I ask Our Lord, Reverend Mother, to raise up some good persons who will give you the means of continuing your

service to His poor members. This is what I venture to hope from His paternal Providence, which is everywhere adorable.

I have special confidence in your prayers, although I am unworthy to have a share in them. Still, I ask you for them with all possible humility and with the desire that God may be pleased to grant me the grace of being of service to you. I am in His love, Reverend Mother, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Reverend Mother Catherine Vironceau, Superior of the Hôtel-Dieu of Québec, in Québec
1491. - JEAN LE VACHER¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
1 [Tunis, between 1647 and 1660]²

Slavery engenders so many evils that the end of some is the beginning of others. Among the slaves in this place, besides those in the prisons, I found forty of them enclosed in a stable so small and narrow that they could hardly move. The only air they received was through a vent, closed with an iron grate at the top of the arch. They are all chained together two by two and kept locked up all the time. Yet, they work at grinding wheat with a small, manually-operated mill, and the quota they have to grind each day is beyond their strength. Indeed, these poor people are truly fed with the bread of sorrow, and they can say that, with such excessive work, they eat it in the sweat of their body in this stifling place.

Shortly after I had gone in there to visit them, as I was embracing them in this pitiful state, I heard some muffled cries of women and children, mingled with moaning and weeping. When I looked up at the vent, I saw five poor young Christian female slaves. Three of them were each holding a baby, and they were all in dire need. Hearing the noise of our common greeting, they had run to the vent to see what was happening. When they realized that I was a priest, the deep sorrow wringing their hearts caused them to cry out loud and burst into tears, seeking from me a share in the consolation I was trying to give the men I had come to visit in that prison.

I must confess that I was almost overcome with grief at that moment, seeing on the one hand those poor slaves who could scarcely stay on their feet because of the weight of their chains, and hearing on the other the lamentations of those poor women and the cries of those little innocents. The youngest woman is uncommonly persecuted by her master, who is trying to make her deny her faith in Jesus Christ in order to marry him. Alas! just a fraction of so many millions spent by Christians on vain superfluities and pleasures could be put to better use here to relieve these poor souls in the midst of the bitterness suffocating them.

With the help of God's grace, I tried to assist the men and women as best I could. However, we are in a country where permission to do some good for these unfortunates must be bought with ready cash. To obtain the right to talk to

them I had to give good money to their masters. I had to do the same to have the chains removed from the slaves on a few galleys ready to set sail and to have them brought to me in the prisons. I did not take all the chain gangs at once but rather one galley after another to hear their confessions, say Holy Mass for them, and give them Holy Communion. This was done with good results and blessings, by the mercy of God.

1492. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

May 2, 1652

I told you I was concerned because I think M. [Le Vazeux] is moving too fast in seeking an extension for our Bull; then you wrote me that you were trying to get the petition presented to the Sacred Congregation. Let me tell you once again that the fundamental decision taken from the beginning, after much prayer and by common consent, was to devote ourselves only to the service of the poor people in rural areas. This, therefore, does not allow us the freedom to give missions in towns for fear lest we might in the end become so attached to them--because they are more attractive--that we might grow to dislike others where nature finds no satisfaction. Since, I repeat, there is question of such an important matter, it deserves to be pondered in depth. Therefore, please proceed no further until I have seen the outline for your petition.

If we have to request this extension, it should be on condition that we will give missions in towns only when the bishops in whose dioceses we are established order us to do so. It must be made clear that, of ourselves, we should aim at giving missions only in the country, in line with the original plan.

1493. - TO CARDINAL ANTONIO BARBERINI, PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

Most Eminent Prince,

I received the letter with which Your Eminence deigned to honor me, with a sentiment of profound respect and humility, but especially of gratitude. I understood from it not only how much you keep us in mind but also how you esteem and support the members of our Congregation who are serving on the island of Madagascar. Their work is certainly of little account but, by the goodness of God, they do it zealously and willingly.

Most Eminent Cardinal, for a long time I have been thinking of sending new workers to this island and already considered this as well as done. However, those on whom all the voyages depend, and who usually sail for the Indies, did not dare to entrust themselves to the sea in a ship badly deteriorated by long use, and especially during a season of the year unfavorable to sailing. They have therefore postponed the departure until the month of September. At that time, God willing, the four workers destined for this mission will set out, if the Sacred Congregation gives its approval. On the other hand, we were notified by Rome that

our men could travel on Portuguese ships, so--not wishing to leave any stone unturned--we discussed this with the Legate. He told us that those ships do not land in Madagascar at all, but if it should be to our advantage, he would intervene and have them pass by Goa. However, since there is no trading between Goa and the said island, we dismissed this offer as unsuitable.

That, Most Eminent Cardinal, is where matters stand at present. We await an opportunity and, when one presents itself, will send the workers at Your Eminence's pleasure. They will do their utmost to draw those people, enveloped in the darkness of ignorance, into the admirable light of truth.¹ In the meantime, we shall pray continually to the greatest and most high God for you, Eminence, who are so good to us, that He may bless you always and attribute to you the greatest share of the fruits our Congregation will gather.

I am the most humble and devoted servant of Your Eminence.

VINCENT DEPAUL, Superior General of the
Congregation of the Mission
Paris, the fifth day before the nones of May,² 1652
1494. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, May 3, 1652
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter of April 1. If you are pleased that our correspondence will continue on a weekly basis, I can assure you that I feel the same way. To give you two proofs of this, as Thursday draws near I begin to get a little impatient to receive your letters because they are usually delivered to me on that day, and I was very disappointed not to get any by the next to last regular mail. I wrote you last Friday that, since then, I had received the letter which was supposed to reach me at that time. This will let you know that on Friday, after sending my own packet, I received your letter of March 25; so, all your letters have been received and answered.

The plan for America proved a failure for us--not that the ship is not sailing, but the person who asked us for priests has not said another word to us about it. Perhaps this is due to the objection I first raised about not being able to give him anyone without the approval and faculties of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. He had not given that a thought, and I think that the priests being taken there are going without authorization. Like you, Monsieur, I think it is good to make similar sacrifices to God by sending our priests for the conversion of unbelievers, but only, of course, when they have a legitimate mission.

I am glad you have decided to keep in touch with M. Dehorgny. He returned to Rome sooner than I expected, but

only for two weeks, and I think that at the time I am now writing to you he has gone back to giving missions.

I received the letter M. de Fleury was pleased to send in reply to mine. Please thank him for me.

Since I know your charitable heart and how much it shares in our public and private afflictions, I shall tell you that they are increasing daily because the armies are nearby and are destroying everything. If God does not give us peace, for which negotiations have already taken place, we are on the eve of many evils.¹ Our Community is still going along as usual. We have not sent anyone away, despite our hardships, and will not do so as long as we can support ourselves, since that is your opinion.

I thank God for the benevolence He continues to give the King and Queen toward the Company. I ask His Divine Majesty to sanctify their souls more and more and to give whatever outcome He pleases to the suggestion of establishing you at Saint Benedict Church. I am pleased that it has fallen to you, and for the exhortations you have given to the French in the absence of Their Majesties. I would like to think that you spoke to them in the language we use with the poor country people.

M. Bajoue told me that the town of Villeneuve,² a league away from La Rose, had revolted and would be placed under siege. In that case, he says, our house is going to be looted. I have nothing but good reports from all the others, except that M. Thibault³ is slightly ill in Saint-Méen.

I hear that our men in Barbary are in good condition and are working zealously and effectively. I received some letters from them today, and Br[other] Huguier arrived in Marseilles en route to Paris, in accordance with the instructions I gave him.

We are trying to find a man to go to Tunis to take over as Consul in the place of M. Le Vacher,⁴ who will succeed better in the duty proper to him. From what M. Barreau writes me, the brother of the former is getting carried away with zeal in Algiers, with the result that he is prostrate with work.

We have no news from the priests who have gone to the Hebrides⁵ nor from M. Brin.

I almost forgot to tell you that, after sending someone to M. Bouchet's house, I went there myself one day this week, but he was not there so he came here. He is quite pleased with you and told me he has not yet received the elk's foot;⁶ consequently, neither have we.

May God grant abundant blessings to your heart and to your Company! I greet them with all possible tenderness and am, in Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission now in Warsaw, Poland

1495. - TO PIERRE DE BERTIER, COADJUTOR BISHOP OF MONTAUBAN¹

May 4, 1652

Excellency,

Enclosed is Madame de Frontevaux's reply to me, and it is in line with your wishes. My sins have made me unworthy of playing any part in your plan² by my services, but the grace that accompanies you has merited its success. I ask God, Excellency, to be pleased to accomplish this always and in all ways and to give me greater opportunities of serving you. They will always be very dear to me, and I shall consider myself most fortunate to render you the perpetual obedience I owe you, Excellency.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1496. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION¹

Since it has pleased God to give me knowledge of the Congregation and, in particular, of the state and needs of each house and the disposition of its members, I do not see how you could be more effective elsewhere at present. In the name of God, Monsieur, remain steadfast, and rest assured that you will not lack God's blessing. One of my keenest consolations is seeing you in the place you now are, and I hope we shall see one another in heaven some great day.

1497. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

May 10, 1652

Saint Vincent gives Lambert aux Couteaux news of the missionaries sent for the relief of the provinces devastated by the wars. Donat Cruoly¹ "crossed rivers, walked barefoot, and made dangerous journeys in the midst of the troops."

Having been notified one day that the soldiers had just robbed some poor people of their cattle--their only resource--he went after the thieves, met up with them in a wooded area, and succeeded in making them give back the stolen goods, which he himself returned to their rightful owners.

1497a. - TO THE COMTE D'ARGENSON,¹ AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE, IN VENICE

Paris, May 10, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter with all the respect and gratitude which I owe to the honor of your memory. I am unworthy of the gratitude you offer me because it is undeserved and also because of my obligation to be of service to you, which I would like to do, Monsieur, in a matter of greater importance. May God grant me the opportunities to do so!

In the meantime, I thank Him for the fact that you have been received with great honor by the Venetians and for the graces He has granted you--from what I have heard--of placing you in high-standing among them.

I ask Him to bless your leadership and your house more and more. And since I am too insignificant to hope for the

happiness of being able to do anything else for you or for your house, I shall at least continue to offer you frequently and lovingly to Our Lord, and my ardent wish is to render you my obedience. I beg you most humbly, Monsieur, to accept the offers I make of it to you.

I am, in life and in death, in the love of this same Lord, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

If I could put my heart into this letter, along with its desire to be of service to you, it would be a joy for me to do so.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur d'Argenson
1498. - TO MADEMOISELLE DE LAMOIGNON

Saint-Lazare, May 14, 1652

Mademoiselle,

I cannot thank you humbly and affectionately enough, Mademoiselle, for your charitable and incomparable concern for us. I ask Our Lord Jesus Christ to be Himself your thanks and your reward.

Yesterday we had a little disturbance in this faubourg.¹ We trust that Our Lord and His good servants, like good Monsieur de Lamoignon² and you, will protect us in future, as you did three years ago³ and have done up to now. I assure you, Mademoiselle, that it is a sweet consolation for me to think it will be so.

Thank you again for your offers of housing and for the arrangements you made to put the poor foundlings in safer surroundings. The fierce fighting taking place right before the eyes of the wet nurses, and the men they saw killed in front of their house, so terrified them that they all ran off with the girls, each with her infant, and left the other children asleep in bed.

I am consoled by the good news you give me and for the reason we have to hope for peace. I praise God that you have acted so much in conformity with what you were advised. I can assure you, Mademoiselle, that you will find grace and glory in this, and nothing but anxiety in acting otherwise.⁴

In the meantime, I send most humble greetings to good Monsieur de Lamoignon, and I ask you to help us to thank him for all his kindness. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1499. - TO MADAME DU SAULT, WIFE OF THE PRESIDENT

May 15, 1652

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your welcome letter with all due respect and with profound gratitude for the honor you paid me of remembering me. I feel equally embarrassed, however, because I am so unworthy of all this by my birth and my inefficiency in serving you. This was clearly manifest in the matter of the charges brought by M. du Sault, your son. Although I could not petition on his behalf, I spoke,

nevertheless, to one of his judges, who had come to this house to make his retreat. From his knowledge of the affair, however, he gave me reason to fear that things would turn out as they actually did, which I greatly regretted.

God knows, Madame, how consoled I would be to have a better opportunity to use my influence for him. Yet, I dare not hope for any whereby I might procure for him, either by my entreaties or my personal credibility, the benefit you desire. I have not seen the Queen for six or seven months now because of her absences. If God does not soon give us peace, I shall not be in a position to see her for a long time to come. We are in a very difficult situation; the storm that broke over Guyenne has now burst in Paris.

I think you are quite well informed of the present state of affairs, but only God knows the outcome. In all probability, I have good reason to fear that my sins make me unworthy of serving you and the Baron effectively. Still, you can rely on my obedience in whatever way I can prove to you that I am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your....

1500. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[May or July 1652]

Most Honored Father,

This alarm¹ has really given us all a fright. Several of our Sisters would really like to go to confession today, and I fear we cannot get a priest from Saint-Laurent. If that is the case, please do us the kindness of giving us someone for after dinner.

I do not think we can go to buy wheat, since there is none in the neighboring villages, and there would be great danger of losing the money, if we went farther away. I informed Mademoiselle de Lamoignon of this, and she told me the same thing she told your charity about it. I also told her that you felt yesterday that we should get some at La Grève² and that the leaders of the city³ were ready to have it brought by some constables, whom we would pay for their trouble. I do not think there is any other way to keep these poor little children from starving to death.

Most of the people are leaving this faubourg and stripping their homes; should we not follow their example? This, however, would be a major undertaking for us. If there were something to fear for our young Sisters, we could send them here or there to various parishes and, if we could, send them some food. As for me, I feel as if I am awaiting death and cannot prevent my heart from jumping every time there is a call to arms. It seems to me that Paris is abandoning this faubourg, but I hope that God will not abandon it and that His Goodness will be merciful to us. We trust that your charity is asking this of Him for us, and we, with all our heart, ask for His blessing. I am, Most Honored Father, your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

I am afraid that the man from Bicêtre could not get through. What shall we do about Sister Geneviève,⁴ who is really needed there to protect our poor Sisters? Will your charity please let us know?

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent

1501. - TO SAINT LOUISE

[May or July 1652]¹

I think, Mademoiselle, that there is no danger in sending Brother Mathieu² to make the rounds in those villages. Let him take only twenty écus to buy three or four setiers³ of wheat. Apparently M. de Lamoignon foresees great difficulty getting any from Paris; they have no control over the people.⁴

Geneviève⁵ will do well to go back. Things in that area are not so turbulent as they are around here.

There will be no inconvenience in sending your Daughters--the most timid ones--to the parishes. I am not convinced that the danger is as great as it is made out to be or that the faubourg will be taken by force. I think better order will be imposed than has been done up to now, although it seems greater than I thought. What Our Lord guards is well guarded; it is only right that we entrust ourselves to His adorable Providence. Alas! Who has ever been mistaken in this? If I am able to do so and you can come to the parlor presently, we shall see if there is anything else that can be done.

1502. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

Paris, May 17, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

When I wrote you that I was disappointed at the brevity of one of your letters, which was only half a page long, it was only to express how consoled I am to read them, and not to oblige you to write me longer ones. So, please do not go to that trouble, unless the things you have to tell me are worth it.

I praise God that you are enjoying the gentle, amiable presence of the Archbishop of Vilna. We shall ask God to preserve him for a long time for His Church and to continue to bless his leadership.

I am not surprised that the affair of the little church built for the Germans was not a success. I always suspected that the people involved would raise some objections to it unless they were much better than we are in France. It seems to me that there is no dwelling place comparable to the one to which you aspire--that of peace and quiet--while awaiting the adorable orders of Divine Providence. I pray that God will establish you in it for all eternity.

The Cardinal of Paris¹ has been inflexible up until now regarding the Queen's wishes and our requests,² and I was told that he wrote a long letter to Mademoiselle de Lamoignon giving the reasons for his refusal. True, the blockade of Paris, the agitation of the people, the riots in

the city, the capture and recapture of Saint-Denis, and some fighting that occurred between La Chapelle and us have preoccupied us so much that we have not been able to take strong action with regard to this good Prelate. We shall be able to do so now that we are beginning to look forward to a little calm.

M. Berthe told me that M. Cruoly will do very well in the post for which the Queen in her goodness asked us for a priest, so we shall prepare him for the journey.

There are no Daughters of Charity who come from Germany. There was a Flemish girl, but she is no longer with them and would not have been suitable.

I am going to send you a copy of our Bull,³ more authentic than the one you have, and, if possible, everything else you requested.

When I saw the letters Zelazewski wrote to me as well as to other persons, I thought he was more determined than he is to remain in the Company. If God permits him to leave, as seems likely, we shall adore His ways willingly and submissively.

Our news is that the Company is in the same state and that the Coadjutor of Montauban⁴ has put us in possession of a chapel⁵ for pilgrims in that diocese. This is being done with the idea of establishing the Company there, according to the intention of the last possessor, who has just died. He had resigned it in the Roman Court and it was received under the name of M. Bajoue, to whom the last possessor and the said Bishop had spoken about that affair.⁶ He is now asking me for three or four priests for that place.⁷

I send greetings to your dear family, and my heart embraces yours in a warm and respectful manner, knowing that it belongs entirely to God. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert

1503. - A DAUGHTER OF CHARITY¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

[Between 1639 and 1660]²

Monsieur,

We are overwhelmed with work and will give way beneath it if we do not get some help. I am obliged to pen these few lines to you at night, on duty with our patients, because there is no respite during the day. Even while I am writing to you, I have to exhort two of the sick, who are dying. First I go to one and say: "Friend, raise your heart to God and ask Him to have mercy on you." After that, I come back and write one or two lines. Then I run to the other and say: "Jesus! Mary! My God, I hope in You." Then I return to my letter again. So I come and go, writing to you in stages with my mind going in different directions. That is why I most humbly entreat you to send us another Sister.

1504. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION¹

May 21, 1652

I have no trouble believing that you are still attached to our Company and its works; your past behavior has convinced me only too well of this. I also respect the opinion of the monk who told you that it would be a temptation if, because of your difficulties in prayer, you stopped being a Missionary, for it is true that in every Community there are many persons--often the best--who cannot apply themselves to meditation, where the imagination or reasoning play a part, because that hinders them. But the blessed Bishop of Geneva² taught his nuns another kind of prayer, which even the sick can make: to remain peacefully in the presence of God, manifesting our needs to Him with no other mental effort, like a poor person who uncovers his sores and by this means is more effective in inciting passers-by to do him some good than if he wore himself out trying to convince them of his need.

So, we pray well when we remain in this way in the presence of God, with no exertion of the understanding or will. Therefore, you will do well to listen to God in the urge you feel to return to us. I would simply like to know how you are doing with preaching, teaching catechism, and hearing confessions, especially since it is a good sign if you are not upset by them. Please ask God, Monsieur, to make known to you what He wants of you. Begin some special devotion for this purpose, and try to place yourself in the greatest possible indifference so as to be more ready to follow His attraction and His Will in such an important matter. Then, after the feast of Our Lady next August, let me know your dispositions so that we can reflect on whether it is advisable for you and for the Company for you to come back to it.

1505. - TO PHILIPPE VAGEOT,¹ SUPERIOR, IN SAINTES

Paris, May 22, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter of April 24 has given me fresh reasons for thanking God for all the graces He grants you. I do so with deep sentiments of gratitude in the hopes that He will continue to protect you. I often ask this of Him and I have the Company do the same. I have also shared with them the favors with which He has blessed your leadership. I thank Him, too, because, despite the misfortunes of the time, He has seen to it that you have received some money and gives you hope of getting more soon.

We must admit that the Bishop of La Rochelle² is very good to us, and his goodness resembles that of God who, once He begins to do good for someone, continues to do so unceasingly. When I have the opportunity of doing myself the honor of writing to him, I shall thank him for his kindnesses to you at every turn.

God has been pleased to take to Himself good M. Rivet's³ father. Before breaking the news to him, please prepare him to receive it well. One thing that should console him, in

addition to his good life--because he was a very fine man⁴ and consequently, is now blessed, as we have good reason to believe--is that he is now beyond the sufferings of this world. He had his share of them before he died, both with regard to material goods and to his own poor health.

We have more troubles here than ever. Paris is swarming with poor persons because the armies have forced the poor country folk to seek refuge here. Meetings are held daily to see how they can be helped. A few houses have been rented in the faubourgs, where some of them have been housed, particularly, poor girls. We continue to assist the border areas of Champagne and Picardy, and we still have ten or twelve men there.

We have nothing else noteworthy to write you. The Company is going along as usual, thank God, as far as health and the retreats are concerned. The foundation in Poland is doing better and better; they are asking for Daughters of Charity and for another one of our priests to distribute the Queen's alms in a devastated province.

I am in a hurry and cannot tell you anything else. I warmly embrace good M. Rivet and you, Monsieur, and I am, in O[ur] L[ord], your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Vageot
1506. - TO ACHILLE LE VAZEUX, IN ROME
June 1652

Concerning what you tell me about the intrigues being used at present to settle affairs, and that they are even being used against us, let us ask God to preserve us from this spirit. Since we criticize it in others, it is all the more reasonable to avoid it ourselves as a fault against Divine Providence, which makes those who commit it unworthy of the care God takes of all things. Let us establish ourselves in total dependence on God, trusting that, in so doing, whatever men say or do against us will turn to the good. Yes, Monsieur, and even if the whole world should rise up to destroy us, nothing will happen except what God, in whom we have put our hope, will allow.

I ask you to enter into these sentiments and to abide so firmly in them that you will never again be preoccupied with these useless fears. Know for certain that those very intrigues by which others might try to harm us in order to succeed in their own establishments will be used by God to defend us. As for me, I ask pardon of His Goodness if up to now I have listened to the things you have written me on this subject and for any answers I may have given you which did not tend absolutely to that abandonment to God which we should have. I ask Him to grant us in future the grace of neither fearing nor desiring anything but Him alone, in whom I am, Monsieur, your....

1507. - TO MONSIEUR MAURISSE

June 8, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I received your letter¹ with the respect and gratitude I owe to your incomparable goodness in thinking of us for the two priories of Saintes, and I thank you most humbly for this. I shall have the honor also of thanking the Bishop of Alet² for supporting you in this idea, even though we are most unworthy of such a favor.

I have received your second proposal in the same spirit, Monsieur, but accepting it will certainly be very difficult for me, considering our insignificance and such a great good. Nevertheless, since you felt that this was God's plan, we must respect your opinion and submit to His guidance so as not to divert us from the order of His Providence. Consequently, Monsieur, we will do as you wish regarding both the matter itself and the conditions, knowing that you will not propose any that are not according to God.

The state of public affairs makes access to this city so difficult that we must dissuade you from coming too soon. This will perhaps give you the opportunity of going to Saintes to explain this affair to the Bishop.³ I strongly hope that everything will be done in agreement with him and in whatever way he thinks fit. In case you may want to confide in M. Vageot, Superior of the seminary, he will keep your secret faithfully, as I shall also do. I will not say or write anything about this to anyone, except to ask M. Vageot, in the event you discuss a matter of such importance with him, to honor the silence of O[ur] L[ord] and to leave to you the entire negotiation of this agreement with the Bishop and him. If it succeeds, fine; we will have you as a father and benefactor and will ask God to impute to you the merit of this good work, if He is pleased to draw some service from it. But even if it should not succeed, the Company will not on that account consider itself free of our debt of gratitude for your good will, which will be expressed by our prayers and services. I, in particular, Monsieur, offer you my obedience with all possible humility and affection, and I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your....

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1508. - TO A COADJUTOR BROTHER OF THE RICHELIEU HOUSE
June 12, 1652

I was very pleased to get your letter because I truly love you tenderly. I am very sorry, however, about what happened to good M. [Escart],¹ whom you have good reason to esteem highly for the qualities you pointed out to me. Nevertheless, dear Brother, you should remain calm, when you see him treated as he is. Virtue does not prevent the mind from being able to deviate and, if the weakness of his mind has not been apparent to you, it does not follow that others have not noticed it. Take my word for this; you can be at peace on that point.

It is not the first time he has fallen into this state.² Once before, we had to have him brought back from Savoy for

a similar reason. Now I am sure that people were right in acting as they did in his regard because, besides what was written to me about him, I see his eccentricity in his own letters, and if you had seen just one of them, it would suffice to remove your difficulty. This should not surprise us; God permits this infirmity to humble him. There are no Communities where similar things do not occur.

Furthermore, dear Brother, you should take as a maxim always to consider that Superiors do the best they can, do nothing of any importance without reflection and advice, and that it is not the place of Brothers to criticize their conduct. Otherwise, they would have as many supervisors as subjects.

I repeat that your letter brought me great joy, but I must recommend to you not to dwell again on what seems to you poor management by the officers of the house, especially by the head of the family, who is a wise man and a good servant of God. If you have seen him act hastily and firmly at times, remember that Our Lord did not always treat His disciples gently. He said some very hard words to them, even to calling Saint Peter "Satan,"³ and this, apparently, for a small matter. Once or twice He also used whips against persons who were profaning the temple⁴ to show those responsible for others that it is not always good to spare them too much.

I do not mean, however, that Brothers in the Company should not be allowed to write to the General to inform him of serious faults they may notice in those who direct them, but that refers to moral faults and not those pertaining to government, for which Superiors have insights which others do not have, and particular reasons, unknown to their subjects, for doing and not doing things.

It will always be a consolation to me, dear Brother, to know that you are growing from virtue to virtue.

1509. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

June 13, 1652

What you tell me about the missions you give demands of us special gratitude to God, and I thank Him for it from the depths of my soul. Let us ask Him, Monsieur, to be glorified more and more by the labors of the Company. Believe me--I cannot stop saying it--let us confine ourselves invariably to our principal works. God will be on our side and, to the extent that we are faithful to them, He will bless us. I shall never deviate from this opinion.¹

I just left an important meeting,² presided over by the Archbishop-elect of Reims,³ where I spoke about you. It was held to discuss the poor country people who have taken refuge in Paris. Their number is very great and so are their needs. We have started assisting them corporally, and I volunteered to have missions given to them, in line with the maxim which states that we should take our good wherever we find it. We are obliged to go and serve them in the rural areas, when they are there. They are our portion, and

now that they are coming to us, driven out by the hardships of war, which is emptying the countryside, it seems that we are more obliged to work for their salvation in their present affliction in the place where they are now, subject, of course, to the good pleasure of the Archbishop.

As for the objection people might raise to me that we do not give missions in episcopal cities, I have replied that the submission we owe to the bishops does not allow us to dispense ourselves from such missions when they instruct us to do so, and that you yourself have just finished one in Terni,⁴ where Cardinal Rapaccioli⁵ had ordered you to work. Consequently, we could do the same here on the orders of the Archbishop of Paris, especially since it will be only for those poor afflicted persons who have taken refuge here.⁶

As for the bishop who gives you reason to believe that he has plans unfavorable to our Company, and your fear regarding M. de Ventadour's proceedings, let me tell you once and for all that we belong to God and should wish that others do the same, and that we are insignificant workers in His Church, who should rejoice when He calls to it better persons than we. Quis tribuat ut omnis populus prophetet et det eis Dominus spiritum suum?⁷ If those who present themselves have the Spirit of God, what have we to fear? And if they do not, what can they do as long as we proceed in an upright manner? All our trust must be in God and, since we are established principally on this virtue, we must rest assured that nothing will happen to us that God does not allow. I am as averse to these precautions concerning the plans of others as I am careful to avoid the intrigues to which people resort in the world today. In the name of God, Monsieur, let us beware of both of these.

I do not know if the Jesuit Fathers are acting against us. I would like to think they are not, but, in any case, let others do what they please; as for us, let us hold fast to God. Persecution changes into something good when it is accepted well, and happy are those who suffer for justice' sake.⁸

1510. - TO FRANÇOIS HALLIER¹ AND JÉRÔME LAGAULT,² IN ROME³
June 21, 1652
Monsieur,⁴

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I have been greatly consoled to learn from your letter that you arrived safely in Rome with those good priests who are with you. I thank God for this and beg Him to keep you in perfect health. I also ask you and them, Monsieur, to do whatever depends on your own care for this purpose, since it is a question of God's interests to preserve three of His best servants engaged in the negotiations of an extremely important affair. Please do not be in a hurry, and do not go out in the heat of the day. It will be most pleasing to O[ur] L[ord] if you husband your strength in order to serve Him better. We here will try to help you as much as we can by our prayers and modest efforts.⁵ In addition, the Court

is already being petitioned for other letters so we can send them to you.⁶

Very little is being said now about these questions; perhaps this is because the unrest of the war is occupying people's minds and the misfortunes of the times are beginning to make themselves felt. However, a minor incident has occurred causing these matters to be brought forward again. Those people have had a printed letter circulated entitled A Letter from a Bishop to a Priest. They sent copies to several persons, including me, but it was discovered that this was not their own creation but rather a letter of Saint Prosper, which they translated and adapted in their own way.

I am sure you have been kept informed about everything. Regarding the solemn translation of the relics of Saint Geneviève and the public processions which took place to ask God to put an end to the sufferings of the people, through the intercession of this saint, I shall just tell you that never has a larger crowd of persons nor a greater manifestation of devotion been seen in Paris.⁷ As a result, before the eighth day the Duc de Lorraine,⁸ who had his army before the gates of Paris and who himself was in the city, decamped and went back to his own region, taking this decision at the moment when the King's army was about to swoop down upon his own army.

Since that time also, negotiations for peace have continued with the Princes,⁹ and we hope from the goodness of God that peace will come about, especially since people are striving to appease His justice by the great good being done at present in Paris for the bashful poor and the poor country people who have taken refuge there. Soup is distributed daily to fourteen or fifteen thousand persons, who would die of hunger without this assistance.

In addition, about eight to nine hundred girls have been placed in private homes,¹⁰ and all the refugee nuns living in the city--some of them in questionable places, so it is said--will be housed in a monastery prepared for this purpose. They will be under the care of the Daughters of Sainte-Marie.¹¹

That, Monsieur, is quite a bit of news, contrary to our little maxim of not writing any, but who could refrain from publicizing the greatness of God and His mercy? It is in Him that I am, Monsieur, your....

1511. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, June 21, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Yesterday I received your letter of May 20 and, a few days earlier, the one dated May 6--which I should have received two weeks ago--was brought to me. I do not know where it came from because the Franciscan Father¹ and Madame des Essarts had sent me word that they had not received anything for me. It contains nothing special, so I only

have to answer your last one, which deals with two main points: the first, concerning the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, and the second, concerning your establishment.

You say you cannot understand why the Archbishop of Paris is preventing these Sisters from going to Poland, and you want me to tell you something so you can inform the Queen, who is distressed about this. I will tell you, then, Monsieur, that M. de Morangis,² who enjoys the confidence of the Archbishop to a certain extent and who used his influence with the latter to try to make him relent, told me that he [the Archbishop] gave him two reasons why he was unwilling to give his consent to this establishment: (1) the Queen did not go to him first about it, and (2) he is annoyed with those nuns because they handled this business without discussing it with him, and for another reason which I cannot tell you, but I can assure you that it was not their fault. In the eyes of God, however, the matter is of such a nature that he cannot give an explanation for it.³

Please note that he [the Archbishop] has never before interfered in any of their establishments, and they have always proceeded as they tried to do in this one, without any fault being found.

That, then, is the basis for his refusal. I strongly doubt that he will change his mind, unless the Queen writes him a cordial letter in French which may satisfy him. Even if she should do so, I still doubt that he will give in.⁴ Do not hesitate, however, to use this means, if Her Majesty chooses to do him this honor. Besides all that, I still fear the opposition of the Sisters' relatives, when the time comes to take action. But I must tell you, Monsieur, that in all these difficulties those nuns are in no way at fault. They would willingly undertake this good work for the glory of God, the consolation of the Queen, and the honor of their holy Institute, if they were not prevented from doing so.

Regarding the second point of your letter, which speaks of the objection being made to permitting your establishment, I adore in that the guidance of God, without whose orders nothing is done. We shall do better to see His good pleasure in all the obstacles we may encounter rather than to impute them to anyone. Even if it were true that those persons mentioned to you might be envious of us and do the worst they could against us, I would still do all in my power to esteem, love, and serve them either here or elsewhere. Nevertheless, I am enclosing an authenticated copy of our Bull⁵ certified by the Officialis of Paris⁶ and the Nuncio.⁷ I am waiting for a letter from the latter for the Nuncio to Poland, containing a recommendation and a testimonial on behalf of the Company so that the Nuncio to Poland might consent to present them to the Bishop of Poznan⁸ in place of the testimonial letter he requested of you from the Archbishop of Paris, from whom I dared not ask it. I hope, by God's goodness and the power of truth, that it will suffice and that you will soon make your foundation.

We will give a warm welcome to that good priest from the household of the Nuncio of Poland and will put him up at the Bons-Enfants, as you have led him to hope.

Our little news is still the same. We are unable to go and give missions in the rural areas because the poor people are so scattered--some here; some there, driven from their homes by fear of being mistreated by the soldiers--so we have decided to give them to the people who have taken refuge in Paris. We began today in our own church, with eight hundred of those poor persons living in these faubourgs, and we will go to the others next. One of our men has also gone to open the mission for the refugees at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, and we shall go to hear confessions in the same church.

We have had some hopes for peace in the past few days since the Duc de Lorraine departed to leave the kingdom with his army, which came right up to our gates, and he even entered the city. He made his peace just as the King's army was going to join battle with him near Charenton. He preferred to come to terms rather than risk fighting, so this poor country has been relieved of a troublesome burden.

It is devoutly believed that this is the result of the intercession of the saints, especially Saint Geneviève, and of the processions that took place in a very orderly fashion, with as much external devotion as I have ever seen. It may also be due to the good works being done in Paris amidst the present tribulations, of which the principal ones are: (1) the daily distribution of soup to nearly fifteen thousand poor persons, both the bashful poor and the refugees; (2) about eight hundred refugee girls have been placed in private houses, where they are taken care of and instructed. You can imagine how much harm would have been done if they had been left wandering around. We have a hundred of them in one house in the faubourg Saint-Denis; (3) we are going to rescue from the same danger the nuns from the country, whom the armies have thrown into Paris. Some are on the streets, some are living in questionable places, and others are staying with relatives. Since, however, they are all in a state of dissipation and danger, it was felt that enclosing them in a monastery, under the care of the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, would be a service most pleasing to God; lastly, people are sending here to us poor pastors, curates, and other priests from rural areas who have left their parishes to flee to this city. We are getting some every day; they will be fed and will be formed in the things they should know and practice.⁹

So, this is how God chooses to have us participate in so many holy projects. The poor Daughters of Charity are more involved than we in the corporal assistance of the poor. They prepare and distribute the soup daily for thirteen hundred bashful poor at the home of Mademoiselle Le Gras, and for eight hundred refugees in the faubourg Saint-Denis. In Saint-Paul parish alone four or five Sisters make the

distribution to five thousand¹⁰ poor persons, in addition to the sixty to eighty patients they have on their hands. Other Sisters are doing the same elsewhere.

Please pray for them and for us, as we always do for the success of your holy intentions, the sanctification of your souls and your leadership, and for the personal preservation of all of you. I tenderly embrace you and those whom the good God has entrusted to you.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Enclosed are two letters from the Nuncio. I think M. du Chesne will tell you why there are two.

1512. - TO THE SISTERS OF VALPUISEAUX

Paris, June 23, 1652

My good Sisters,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Blessed be God that you are finally back home again¹ and for keeping you safe in the midst of so many trials and dangers! I thank Him for this with all my heart. I was very happy to have news of you but equally sorry to hear that you have been ill. Nevertheless, I submit to the good pleasure of God, who will draw His glory from your sickness, as He has done from your good health, which I hope He will soon restore to you by His grace and by the change of air. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for your protection; I feel this as keenly as if you were dead and He has brought you back to life.

It must be acknowledged, Sisters, that you have really had a hard time but, consequently, you will be amply rewarded for this. Not only will your reward be great because of what you have suffered, but also because of the good you have done by serving the sick and the wounded in the hospital, and for the good example you have given there. I ask God to be His own praise and thanks for all this.

I have heard that there are many sick persons in Val de Puiseau, and that the poor place has great need of assistance right now. This has made me redouble my prayers to God to restore you to a condition in which you can visit and console them, and I beg you, Sisters, to do your utmost to get well. Mademoiselle Le Gras is sending you syrups and medicines for this purpose, and I am asking the poor widow of the late Pierre Charpentier to supply you with the money you need.

Please spare nothing for your recovery. We would send you a Sister to help you, if we could, but you are aware of the dangers on the roads.² Besides, the situation in Paris is so bad that Mademoiselle Le Gras does not have enough Sisters to care for the sick and the poor refugees in all the places where people are requesting them. Soup is prepared for them in a large number of parishes; our Sisters at Saint-Paul distribute it daily to almost eight thousand³ poor persons, both the bashful poor and the refugees, not counting the sixty to eighty patients they have on their

hands. Your Company has never worked so hard or so effectively as it is doing at the present moment. I hope that, in consideration of this, God will bless it abundantly.

Your good Mother⁴ is well. I come back to you, Sisters, to ask you once again to take great care to recover the strength you have lost. Do not be in any hurry to get back to work until you have fully recovered. Just now you are, as it were, in a desert, for I consider Val de Puisseau as such, but remember that Our Lord Himself honored solitude, when He willed to spend some time in the desert, as you know. Now, it is always a blessing for us to be in those states through which our good Lord and Master has passed.

I often recommend you to Him. Continue to fear and love Him well; offer Him your difficulties and your little services, and do only what pleases Him. In this way you will continue to grow in grace and virtue. Pray to Him for us and for me, who am, in His love, my good Sisters, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: The Sisters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor, in Val de Puisseau

1513. - TO A VISITATION NUN OF THE SECOND MONASTERY¹

[June or July 1652]²

Mon Dieu! dear Sister, how I thank you with all my heart for your goodness to us! I cannot tell you how grateful I am. The constant state of confusion in which we now are has prevented me from going to see you. I have not been to town for a week or so. Besides, I do not think that your house has any reason to fear. In addition to the special protection of God, you have the esteem in which your Order is held, generally speaking, and then the concern all the relatives of our dear Sisters and of your little girls have for your protection. Your walls on the side of the open country are strong and high, thank God. Oh no! dear Sister, I do not feel that you should be alarmed at all, even though other monasteries might be withdrawing to the city.³

These, dear Sister, are my humble thoughts on the matter. I am, dear Sister, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I send most humble greetings to our dear Mother⁴ and am her most humble servant.

1514. - ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA,¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

[July 1652]²

Niolo³ is a valley about three leagues long and half a league wide. It is surrounded by mountains, and the access and roads to reach it are the most difficult I have ever seen, either in the Pyrenees or in Savoy. Consequently, the place is a sort of refuge for all the bandits and ruffians of the island; since they have this hideout, they engage freely in highway robbery and murder, with no fear of the law.

There are several small villages in this valley and about two thousand inhabitants within its confines. I have never met any people--and I wonder if there are any in all of Christianity--more forsaken than they. We found almost no other vestiges of the faith there other than the fact that they said they had been baptized, and there were a few very run down churches. The people were so ignorant of matters pertaining to their salvation that it would have been very difficult to find a hundred persons who knew the Commandments of God and the Apostles' Creed. Asking them if there is one God or several, and which of the three Divine Persons became man for us, was like speaking Arabic to them.

Vice passed for virtue there, and vengeance was so rife that no sooner had children learned to walk and talk than they were taught how to seek vengeance at the slightest offense. It was useless to preach the contrary to them because the example of their ancestors and the bad advice of their own relatives regarding this vice were so deeply rooted in their minds that they were incapable of accepting any opinion to the contrary. Many of them went seven or eight months without going to Mass, and three, four, eight, or even ten years without going to confession. We even came across some young people of fifteen or sixteen who had never even been to confession.

Along with all that, there were many vices rampant among these poor people. They had a strong penchant for stealing; they never scrupled eating meat during Lent and on other days of abstinence; they persecuted and harassed one another like barbarians; and when they had a certain enemy, they had no problem accusing him falsely of some major crime, bringing him to court and producing as many false witnesses as they wanted. On the other hand, those being accused--guilty or not--found persons to say and uphold in court whatever they wanted, in order to justify themselves. The result was that justice was never done so they took it into their own hands, readily killing each other under any pretext.

Besides all these disorders, there was also very serious abuse among the inhabitants of this island regarding the Sacrament of Matrimony. They rarely celebrated it without first having lived together. Usually, when they were engaged or had merely given their word to one another, the girl would go and live in the home of her future husband, continuing in this situation of concubinage for two or three months, sometimes for two or three years, without bothering to get married. What is even worse, many of these marriages took place between close relatives, without a dispensation from the impediment of consanguinity, and they remained in this situation eight, ten, even fifteen years and longer. In the meantime, they had several children, and if the man happened to die, these were abandoned as illegitimate, and the woman would marry someone else who--again--was sometimes one of her relatives. We have seen some who have had up to

three husbands, with whom they lived in concubinage and incest. It even happened that, if people who were married in this way began to tire of one another, even if they had children, they would separate and look elsewhere for another partner.

There was yet another major abuse: most of the parents would marry off their children before the age of consent. Some had them marry from the age of four or five, and one man had married off his one-year-old daughter to a five-year-old boy. Another disorder resulted from this because very often these children who never had any affection for one another could not stand even to see one another, and several got divorced, which led to mutual hostility, attempted murder, and murder itself.

In this valley alone, we found one hundred and twenty persons cohabiting without the benefit of marriage, of whom about eighty were also living in incest. About forty of the latter had been denounced and excommunicated for this but, in spite of that, they continued to do business and to converse with the rest of the people as freely as if they were not [excommunicated]. As a result, almost the entire district was included in these censures, and most of the inhabitants were excommunicated for keeping contact and doing business with these people.

That then was the deplorable state of all those poor people, when some priests were sent to give the mission in that place. Here is what we did to try to remedy so many disorders: (1) We used the greatest possible diligence to teach the people things necessary for salvation; this took us about three weeks.

(2) We had those living together outside of marriage separate from one another--at least all the ones we knew about and who were living right there. On the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, patrons of the church where we were, all of them, firmly convinced of the bad state in which they had been living and touched by a true sentiment of penance, knelt down at the end of the sermon, publicly asked pardon for the scandal they had given, and made a solemn promise that they would separate. When they did, in fact, separate, they presented themselves at the confessional.

(3) We also set apart those who were excommunicated. With all the signs of a truly contrite and humbled heart, they presented themselves at the door of the church to be absolved. Once they were admonished for the censure they had incurred, they committed themselves, one after another, by a public oath, to remain separated and never to enter one another's house for any occasion or reason whatsoever. Then they were publicly absolved, went to confession, and received Communion shortly after. Since there were a few priests who were fomenting these disorders by their bad example and were committing incest and sacrileges with their own nieces and other female relatives, God in His mercy was pleased to touch their hearts by the charitable reproaches

made to them and by means of the spiritual conferences they attended. As a result, all made their general confessions with every sign of true repentance, and to this they added public reparation for the scandal they had given.

The bulk of our work, however, was in our efforts to bring about reconciliations, and I can say hoc opus, hic labor⁴ because the majority of these people were living on bad terms with one another. For two weeks we were unable to make any headway, except that one young man forgave another who had shot him in the head. Everyone else remained unyielding in their bad dispositions, refusing to be moved by anything we said to them. All the same, there was always a large crowd of people who came to the sermons, which we continued to give every morning and evening.

All the men came to the sermons armed with a sword at their side and a gun slung over their shoulder; these were their usual weapons. But, in addition to these weapons, the bandits and other criminals carried two pistols and two or three daggers in their belts. All those people were so filled with hatred and a desire for vengeance that, no matter what we said to cure them of this strange passion, it made no impression on them. When we spoke about forgiveness of enemies, several of them even left the sermon. This left all of us very worried; myself more than anyone else, because handling these reconciliations was my special task.

Finally, on the eve of the general Communion, as I was coming to the close of the sermon, after exhorting the people once again to forgiveness, God inspired me to take in hand the crucifix I was wearing and say to them that anyone who was willing to forgive should come and kiss it. Then I invited them to do so in the name of Our Lord, who was stretching forth His arms to them, saying that those who kissed that crucifix would be giving a sign that they were willing to forgive and were ready to be reconciled with their enemies. At these words, they started to glance at one another but, when I saw that no one was coming forward, I pretended I was going to leave. I put the crucifix away, complaining of their hardness of heart, saying that they deserved neither the grace nor the blessing Our Lord was offering them.

At that, a reformed Franciscan got up and began to cry out: "O Niolo, O Niolo, so you want to be cursed by God! You do not want to receive the grace He is sending you by means of these Missionaries, who have come from such a distance for your salvation!" While this good monk was uttering these and similar words, a parish priest, whose nephew had been killed and the murderer was present at the sermon, came to prostrate himself on the ground and asked to kiss the crucifix. At the same time he said in a loud voice: "Let a certain person (his nephew's murderer) come forward so I can embrace him." When this was done, another priest did the same with regard to some of his enemies who were present. These two were followed by a throng of

others, so much so that, for the space of an hour and a half, we saw nothing but reconciliations and embraces. For greater assurance, the most important matters were put in writing and authenticated by the notary public.

The next day--Communion day--a general reconciliation took place. After the people had asked pardon of God, they asked it also of their pastors and vice-versa; it was all very edifying. I then asked if there was still anyone who was not reconciled with his enemies. Immediately one of the pastors stood up and said yes, and he began to call several people by name. They came forward, adored the Blessed Sacrament, which was exposed, and without any resistance or difficulty warmly embraced one another. O Seigneur, what edification on earth and what joy in heaven to see fathers and mothers who, for the love of God, were forgiving someone for the death of their children; wives for their husbands; children for their parents; brothers and relatives for their near and dear; in a word, to see so many persons embrace one another and weep over their enemies! In other countries it is rather common to see penitents weep at the feet of their confessors, but in Corsica, it is a minor miracle.

The day after Communion, we received a letter telling us to go to La Bastida,⁵ where a galley sent expressly by the Genoa Senate was awaiting us. Nevertheless, we delayed two days longer, using them very effectively for a few remaining reconciliations. On Tuesday, a sermon was preached on perseverance, and there was such a huge crowd that we had to preach outside the church. There, promises and declarations of a desire to lead a truly Christian life and to persevere in it until death were renewed, and pastors committed themselves to teach catechism and to be more careful about their duty.

The rain which began at the end of the sermon prevented us from leaving that day so, in the evening, I went off to a place about a league away to speak to two persons who had refused to come to any sermon for fear of being forced to forgive their enemies who had killed their brother. Yet, when their pastor asked them to at least defer the effects of their vengeance until they had spoken to me, they did so, and Our Lord touched their hearts with His grace, with the result that they forgave this brother's death. On Wednesday morning, after hearing their confessions and giving them Holy Communion, we all left together, accompanied by several priests and other influential persons in the district who, as a sign of their gratitude for the modest services we had rendered them, fired a volley of shots from their guns and other weapons as we were boarding the ship.

1515. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

July 5, 1652

Profound gratitude should be expressed to that fine Senator who wants to do some good for your house and to win over someone else to his plan. For my part, I thank God for this with all my heart. However, giving an account to

anyone of the use of the money he gives you, other than to the Visitor of the Company, is something we cannot do, and I have never been willing to submit to anything of this sort, not even for the Saint-Lazare house. When we went to live there, the Archbishop of Paris led us toward this and tried to get us to render accounts to him, as the former monks did. I told him, however, that we would prefer to leave, and no matter what anyone said to me, God gave me the grace to remain firm. My reason was that, since we go all over giving missions, it is almost impossible to write down in detail our various expenditures, and to balance our accounts in this difficult situation we would have to estimate money we had not spent instead of recording some real expenditures we had omitted to write down. This could not be done without danger of sin.

You lead me to hope for your prayers for the peace of this kingdom, and I thank you for this. Never was the need greater. Just three or four nights ago we had an entire army surrounding our enclosure. However, because it was pursued by the King's army, it cleared out in great haste early in the morning, and the rear guard was attacked behind Saint-Charles Seminary, which ran a great risk of being sacked.¹ Eight soldiers, who had entered the house for this purpose, intended to mistreat M. Alméras,² who offered them food and money, provided they did no other damage; but they went into the rooms, broke open the coffers, and carried off the best of anything they found.

Just as they were leaving, loaded down with booty, a porter and a coachman of the Duc de Bouillon,³ who were passing by, saw all this disorder and drew their swords against them. After making them give back all they had taken, they put them out and stayed all day and night in the house to prevent other thieves from entering. These were men who did not know us and who came to our defense out of compassion. We must acknowledge that God is wonderful to have had them come to us just in the nick of time. We considered them two protectors sent by Him. They left the next day--last Wednesday--very pleased with us.

1516. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

Paris, July 5, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Public affairs here are in such a state of confusion that we can hardly think of anything but self-preservation. Nevertheless, I want to tell you that, in the midst of all that, your letter of June 4 consoled me greatly.

I change nothing of what I informed you about the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, nor have I anything to add to it. We shall see what effect the Queen's letter will have on the thinking of the Archbishop of Paris.¹

The Daughters of Charity will still be ready to go, but we have to wait for an opportunity. M. Cruoly is still in Rethel, continuing to assist the poor people of the town and

the environs within a radius of five leagues from it. He is being helped by two other priests and a Brother. The harvest which will be gathered there, and the misfortunes here will oblige him to leave his post at the end of this month, along with all the others who have been laboring in that holy work in Champagne and Picardy for the past two years. At that time I shall see what M. Cruoly's dispositions are for the journey to Poland.

I praise God that the Queen is still zealously inclined to all good works of charity and that her alms are being distributed effectively in Krakow. I also thank O[ur] L[ord] for the preservation and fine leadership of the workers you have sent there.

I thought I had written you that I received the letter with which Her Majesty had honored me in reply to mine regarding her safe delivery, on which I had congratulated her.

I receive all your letters on time because I send for them punctually every Thursday at Madame des Essarts' house or at Father Berthod's. They are in safe hands with either person.

I finally received the elk's foot,² for which I thank you; I shall send it on to the Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

I have nothing to tell you about our present troubles, except that on Monday evening³ we were suddenly surrounded by an army, but it only passed along the walls of our enclosure, stopping there just part of the night. It was pursued by the King's army, which drove it away from us, and both of them caused us more fright than harm.

Saint-Charles Seminary would have been sacked were it not for two men sent by God. After making eight soldiers give back the booty they had taken, they put them out and kept others from entering. We did not know these two men and vice-versa; that is why I say that God sent them to us just in the nick of time to defend this house, which they did out of compassion, as they told us. They left the next day to go see the Duc de Bouillon, their master, at Saint-Denis, where the Court has been for the past eight to ten days.

Since the bad times are getting considerably worse, we have been advised to keep a few armed men here. As a matter of fact, we had them here last night and intend to keep them so that, by the grace of God, they will protect us during the rough storm in which we now are. I kept watch with them myself, and every night six or seven members of the Company and the same number of servants keep watch at Saint-Charles, and within the enclosure and around Saint-Lazare, from which we have removed as much furniture as we could.

I leave you to imagine our hardship and that which will befall Paris, unless God has mercy on it. It is to be feared that it will destroy itself. Things began yesterday at City Hall, where M. Le Gros⁴ spent the night in great danger of being killed or wounded, as has happened to many

others.⁵ The Parlement does not dare to return, for fear of the rebels.

Continue to pray for us and for me, who am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Poland, in Warsaw

1517. - TO FRANÇOIS HALLIER AND JÉROME LAGAULT

[Around July, 1652]¹

Monsieur,²

Thank you for the consolation your precious letter brought me. I am really embarrassed at seeing myself given this great honor and the thanks you offer me, despite the fact that I have been altogether useless to you, as has our Little Company, which has not been worthy to give you hospitality in Rome, so wretched is it. I am well aware that this is not for want of good will on its part, and we shall never lack the good will to be of service to you. I, personally, am most anxious for opportunities to render you mine.

I am going to do as you asked with regard to the Franciscan Father and to see that Fathers...do not involve him in your affair. I shall let you know their opinion on this and shall continue to ask God to bless your work there. It may take a long time, if our good God does not shorten in your favor the usual lengthy proceedings of the Roman Court. For this reason, Monsieur, you must take good care of your health.

If, in your absence, you honor me here with your orders, I shall receive them with great joy and a similar desire to prove to you that I am in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your....

1518. - TO CARDINAL MAZARIN

[Between June 29 and July 17, 1652]¹

I most humbly entreat Your Eminence to forgive me for returning home last evening² without having the honor of receiving your orders. I was obliged to do so because I felt ill. The Duc d'Orléans³ has just informed me that he will send Monsieur d'Ornano⁴ with a reply for me today, which he wanted to discuss with the Prince.⁵ I told the Queen yesterday about the gracious, respectful conversation I had the honor of having with each of the two individually. I told His Royal Highness that, if the King were reinstated in his authority and a decree of vindication⁶ issued, Your Eminence would give the desired satisfaction.⁷ I also said that it would be difficult to have this important affair settled by deputies, and that persons who trusted one another were needed to negotiate matters by mutual agreement. He indicated to me by word and gesture that this was agreeable to him and replied that he would discuss it with the Council. I hope to be able to bring the reply to Your Eminence tomorrow morning, God willing.⁸

1519. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON

[Between July 5 and 24, 1652]¹

Disease is still widespread in Palaiseau.² The first persons who fell ill and did not die of it now need time to recover, and those who were healthy are now sick. One of our priests came to me expressly to say that the soldiers have cut down all the wheat and that there is nothing to harvest. However, we are no longer in a position to bear this expense. We have contributed to it 663 livres in cash up to now, besides the food and other things in kind which we have sent them. I beg you most humbly, Madame, to hold a little meeting at your house today to decide what we should do. I will be there, if possible.

I have just sent the priest back with a Brother and fifty livres. The disease is so contagious that our first four priests, and the Brother who accompanied them, caught it. We had to bring them back here, and two of them are now dying. O Madame, what a harvest to be reaped for heaven at this time when such great misery is at our gates! The coming of the Son of God was the downfall and the redemption of many,³ as the Gospel says. In a certain sense, we can likewise say that this war will be the cause of the damnation of many persons, but that God will also make use of it for the grace, the justification, and the glory of many persons. We have good reason to hope that you will be in that number, as I am asking Our Lord.

1520. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT
July 11 [1652]¹

Monsieur and Most Honored Father,

Madame de Varize came here yesterday to have the honor of seeing you and to propose to you the desire of those in charge of the Châteaudun hospital to have two of our Sisters. She told me she could manage without the two we gave her for Varize² and thinks it would be very useful to send them there. I am well aware, Monsieur, that they have been asking us for Sisters for that place for a very long time, but up until now there has always been some reason against it.

Madame and the Lady who was with her came also to ask your charity for two of our Sisters to serve the poor at Saint-André. I cited to them the fact that we had to send Sisters to Étampes and to the parishes in Paris, where most of our Sisters are still ill.

Last evening we buried good Sister Perrette,³ mother of a Carthusian, and I was told that one of our best Sisters,⁴ who serves the sick at Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas, was to receive Extreme Unction in the course of the evening. Another one [is] seriously ill at Saint-Sulpice. In short, Monsieur, there is good reason to believe that my sins are emptying the Company of the Daughters of Charity. When I see the faults I commit in it by my laziness of mind, I am very much ashamed.

I most humbly entreat your charity to inform me whether I should give some answer to Madame de Varize on these two points. Please give me your blessing and continue to do me

the honor of believing that I am, in the love of Our Lord, Most Honored Father, your most obedient daughter and very grateful servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

Our Sister who works with the galley slaves came to me in tears yesterday. She cannot get any more bread for her poor men because money is owed to the baker and because bread is so expensive. She begs and borrows everywhere with great difficulty and, to crown her woe, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon wants her to make a list of those she thinks can be put out.

I have three serious objections to that. First, her only knowledge of them is from the way they treat her, be this with insults or praises. That being the case, she might commit an injustice. Another objection is that some of them bribe the captain and the concierge, who have already begun to quarrel with her and to accuse her of being the cause of their disorder. The third objection is that those who remain in the chain gang will think she is to blame for this. You know, Most Honored Father, what those men are capable of saying and doing.

I told our Sister to put off making this list until I have instructions from your charity regarding what she should do.

1521. - TO PATRICE VALOIS, IN GENOA

Paris, July 19, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Your letter is full of your concern about the return of M. Blatiron and the others. As a matter of fact, you are right to fear that they may be overcome by the heat in Corsica and perhaps by some illness. I, too, am anxious about them and ask God to preserve them from all dangers of sea and land. I do not think that the Republic,¹ which sent them to that region and knows there is no plague there, will quarantine them, but if it does we must conform ourselves to God's Will in that as in all else. It would give them an opportunity to work in the rural areas, or they could use the time to take a rest; both of these things are feasible and desirable.

We shall continue to pray to God for them and for you. I ask you to do the same for our houses here and for the country. It is becoming more and more disorderly and will soon be in a state of extreme misery, unless God in His goodness puts a stop to its spread.

Besides this affliction common to all, we have our own particular trials: the loss of Brother Patrocle,² who died here on Sunday, and the burden of sixteen to eighteen sick men we have here, several of whom are in danger, including M. Molony, who has had a relapse. I am not going to mention the qualities of the man who died, because M. Duport knew him and was his Superior; he can tell you how wise, gentle, pious, and exemplary he was. I can simply add that he was

growing daily in the spirit of his vocation. He was a native of Paris and came from a prominent family.

I embrace your family and am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Patrice Valois, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa

1522. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

July 19, 1652¹

Monsieur and Most Honored Father,

Madame de Herse,² the President's wife, came here yesterday to ask for Sisters for Saint-André. I am very distressed at not being able to send some strong ones to relieve our Sisters in the parishes and also at not being able to give any to that good Lady. Nevertheless, Monsieur, if none should be sent to Étampes or to Poland, as Mademoiselle de Lamoignon believes, we should make some effort to satisfy her, if your charity thinks it advisable, provided there is no fault to be found in the conduct of the parish priests.

I most humbly entreat your charity to remember that I am awaiting your orders to return. I have not made any visits because of a slight ailment which has kept me in bed. However, I do not think I will be really sick, as I feared, thank God.

I had asked our Sister to find out from your charity whether I should send someone to request Madame de Bouillon's³ carriage to go and see her, in line with the wish she expressed to you. She was mistaken in the message she gave you. I think we have to stand on more ceremony with this Lady than with the others.

Continue to honor me by believing that I am, by God's Will, Most Honored Father, your most humble daughter and very grateful servant.

LOUISE DE MARILLAC

The priests of Saint-Sulpice have just this minute sent someone to ask for four of the refugee girls⁴ to help our Sisters. Should we let them do this or would it not be better for the convalescents to go and pick up their own meals? We have six Sisters there, but two of them are ill. I am afraid that this mixture might cause some confusion and much harm, and this may come from our Sisters themselves.

1523. - TO JACQUES-RAOUL DE LA GUIBOURGÈRE, BISHOP OF LA ROCHELLE

[Around 1652]¹

I received the letter with which you have honored me as a blessing from God. It was a great consolation to me amidst the common afflictions of this region. If those which threatened your diocese have not disturbed it too much, I think that this is due, after God, to your wise leadership, which has held off the storm while serving the King. I thank God for this and for all the other good you are doing inside and outside your town, by which the people are

maintained in their duty to God, to the Church, and to their Prince. Even heretics, who witness this, see also the excellence of our holy religion, the importance and grace of the episcopacy, and what it can do when it is administered in a holy way, as it is by your sacred person.

I ask God, Excellency, to give us many bishops like you to work for the spiritual and temporal advancement of the people.

1524. - TO THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA

[July or August 1652]¹

Madame,

Paris rejoiced in amazement when it learned that the King and Your Majesty, in your incomparable goodness, demanded that wheat be brought in without hindrance. However, this joy has been followed by a little sadness, Madame, because troops of soldiers are constantly coming to carry off the wheat, not only on the Saint-Denis plain, as I have witnessed, but also between La Chapelle and La Villette, two villages a quarter of a league away from Paris. They chase away the owners who dare to approach in order to gather in their harvests.²

I most humbly entreat Your Majesty to allow me to give her this information because she did me the honor of telling me³ that the King did not forbid those who have sown their land to reap its fruits. I also know, Madame, that, if it please His Majesty and you, Your Majesty, to have the obstacles placed in their way removed, this would go a long way toward convincing the people that Your Majesties are better to them than they might imagine. For my part, Madame, I shall always testify to this before the whole world, on the strength of its truth and by my obligation to be, as I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Madame, Your Majesty's most humble, most obedient and most faithful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

1525. - TO MONSIEUR DE RAMEVILLE¹

[July 1652]²

Monsieur,

The goodness Our Lord has granted you in my regard leads me to entreat you most humbly to give us a guard for the protection of a little farm we have near [Livry].³ I have not had sufficient time to ask M. Desbordes⁴ to write to you about this.

The escort you in your kindness did me the honor of sending me as a precaution, when I was going to Saint-Denis recently, gives me the confidence to have recourse to your protection in these circumstances. If God is pleased to grant me the means of expressing gratitude for it by my most humble services, God knows, Monsieur, how gladly I shall do so. I am, in the love of Our Lord....

1526. - TO MARÉCHAL DE TURENNE¹

[July 1652]

My Lord,

I take the honor of writing to you to renew to you the offers of my perpetual obedience and to entreat you most humbly to accede to the most humble request I make you of giving us a guard for the protection of a little farm we have near Livry. I have absolute confidence that, in your kindness, My Lord, you will grant us this favor. I ask it of you for the love of O[ur] L[ord], with all possible affection and humility. I am....

1527. - TO JEAN GICQUEL, IN LE MANS

Paris, July 24, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The extraordinary pressure of business, in which the disorders of the times have involved me, explain why I did not write to you when I wished. So, I am doing it now, while I can, to tell you that I am very distressed about M. Gentil's illness and to ask you to take good care of him, sparing nothing for food and medicine to restore him to health. By the same token, I recommend that you take care of your own health. I just remembered, as I write this, that you sent me word that Brother Le Blanc¹ has also been sick. I am very sorry about that; I hope, however, that there have been no complications to his illness. If there are, remember that the greatest pleasure you can give me is to see that your patients are well taken care of.

We have several priests in the border areas of Champagne and Picardy, who have been assisting the poor people for two years now. Some of them are supposed to return here after this month because alms from Paris can no longer be sent so far away nor so abundantly as in the past on account of the large number of poor who are now here in this city. We will send you two of the men who will be coming back to us, for the purpose for which you request them. In the meantime, please be patient about the needs of your house, which I ask Our Lord Himself to remedy.

I am consoled to hear that, despite the fact that you are only a few workers, you are still having some little missions given. After the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, this is the best means we have of drawing down the blessings of God upon us. It is also our main concern; when it is carried out in the Spirit of Our Lord, it ensures our salvation.

In the absence of Brother Robineau,² who is in the country, I read the letter you wrote him and have given someone else the responsibility of informing Abbé Lucas³ of M. Guibert's lawsuit to reduce the forty livres a year he has promised him on his lease. As soon as I have his answer, I will let you know.

Please tell me the amount of the lease on the chapel of M. Pangois,⁴ and how much he wants us to give him annually in payment, for it would be wrong to give him a larger pension than the benefice is worth. If he is satisfied with receiving from us exactly what he receives from his farmer,

the settlement will be feasible. I am well aware that the house is grossly overburdened with such leases, but it is also wise to ensure the benefices which depend on it in order to protect ourselves against lawsuits that will be brought against us, if the holders resign them or if others petition them for them. This is greatly to be feared from the mentality of the people in that region.

We now seem to be at the height of the greatest calamities, which are almost beyond measure here; therefore, they will begin to diminish in future, please God, and when that happens we shall be able to satisfy your needs more easily.

You can imagine how deeply we are affected by the public afflictions; in addition, God is pleased to try us by some of our own. We have sixteen to eighteen sick men, some of them seriously ill, but there are also several who are getting better. That is not all: we have just lost two excellent men, one a priest; the other a seminarian. The former is M. David,⁵ whom we had sent to Étampes for the corporal and spiritual assistance of the poor inhabitants, almost all of whom the army and the siege left sick and in a state of extraordinary poverty.⁶ That good priest worked so zealously and indefatigably that he contracted a persistent fever, of which he died three or four days ago. Tomorrow we are sending three men there to assist good M. Deschamps, who is still holding up well in the midst of this heavy labor. We took on similar work in Palaiseau, where another army camped out for twenty days. The poverty and disease there are also very great, and seven or eight of our workers fell ill, one after the other. This has obliged us to recall them and send others to that place.

The other dear deceased is good Brother Patrocle, a very wise, pious young man. He was a native of Paris and came from a distinguished family.

In great haste I send greetings to your family and am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Gicquel, Priest of the Mission, at Notre-Dame de Coëffort, in Le Mans 1528. - TO PATRICE VALOIS, IN GENOA
Paris, July 25, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You have greatly consoled me, Monsieur, by sending me news of Monsieur Blatiron and his dear companions. I ask Our Lord to bring them all back in good health. O Jésus! Monsieur, how the news that your dear family is doing well has also consoled me! Oh! how I hope that Our Lord will be pleased to give it more and more of His Spirit and His holy manner of acting!

I praise God that the good gentleman is persevering in the devotedness Our Lord has given him for the welfare of the Company, and that he has found two other persons of his

own social class similarly disposed. I ask Him to guide this work according to His own good pleasure.

I will explain to you my objection to binding ourselves to keep accounts: when the Archbishop¹ did us the honor of coming to put us in possession of this house,² he suggested that we present to him an annual account of the income, as our predecessors had done. I asked him to excuse us from this and went so far as to tell him that we would prefer to go back to our poor collège.³ Now, in his goodness he disregarded those difficulties and welcomed us here without obliging us to render any accounts. And how, Monsieur, could Missionaries keep an account of so many little things they buy, when they are out giving missions in the country? Please keep this reply for M. Blatiron.

I thank God that the building the Cardinal⁴ is having erected is making progress, that Monsieur Duport is giving the mission to the laborers working on it, and that His Eminence wanted translated into Italian what I wrote you on the assistance of the poor in Paris.

I wrote you that Our Lord has taken to Himself Monsieur Patrocle, a person of noble birth and rather noteworthy piety, and a seminarian of our Company. Today I have to tell you that Divine Providence has also taken the late Monsieur David, a priest of our Company, of whom it can be said that in a short time explevit tempora multa.⁵ He had been assisting the sick poor for only ten to fifteen days in Étampes, where the army of the Princes had stayed for a long time and left the air contaminated, although not contagious. Monsieur Deschamps, who was with him, sent me word that he did there what a man come down from heaven might have done with regard to hearing confessions, teaching catechism, corporal assistance, and burying the dead whose bodies had long been decomposed. He had twelve corpses, which were infecting the village, buried in Étréchy.⁶ Because of that he fell sick and died. He tells me that, shortly before he [David] died, he was somewhat fearful of the justice of God and cried out: "No matter, Lord. Even were you to damn me, I would never stop loving you in hell."

Monsieur de la Fosse⁷ most generously asked to be allowed to take his place, and Brother Férot⁸ to go with him. They left yesterday with a coadjutor Brother, like three victims to be sacrificed for the good of the neighbor. I recommend them to your prayers, and also the eighteen to twenty sick men we have here.

I almost forgot to tell you that Monsieur David is the first member of the Company Our Lord has taken while assisting the poor people corporally, and that the Divine Goodness has preserved all those whom we have sent to the border areas of Picardy--thirteen or fourteen priests and Brothers.

I close by recommending myself to your prayers and those of your family, whom I greet, prostrate in spirit at their feet and yours. I am your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Valois

1529. - TO BALTHAZAR BRANDON DE BASSANCOURT¹

The last day of July, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

The troubles everyone is experiencing in these times have prevented me from going to see you to express my sympathy on the loss you have suffered of the late Bishop of Périgueux,² and the whole Church with you. I most humbly entreat you, Monsieur, to accept my apology for this. With the help of God, I hope to carry out this duty as soon as possible, to go to ask you for the favor of the same benevolence with which this holy Bishop honored me, and to offer my obedience to you as I did to him.

I beg you, Monsieur, to allow me to tell you that we owed him four thousand livres, and consequently, we owe them to you, his heir. We will make some arrangement with you for the annuity, whenever you wish, since it is impossible for us, in these times when the majority of people are suffering, to give you this sum. I entreat you, Monsieur, to agree to this and to my transferring to you the esteem and affection we had for this holy Bishop. I am your....

1529a. - TO N.

[1652 or 1653]¹

That they have used his name and shown counterfeit letters, benefitting the Jansenists.

Write to Rome that in the Papal Bull no mention be made of the term "Inquisition" nor of temporal punishment, which are contrary to the style of France.

That Monsieur Hallier and Monsieur Lagault may count on finding, on their return to this city, the sum of one thousand livres for the purpose for which they wrote.

Tell him that everyone is well disposed to submit to the decision of His Holiness, regardless of any rumors the Jansenists are spreading to the contrary.

That he should be careful of the persons to whom he writes and be prudent in doing so.

That a journal should be kept of all that has taken place during their negotiations, noting all the important details and events.

1530. - TO MADEMOISELLE DAVID

The last day of July, 1652

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I have seen the letters you wrote to M. David, your brother, and to me they always seemed full of piety and good sentiments. They have led me to think that you belong wholly to God, like a true daughter of O[ur] L[ord], who desires only His good pleasure and is glad that it is accomplished in all that concerns her. Therefore, Mademoiselle, I do not have to use any other preface to inform you that God has been pleased to call M. David to

Himself. It suffices for you to know that it is God who has done this, to cause you to love the hand that has deprived you of a person so close to you. Still, I am sure you are deeply grieved at this, since your nature is so good, and grace does not destroy our natural feelings. I ask Our Lord, Mademoiselle, who alone is the Consoler of hearts in such sorrows, to be yours also, and I ask you, for your part, to do all you can to ease your sorrow.

The reasons you have for this are, first of all, the Will of God, who wished to reward this dear soul for the services he has rendered Him and for those he wanted to render Him, especially on the island of Madagascar for the conversion of unbelievers, of whom you have heard. This was an apostolic endeavor he was unable to carry out, but, in the eyes of God the will is taken for the deed.

Secondly, the service he was performing when he fell ill is one of the holiest that can be done on earth, namely, the corporal and spiritual assistance of the suffering members of Jesus Christ, in the person of the poor inhabitants of Étampes and the environs. The army had encamped there for a long time, leaving almost all of them sick and totally ruined, with the result that most of them would have perished without the aid sent from Paris. This help was brought to them by this good Missionary and a few others who are still on the scene. The latter have written me that he did this great work with as much punctuality, zeal, and charity as a man come down from heaven would have done. In the short time he worked there--only ten to twelve days--he won the esteem and affection of the whole town.

Our Company has suffered a great loss in him. Everyone who knew him mourns his passing, I more than anyone else. I was hoping that his grace and talents would produce considerable results for the good of souls.

In the third place, it was his good fortune, young as he was, to be taken away from the corruption of this world, where occasions of wrongdoing are so frequent and misery so prevalent that they cause the living to consider that the dead, who are no longer subject to it, are fortunate. We can say that about this good priest, who had not yet tasted the false sweetness nor the true bitterness of the world, since he was called from his childhood to the service of God. He was so good that in the time he was with us he always devoted himself to the practice of virtue and to living out his vocation so as to become a good evangelical worker and by this means to assure his salvation, while procuring the salvation of others. He was working at this, as I said, very ardently and successfully, when our good God chose to send him a persistent fever. On the seventh day of his illness, it made him delirious, and on the fifteenth it put him in possession of the glory of his Lord, as we have good reason to believe.

I cannot refrain from recommending him to your prayers, since we are not sure of God's judgments and must always be

in fear of them. We are still tossed about by the disturbances of this life, which is like a stormy sea, where those who are not attached to J[esus] C[hrist] and the duties of their state, as was our dear departed, are shipwrecked.

May His Divine Goodness be pleased to grant us the same grace and to give me opportunities to serve you, since He has made me, in His holy love, Mademoiselle, your....

1530a. - TO MOTHER MARIE-AGNÈS CHEVALIER,¹ VISITATION NUN [July 1652]²

...and the sorrow of leaving your dear house. Mais quoi! no thought should be given to the expense in these circumstances, and your sorrow will be compensated by the consolation of seeing your dear Sisters,³ who are waiting to give you such a warm and loving welcome, that I cannot even express it to you. I enclose the letter our dear Mother⁴ wrote me on this subject, and perhaps she has already forwarded to you the orders I sent her for you. It will be well, then, for you to send--today, if possible--your little girls and some of the Community, such as the....

...dear Mother, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

What prompts me to give you this advice is the fear of a recurrence of the danger in which you have been and the pain of the harm done to you, and not because of any special knowledge I have of the state of affairs. We cannot go wrong in putting Our Lord's advice into practice. Then again, the pressure being put on you by the relatives of your little girls,⁵ who may know more than I, gives me a sense of urgency myself.

1531. - JEAN LE VACHER TO SAINT VINCENT [Tunis, between 1648 and 1660]¹

Two galleys left yesterday on a raid, with more than five hundred Christian slaves on board. By the grace of God, all of them have put themselves in a good state. Oh! what a sorry day that was for them, and how many blows those wicked renegades in charge rained upon their poor bodies! I am well aware that convicts on the French galleys are treated no better, but the difference is that convicts in France are condemned for their crimes there, whereas the slaves in Barbary undergo all their punishment and suffering only because they are good Christians, faithful to God.

The day these poor men received Communion and were then taken to the galleys, I prepared a little feast for them, and had more than five hundred rolls and the meat from two steers distributed to them. I also had a quintal² of white crackers given to each galley to be dispensed to those who got sick during the voyage.

From there I went to visit the slaves in Sidi-Regeppe. I found them unchained, so I realized that their master had kept his word to me because the last time I saw him he had promised me to take those unbearable irons off them. I found among them six adolescent boys between the ages of

sixteen and eighteen. They had been slaves for four or five years and had been unable to get permission to leave the place where they were housed; consequently, it had always been impossible for them to go to confession and Communion as the others had done. I prepared them for both sacraments and, after hearing their confessions, told them to prepare their poor sheds as decently as they could and said that I would bring them the Blessed Sacrament the next day in the same way I bring it to the sick.

And so I did. After celebrating Holy Mass in Annonciade prison, I brought this Divine Treasure to those poor slaves, followed by all the Christians I met in the streets of Bizerte. O Dieu! how devoutly and lovingly those poor young boys welcomed that holy visit! The tears of joy and consolation falling from their eyes compelled everyone present to weep, too--not so much for their wretched situation as because they understood how happy they were. I heard the confession of a seventh boy, who had fallen ill the night before, and gave him Communion; then I gave him Extreme Unction, and he died soon after. I had to spend the rest of the time in the service and assistance of the sick in the prisons.

1532. - TO CLAUDE DUFOUR, IN SEDAN

August 3, 1652

In reply to your letter, I agree that it was very wrong to lease the tithes to Huguenots. I was not aware of it, and I must admit that I am deeply grieved by it. I will write my thoughts on that to Monsieur [Coglée]¹ some other time, since it is not the right moment to do so just now, lest he surmise that you were the one who told me.²

The present state of public affairs puts us in such a difficult situation here that, to my great regret, I still have not been able to read the manuscript you sent me. I will do so at the first free moment God sees fit to give me; then I will also have some of the men here read it. After that I will tell you their opinion and mine. In the meantime, you must understand that we have always considered the writing of books a hindrance to our work, and that for this reason the custom was not to be introduced into the Company. However, since no rule, however general, does not have some exception, we shall see whether it is advisable to have yours printed.

1533. - TO MADEMOISELLE DE LAMOIGNON

August 4, 1652

Mademoiselle,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

One of our good Ladies of Charity had asked me if the Queen of Poland was entrusting to the Ladies of Charity the distribution of the twelve thousand livres Her Majesty is donating for the poor of Paris and the surrounding areas. I told her no. What gave rise to this idea is the fact that I told the company of Ladies that Her Majesty had paid me the compliment of allowing me to assure the Ladies that, if they

wished to borrow four thousand livres from this sum of twelve thousand livres for urgent necessities, Her Majesty would certainly send them what they needed. So, Mademoiselle, I beg you most humbly to set the Ladies straight regarding this idea that the Queen of Poland has entrusted this distribution to them. I assure you that I never said that, not....¹

1534. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

God be praised that you are ready to do His Will in all things and everywhere and to go to live and die wherever He chooses to call you! This is the disposition of good servants of God and of truly apostolic men, who are attached to nothing. It is the mark of the true children of God, who are always free to correspond to the plans of such a worthy Father. I thank Him for this on your behalf, with lively sentiments of love and gratitude. I am sure that your own heart, prepared in this way, will receive abundant graces from heaven to do much good on earth. I ask this of His Divine Goodness.

1535. - TO JEAN MARTIN, IN GENOA

Paris, August 9, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Monsieur Blatiron has told us of the blessing God has given to your work in Corsica,¹ and I cannot refrain from telling you what a consolation that is for the Company here, and for me in particular. I am going to send this report to all our houses to edify and encourage them, by your example, to undertake many things for the service of Our Lord and to rely on Him in times of difficulties, which He uses as a basis to merit success. I thank Him infinitely for the results of that mission and for your safe return. May His Divine Goodness be pleased to preserve you and be more and more glorified in and by you!

Each quarter when your brother has requested it, I have always given him a written consent, under my personal seal, to withdraw your pension from City Hall. Now he has come to tell me that the disbursing officials are raising objections to paying him because they do not recognize my seal. So, he has asked me for this consent to be notarized, not just for one quarter but permanently. I did not want to do this for him without your advice. Please let me know if you approve my giving him my notarized authorization, on your behalf, to collect the said pension for two or three years. I have already done this for one quarter only, while awaiting your instructions, to save him the trouble of coming here every three months.

I recommend myself to your prayers and am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Martin, Priest of the Mission, in Genoa

1536. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

August 16, 1652

Thank you for sending me a report of the present state of your house. I see some straw in it and some good grain. We must not hope for anything else from the condition of mortal men; we have to wait until we are in heaven to find pure wheat. I hope that God in His goodness will draw strength from these weaknesses and His glory from our miseries. Let us humble ourselves and, while working to support others, let us strive to make ourselves pleasing to God and to those with whom we live.

You keep asking me for M. Ennery for Corsica, but I do not think he is gentle enough for that region, where the people are uncouth and used to being rough. They must be won over by kindness and cordiality, for evils are cured by their contrary. I have warned this good priest of his fault, which comes from his nature. I think he is trying to correct it; we shall see how effective he is in doing so. I have not yet mentioned this journey to him.

1537. - TO A COADJUTOR BROTHER,¹ IN THE GENOA HOUSE
August 16, 1652

Your letter consoled me greatly, on the one hand, because I saw the basic goodness of your soul, which makes you want to please God. On the other hand, although this desire is proper, it gives you other desires which are immoderate, and because they have distressed you, they have distressed me, too. I have since seen, in a letter from M. Blatiron, that you have recovered peace of mind, and I thank God for this. I ask Him to confirm you in it so that nothing can trouble you any longer and still less make you fail in the support you owe your brothers or in the fidelity demanded by the grace of your vocation--the two things that have been a source of temptation to you.

By "temptation" I mean the urge which prompted you to go off alone to the country to instruct the poor and serve the sick; first of all, because the teaching of divine matters is not one of the functions of the laity. A person must have received Holy Orders to preach the Word of God; otherwise, this would be a disorder and would encroach upon the office of priests, who alone have the right to teach Christian truths publicly.

Secondly, if you were to go and serve the sick, it would be in a hospital or in their own homes. If it were in a hospital, alas! poor Brother, you would be going from the frying pan into the fire, for so many painful crosses and contradictions are encountered there that the ones about which you are complaining are nothing in comparison. The work is heavy, times of rest are short and interrupted, repugnance is certain, and reproaches and insults are frequent there. Almost all the poor grumble about things because they are never satisfied and usually complain to both the devout persons who visit them and the Administrators who are in charge of them. They even make false reports to them about those who serve them because the latter have refused them something. Those poor servants are

harassed on all sides, having as many supervisors and critics as there are masters, chaplains, and persons who have some responsibility in those houses. This is what our poor Daughters of Charity find the hardest.

If your intention is not to stay in a hospital but rather to seek out the sick poor here and there in the country, I do not know how you would go about this nor what assistance you might give them, unless you have ample resources to keep up this work and to alleviate their penury. You would soon tire of going begging for yourself and for them. Whatever way you look at it, I see insurmountable difficulties in this.

Furthermore, these are only suggestions of the evil spirit who, to jeopardize your salvation, suggests to you extraordinary works that are beyond your strength, under the fine pretext of practicing, on your own, the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, as if our Company were not making its chief concern to serve the poor people in all these ways, even the sick in hospitals and in their own homes. Look at what has been done for the past two years in the border areas of Champagne and Picardy by many of our priests and Brothers--as many as sixteen or eighteen of them. Look also at what is being done in the environs of Paris by six or seven of our men, who are looking after both the spiritual and corporal needs of the poor abandoned people.

Why do we give missions in France and Italy? Is it not to instruct the country people and to assist the sick who are needy? As a member of the body, you have a share in the labor and merit of these works of the Congregation. If you were cut off from it, you would certainly work at this much less than you do now, like others who have left, returning to the world to be more free to do so, but not doing the good they had planned to do there.

True, you would also be free, but it would be only to regret at your leisure having deceived yourself by false zeal. So, remain in the state to which God has called you, in which He gives you the grace to serve Him in an edifying manner, and in which you have all the right signs to convince you that this is where God wants you.

You yourself have always believed and acknowledged this truth. Why, for no good reason, do you now think the contrary? You say simply that you cannot tolerate what is going on among our Brothers, that is, some slight misunderstanding. My reply to that is that even the holiest Companies, like human bodies, are subject to sickness and congestion. Sometimes they are healthy; sometimes ill. No one's health is so good that it is not at times affected in one way or another--if not the whole body, at least some part of it. However, remedies restore us to health, and we see that the weak among us become stronger and those who have fallen rise again, thank God.

I would like to think that the little disagreement about which you wrote me has already passed, that those Brothers

are reunited and that, instead of the little quarrels you were hearing, you now see only mutual support and cordiality among them. With the shepherd absent, it has been easy for the wolf to disturb the fold, but now that the Superior has returned, it is at peace. Each is trying to be first in showing respect to the other, and all are helping one another. Not that they still do not commit any faults--the saints committed them, and even the Apostles did not always get along with one another. Our Lord had to put up with a great deal from them.

That being the case, dear Brother, should you be surprised to find something to criticize in those with whom you live? You know that you yourself are not always in the same state. If you are exact today, closely united to God, and a consolation to the whole house, tomorrow you will be out of sorts, indolent, and a source of affliction to others. Then you will need their support, as you have supported them. That is why the Father and Lord of us all has so strongly inculcated reciprocal love in us, knowing how difficult it is for those who do not have it to live happily together.

This is the love we lack, you will tell me. Oh well! dear Brother, apply that to yourself and not to others. Practice humility and patience; you need these two virtues to attain true charity, and they are also necessary for all who wish to serve Jesus Christ. No type of life in this world is without its crosses. Nevertheless, people have a natural desire to avoid them and everyone imagines that by changing his situation he will be happier. I have rarely seen bishops who did not complain of their situation, although it is so holy and exalted.

If we want to find the manna hidden in our vocation, let us restrict and confine all our desires within it. Let us esteem and love it as a precious gift from the hand of God and try to accomplish His holy Will in it always and in all things. This is my prayer to Him and what I ask you to ask of Him for the whole Company and for me. I am, in His love....

1538. - TO CARDINAL ANTONIO BARBERINI, PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

Paris, August 16, 1652

Monseigneur,

The second letter Your Eminence did me the honor of writing to me regarding the Madagascar mission obliges me to thank God once again for having given His Church such a vigilant shepherd as Your Eminence, who is so concerned about the conversion of unbelievers in that country.

I have just seen, Monseigneur, one of the men in charge of sending ships to that island. I regret to inform Your Eminence that he doubts they will be able to make the voyage this September, as they had planned. They still do not have a ship and are in no hurry to fit one out. The reason for this, Monseigneur, is the present state of France, which has

compelled some of those involved in the venture to leave Paris, and it is causing the rest of them to hold off making the necessary expenditure.

I am really distressed about this delay because we have had one of our priests on that island for the past three years,¹ and have not been able to make any contact with him since this interruption in trading. I inquired about our sending men by another route and was told that the Portuguese have no communication with the island. As for the Dutch, they hold the island of Saint-Maurice,² just about one hundred leagues from there, and sometimes go to Madagascar, but only to one of its tips, where there are no French. The French are at the other end of the island, about one hundred twenty leagues away, and traversing the island is very difficult.

But the greatest difficulty, Monseigneur, would be to sail there on Dutch ships because the Dutch are doing their utmost to become masters of the Indies and to drive out the French. It is even feared that they are paying one of those gentlemen to induce them to abandon the undertaking, with the result that, instead of facilitating our going there, they would prevent it. Nevertheless, I will see once again if we can find some way to send new workers to this nascent Church; in which case, I shall inform the Sacred Congregation.

In the meantime, I most humbly thank Your Eminence for all your kindness to me and the benevolence with which you honor our Little Company, which it continues to ask God to preserve Your Eminence. For my part, I renew the offer of my perpetual obedience and am, in the love of Our Lord, Monseigneur, your most humble and very grateful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

1539. - TO POPE INNOCENT X

Most Holy Father,

I, most unworthy of all men, prostrate most humbly at the feet of Your Holiness, offer, dedicate, and devote to you myself and our entire little Congregation of the Mission, of which I, though most unworthy, have been appointed Superior General by the Holy Apostolic See. Confident of your paternal affection, with which you graciously hear and receive all your children, even the least, dare I also make known to you the very pitiful state of our France, which is most deserving of compassion?¹

The royal house is divided by dissensions; the people are split into various factions; cities and provinces are ruined by civil wars; farms, cantons, and towns are destroyed, ruined, and burned. The farmers cannot harvest what they have sown and no longer plant anything for the coming years. Soldiers do as they please; the people are exposed not only to their thefts and pillaging, but also to murder and all kinds of torture. Most of the country people are perishing of starvation if not by the sword. Not even priests escape the soldiers' hands; they are treated with inhuman cruelty,

tortured, and killed. Young women are raped, and even nuns are victims of their lust and fury. Churches are profaned, plundered, and destroyed; those left standing are, for the most part, abandoned by their pastors, so the people are deprived of the sacraments, Mass, and almost all other spiritual assistance. But what is horrible to think and even worse to say, the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Body of the Lord is treated very unworthily, even by Catholics. In order to get possession of the sacred vessels, they throw the Holy Eucharist on the ground and trample it underfoot. I dare not, and even cannot, say what is done by heretics, who have no faith in this mystery. It is a small thing to hear or read these things; they must be seen and ascertained with one's own eyes.

I am aware that Your Holiness may justly accuse me of great rashness because I, a private, nameless individual, dare to give such a forcible reminder of these things to the Head and Father of all Christians, who is so well and so fully informed about everything from every nation, especially Christian nations. Sed, quaeso, ne indigneris, Domine, si loquar.² Loquar ad Dominum meum, cum sim pulvis et cinis.³ Most Holy Father, there is no other remedy for all these evils of ours, except the help that the paternal care, love, and authority of Your Holiness can bring us. Nor am I unaware that you are deeply distressed by our misfortunes, that you have frequently tried to nip these civil wars in the bud, have sent pontifical letters for this purpose, and have instructed the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Apostolic Nuncio⁴ to intervene effectively in your name, which I know for a fact that he has done with apostolic zeal and, as far as depended on him, has worked admirably for Your Holiness and for God, although to no avail thus far. But, Most Holy Father, there are twelve hours in the day, and what has not succeeded one time may have better results if tried again.

What more can I say? The hand of the Lord is not shortened,⁵ and I firmly believe that God has reserved to the care and solicitude of the Shepherd of His universal Church the glory of obtaining for us in the end rest from our labors, happiness after so many misfortunes, and peace after war; of uniting the royal family, divided by so many dissensions; of bringing relief to the people crushed by such a long war; of bringing back to life the poor, prostrate and almost dead from starvation; of restoring devastated farmlands and afflicted provinces; of rebuilding ruined churches; of giving security to young women; of returning priests and shepherds of souls to their churches; and, in a word, of giving life back to everyone.

I humbly beg and implore Your Holiness to do this, by the tender mercy of Christ, whose Vicar on earth you are and whose person you represent. I ask you also to give me your blessing.

I am the most humble, most obedient, and most devoted servant of Your Holiness, and your son in Christ.

VINCENT DEPAUL, most unworthy Superior of the Congregation of the Mission

Paris, August 16, 1652

1540. - TO NICOLAS BONICHON, IN CAHORS

Paris, August 17, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

You did well to obey the Bishop of Sarlat¹ in what he asked you. I shall take the honor of thanking him for the honor he wants to confer on our Little Company and for the confidence he has placed in you, as I have thanked the Bishop of Cahors² for his recent favors. May God be the reward of both these holy Bishops and your inspiration in carrying out their holy intentions!

Please find out the intention of the Bishop of Cahors regarding the conferences for the next ordination, and do not use M. de Nans, unless he allows you to do so.

We have no Brother at the Bons-Enfants who has been married nor any who can give you any information on the Huguenot lady about whom you wrote me. If you let me know her name and where she lived in Paris, I will try to find out the rest.

Nothing new has happened to us that is worth writing. Once again I ask God to give you strength in your heavy labors and, through you, to bless your dear house.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Neither the Assistant, nor even the Superior of a particular house, has the right to bless vestments. I am the only member of the Company with that authority, but we will try to get it for all the Superiors.

Addressed: Monsieur Bonichon, Priest of the Mission, at the Cahors Seminary, in Cahors

1541. - TO THE CHEVALIER DE CHANDENIER¹

August 19, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

Since writing my letter to your brother, the Abbot,² which I sent to your mother,³ Mademoiselle⁴ de Chandénier, I have received the one M. Romanesque delivered to me from you. In reply I shall tell you, Monsieur, that apparently you allowed yourself to get carried away by anger. After you reflect in a more reasonable way on the importance of things, I think you will find it advisable to return without delay, on good terms and in agreement with one another, and to leave all your business to be settled here so definitely, with the advice of your friends, that no further difficulties will ever come between you again. In this way, the quarrel that arose will serve only to consolidate the affection which should exist among brothers, and to which,

Monsieur, you are exhorted by your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1542. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

Paris, August 30, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received no letters from you in this mail; they say that delivery has been stopped because of the plague.

I have nothing new to tell you; everything here is in the same state. We had hopes for peace but just now things look very doubtful. As our sick men get better, others fall ill and take their place. M. de la Fosse, who was assisting the sick poor in Étampes, was brought back home on a stretcher by his companion. He has a fever but is not in any danger, thank God. We expect another man, with a persistent fever, from Palaiseau this evening; he is a good Brother from the seminary. Messieurs Le Soudier and Berthe are also sick in Picardy, and, to crown our distress, I learned yesterday that M. Lambert in Poland is also ill with double tertian fever--I mean he was ill when he wrote on July 28. I am waiting impatiently for more letters to find out the course of his illness, but I also submit to God's ways. The King and Queen of Poland are also sick or, rather, they are getting better now.

It is said that ten thousand people a month have been dying in Paris for some time now. Please pray for all of us and for our upcoming ordination; we were not expecting to have because of the misfortunes of the times, but we are still being burdened with it.

This year we will lose at least twenty-six to thirty hogsheads¹ of wheat, even if we can save the little that has been left us, which is, however, in great danger because most of it is still in granaries in the country. May God be pleased to make use of us and of what we have for His glory!

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Blatiron, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, in Genoa

1543. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[Shortly after August 22, 1652]¹

I am sorry to have to inform you of another piece of news, since it will distress you deeply: God has called to Himself good Monsieur Gilles,² the Superior in Crécy. I cannot express to you either the extent of this loss or the sorrow it causes us; however, we shall still endeavor to submit to the good pleasure of God. I recommend the deceased and our sick men to your prayers.

1544. - TO NICOLAS BONICHON, IN CAHORS

Paris, the last day of August, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Today I received your letter of August 16, and I answered all your previous ones two weeks ago. I have nothing new to tell you except that I am enclosing the contract for the foundation of an anniversary Requiem Mass you had sent me to be ratified, which I have done.

I praise God for the strength He gives you to keep up with all your duties and that M. Treffort's health is improving. I have told him how happy this makes me, and I ask you to assure him that my joy is very great because his health is a treasure for the family and for the poor, and so is yours. So, I recommend that you take care of the health of both of you, and of good M. Water¹ as well. On the other hand, I am truly distressed about the illness of your sick men and ask O[ur] L[ord] to make them well soon.

Most of our patients are recovering, thank God, but others are falling sick and taking their place. M. de la Fosse, who was assisting the poor in Étampes, has returned home with a fever. Others have gone to take his place, just as he had replaced the late M. David, who died there doing that holy work, as I have told you. Every day we feel the loss of such a good worker. But, O Dieu! Monsieur, this next loss will undoubtedly touch you deeply! I am speaking of good M. Gilles, whom God took on August 22 in Crécy, where he was Superior. I am not going to tell you how grieved we are because I cannot; all of you knew him well enough to imagine it.

God is choosing to try us in another way as well, namely, by the illness of M. Lambert in Poland, of Messieurs Le Soudier² and Berthe in Picardy, and by the public misfortunes, which increase daily, causing us crushing losses.

I recommend to your prayers the deceased and the living members of the Company, the healthy and the sick, and all our needs in general. For our part, we continue faithfully to offer you to God, in whom I am, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Enclosed is a letter for the Bishop of Cahors. I will forward M. Treffort's letters.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Bonichon 1545. - TO FATHER CÉSAR DE SAINT-BONAVENTURE¹

Paris, the last day of August, 1652
Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I was greatly consoled to receive your letter, coming as it does from a good servant of God and an apostolic worker, laboring most successfully in a country in such great need of men like you. I am indeed anxious to see some of your Fathers to rejoice with them at your good results there, including the important one about which you wrote to me. I thank God for all the graces He bestows on you and, through you, on so many souls. I thank you, Reverend Father, for remembering me on this occasion.

Would to God that it were in my power to be of service to that person;² I would gladly do so. I shall, in fact, ask several good persons to try to find some employment or situation for him. However, I must tell you that it is greatly to be feared that none may be found right now that would be suitable for him because of the misfortunes of the times, when everyone is getting rid of personnel. People devoted to the assistance of their neighbor are using all their energy and alms to snatch the poor from the jaws of death and poor girls from occasions of sin.

This is the state to which this poor region, for a radius of ten leagues around Paris, has been reduced. Just some days ago we had twenty thousand refugees in that situation in this city, who had to be fed for a long time, plus a large number of sick persons we were assisting in the rural areas and are continuing to do so at great expense, which we can hardly meet. Those who have an income, cannot draw it; those who have land, have not harvested their crops this year, and nothing can be planted for next year. With this prospect of even greater poverty, charitable donations have fallen off considerably.

As for us, Reverend Father, we are in no position to exercise this charity toward that good young man in the way you would like; far from taking on anyone new, we are obliged to let some of our own people go. No one pays anything; some farms of ours have been pillaged, and we are truly at a loss about how to manage in these hard times, when we are receiving nothing from our modest revenue. I am distressed that this prevents us from contributing anything to the good work you have begun.

I ask Our Lord to give you the means of doing it better and to continue to give you the grace of doing an infinity of similar works for the extension of His glory. We shall see whether I can effectively comply with your wishes later on, for I desire to do so with all my heart. I entreat you, in the name of God, not to allow my present powerlessness to discourage you for the future, when opportunities will present themselves for me to use my influence for the service of God and yours. I am, in His love, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur César de Saint-Bonaventure, chaplain and preacher of the King's Ambassadors and Ministers in Holland, at The Hague.

1546. - BERTRAND DUCOURNAU TO SAINT VINCENT WITH THE SAINT'S REPLIES

[After 1645]¹

Q. - The Daughters of Charity of Forges² say that the Pastor wants to give them the chalice from the Church for safekeeping. Mademoiselle Le Gras is asking whether they should take or refuse it and, if they do take it, should some document be drawn up, stating that the Pastor wanted them to be responsible for it?

A. - I do not think these formalities are necessary.

Q. - Little boys who have misbehaved in school are being sent to them to be whipped, as though their teacher were incapable of doing so himself. They are asking what they should do.

A. - It is absolutely unsuitable for the Sisters to have boys in their school, much less to punish those who are sent to them.

1547. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

Please spare nothing either for medicine, food, or rest, and do whatever the doctor tells you. For our part, we will ask God to restore you to health and to grant you the grace of making good use of your illness.

1548. - TO LOUISE-MARIE DE GONZAGUE, QUEEN OF POLAND
September 1652

I thank God, Madame, for the grace He has granted His Church in restoring you and His Sacred Majesty, the King, to health. I pray it will last for years to come and that He will sanctify Your Majesties more and more and, through you, the people He has entrusted to you.

M. Lambert writes me in all his letters of the incomparable acts of kindness Your Majesties have done for him during his illness, and for all you are constantly doing for the Little Company and that, just recently, Madame, you have purchased a house for its establishment and assigned a substantial revenue for its maintenance.

Now, since these are truly royal acts of charity, similar hearts would be required to thank Your Majesty in proportion to the grandeur of the matter. Since I am a miserable earthworm, unworthy of conveying this thanks to you, I ask O[ur] L[ord] to be Himself your thanks and your reward. Should He see fit to draw some glory from the services of your Missionaries, I ask Him to attribute the merit to Your Majesty. From what I hear, Madame, you acquire new merits daily by the unprecedented good you do everywhere and for all sorts of persons. In this way you show everyone the great goodness of God through your own, and the infinite gratitude Poland owes Him for having given it one of the best Queens in the world.

May His Divine Goodness be pleased to continue to bestow His choicest blessings on the sacred persons of the King and Your Majesty and on all your ways of acting! These are the prayers and wishes of all good people here, especially the Ladies of Charity, who are very faithful in that. I, too, shall be faithful all my life in asking God for the grace to bear more worthily than I do, Madame, the title of your most humble, obedient, and grateful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1549. - TO THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA
September 5, 1652

Madame,

The Bishop of Montauban, formerly Bishop of Utica,¹ asked me to do myself the honor of writing to Your Majesty

regarding a man named Labadie,² who holds many unorthodox opinions about our holy religion. He has done a great deal of harm in Picardy and in the Bazas diocese, where the Bishop³ brought him and his supporters to court. In the end, to escape the law, he became a Huguenot in Montauban, where he is scheming to become a minister. The Bishop fears he may do more damage to the Church in that capacity than as a private individual and that Your Majesty should be informed of this.

That is what I am doing, Madame, so that, if Your Majesty approves, she may be pleased to tell Monsieur de Moucaut, deputy of this religion,⁴ that she does not want this man to be made a minister. May she be pleased also to write or have someone write to M. de Saint-Luc that it is in the King's interest that this man not enter the ministry because he is seditious, a blunderer, and the author of new heresies; that Your Majesty wants him [M. de Saint-Luc] to discuss this with some of the leading members of the synod and whoever is to represent the King there on the twenty-fourth of this month; and that it is not that the King wants to hinder the liberty granted them to practice their religion and to ordain ministers, but simply to give orders that this troublemaker not cause any difficulties between the religion and the State, whose interests are closely allied to those of religion.⁵

This then, Madame, is the most humble representation which the Bishop of Montauban wanted me to make to Your Majesty. I do so, Madame, with all possible humility, and I renew here the offer of my perpetual obedience to Your Majesty. I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Madame, your most humble and very obedient servant and subject.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1550. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[Around 1652]¹

When mention is made of permissions obtained from the Sister Assistant, is it not necessary always to add: "in the absence of the Directress?"² Is the term "Directress" appropriate? For the reading required monthly, would it not be better to have it weekly? It is really essential that the Sisters in the parishes should not visit one another except in case of illness. Should an article be drawn up on this?

These are my observations, Most Honored Father, but, in the name of God, disregard my notes and remarks and do what you think God is asking of us. Add to that the maxims and instructions that might encourage us and keep us attached and exact to the observance of all these points of our Rules. It seems to me that, being as we are, we do not pay sufficient attention to our obligations, since we do not consider them as such.

Please give your blessing to all your poor Daughters, and ask God for the mercy your servant needs to be truly, Most Honored Father, your poor daughter and very grateful servant.

L. DE M.

1551. - TO CARDINAL MAZARIN

September 11, 1652

Monseigneur,

I venture to write to Your Eminence to entreat you to allow me to tell you that I now see the city of Paris returned to its former state and clamoring for the King and Queen. There is no one anywhere who does not say the same thing to me.¹ Even the Ladies of Charity, who are among the most prominent citizens in Paris, tell me that, if Their Majesties approach the city, a whole regiment of Ladies will go out to give them a triumphant welcome.² Therefore, Monseigneur, I think Your Eminence would be acting in a manner worthy of your goodness to advise the King and Queen to return and take possession of their city and of the hearts of the people of Paris. But because there are many things to be said against this, here are what I consider the greatest objections, and my response to them. I most humbly entreat Your Eminence to read and reflect on them.

The first objection is that, although there are many good persons in Paris and a number of fine citizens who feel the way I mentioned, there are still many who have the opposite opinion and others who are somewhere in between. My reply to this, Monseigneur, is that I think there are very few who have the opposite opinion--at least I know of none--and that those who are indifferent, if there are any, will be carried along by the number and strength of those who are very much in favor of it. This includes most of Paris, except perhaps for those who might fear punishment, unless they were reassured by an amnesty. Second, that there is reason to fear that the presence of the leaders of the opposition may repeat another day of the Palace³ and of the Hôtel de Ville.⁴ My reply is that one of them⁵ will be delighted at this opportunity to be restored to favor with the King, and the other,⁶ seeing Paris obedient to the King once again, will submit. There should be no doubt about that; I know it on good authority.

Third, some persons may perhaps tell Your Eminence that Paris should be punished to teach it a lesson. I think, Monseigneur, that it is advisable for Your Eminence to remember the conduct of the Kings under whom Paris revolted. You will find that they proceeded cautiously and that when Charles VI⁷ punished a large number of rebels, disarmed the city, and took away its chains, he only poured oil on the fire and inflamed the rest of the people. The result was that for sixteen years they continued the insurrection, opposed the King more than ever, banding together for that purpose with all the enemies of the State,⁸ and in the end neither Henry III⁹ nor the King himself¹⁰ has been any better off for having blocked them.

If it is said that Your Eminence will make peace with Spain and will come in triumph to fall upon Paris to teach it a lesson, I reply, Monseigneur, that far from becoming better established with the people in the kingdom by making peace with Spain, you will, on the contrary, be hated more than ever, if you hand over to Spain all its possessions we now hold, as people say Your Eminence wishes to do.

In that case, Your Eminence should fear, and rightly so, what happened to Charles III,¹¹ Regent of the kingdom and crowned King apparent. He abandoned Normandy and some towns in Flanders to the English, on condition that they be dependent on the sovereign power of the crown. This stirred up the people so strongly against him that an extraordinary meeting of the Estates was held to discuss the matter. This poor Prince was forced to flee incognito and died miserably in a village where he was in hiding.¹²

If it is thought that before Their Majesties return to this city, it is better to deal with Spain and the Princes,¹³ allow me to tell you, Monseigneur, that in that case Paris will be included in the articles of peace and will be indebted for its amnesty to Spain and those Princes and not to the King, and will be so grateful that it will side with them at the first opportunity.

Some persons might tell Your Eminence that your private interests demand that the King should not pardon the people and should not return to Paris without you, but rather that

affairs should be embroiled and the war kept up to prove that it is not Your Eminence who is whipping up the storm but those evil-minded persons who refuse to submit to the will of their Prince. My reply, Monseigneur, is that it does not really matter whether Your Eminence return before or after the King, provided you do return. Once the King is reestablished in Paris, His Majesty can send for Your Eminence whenever he wishes; I know that for a fact. Furthermore, if Your Eminence is concerned mainly with the welfare of the King, the Queen, and the State, and you do what you can to reunite the royal house and to return Paris to obedience to the King, this will certainly win people back, Monseigneur, and you will soon be recalled in a proper manner, as I said. But, as long as the people are in a state of rebellion, it is greatly to be feared that peace will never be made on that condition. Public folly comes into play at that point, and experience shows that those stricken with this disorder are never cured by the same causes by which the wheels of their minds have been warped.

If it is true, as people say, that Your Eminence has given orders that the King should not listen to the Princes, nor give them passes to go to see Their Majesties, nor that any deputation or representation be heard, and to that end Your Eminence has surrounded the King and Queen with strangers--your servants--who block access on all sides to prevent people from approaching Their Majesties, then it is greatly to be feared, Monseigneur, that, if this continues, the opportunity may be lost and the hatred of the people may turn into rage. On the contrary, if Your Eminence advises the King to come and receive the acclamations of the people, he will win the hearts of all those in the kingdom who are well aware of your influence with the King and Queen, and everyone will be indebted to Your Eminence for this favor.¹⁴

This, then, is what I take the liberty to put before you, Monseigneur, confident that you will not take it amiss, especially when you realize that I have told no one at all, except one of Your Eminence's servants, that I am writing to you. In addition, I have no contact with my former friends who have views contrary to the will of the King,¹⁵ have not shown this letter to anyone whomsoever, and will live and die in the special obedience I owe to Your Eminence, which O[ur] L[ord] has given me.¹⁶ I assure you of this, Monseigneur, and am forever your most humble, obedient, and faithful servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1552. - TO LOUIS DE CHANDENIER

September 15, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The Pastor of Saint-Nicolas¹ has just sent me word that M. Delêtre, a friend and servant of your family and a parishioner of his, spoke to him about arranging a reconciliation in the affair with your brother, the Chevalier.² He then spoke with Madame and Mademoiselle de Chandénier,³ who had gone to see him with Madame de Nesmond.⁴ The outcome of their conversation was that it would be advisable for the Abbot of l'Aumône⁵ and you, Monsieur, to agree with the Chevalier to settle this dispute through arbitrators, whom you and he will choose, after you come back here, and to refer to them all the disagreements you have among you. To put this promise into execution, you will decide from there on a person of high position in this city, to whom the Chevalier and you will write, asking him to vouch for the word you, he, and your brother will give one another, and that I will be asked to write to you about it.

That, Monsieur, is what I now do with all possible humility and affection. I beg you to accept it, Monsieur, in order to put an end to this affair.

1553. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

September 20, 1652

I have asked you, and I ask you once again, not to be in any hurry with those good priests of Orvieto, and not to commit yourself in any way, if they speak of a union. In the event that they do, they should be most earnest in their request and very well disposed to adapt themselves to our little Institute and customs. Let me know exactly what their intentions are and what happens in all this. Perhaps they only want to procure our establishment in that diocese and then join the Company, as if there were no Community keeping them together.

You say you do not know how to settle the question of our vows with them. Make no pretense, Monsieur, but tell them clearly that we take simple vows, so that if they do not want to take them, they should not expect to join us.¹

Like you, I realize that it is not good to make so many small establishments, and, with the help of God's grace, I intend to be attentive to this. However, it is also very difficult to make larger ones in the beginning of a Company like ours. Our situation is not like that of the Mendicants. All they have to do is pitch their tent and they are established. But we, who do not take anything from the poor, need revenue, and since we need a fair amount of it, we do not get it all at once, nor do we always get it in the towns to make establishments only there.

If we had not accepted Notre-Dame de Lorm, which is in the country, perhaps the opportunity to make an establishment in the Montauban diocese might never have presented itself. Perhaps also, with time, God will make use of this means to call us to the town.² So we do what we can first, and gradually Providence arranges things for the better.

1554. - TO GERARD BRIN, IN DAX

Paris, September 22, 1652

Monsieur,

I received two of your letters, dated August 30 and September 9. I am very sorry to hear about your illness, and I ask Our Lord to heal you. For your part, do all you can to get well, sparing neither time nor remedies. See that you are well taken care of and purged. The people where you are usually drink cider; perhaps it would be better for you than wine because in Ireland you drink only beer.

Since you are constantly traveling--sometimes to Saint-Pandelon,¹ sometimes to Pouy, sometimes to Bayonne, and other times elsewhere--we cannot say that the air in Dax is bad for you. Even if it were, because it does not circulate, it could do you no harm with all your moving about. Then, too, are not people everywhere sick? There are very few persons here who have not been ill this year. We still have several, and our infirmarians have had so much work that they, too, have succumbed and are ill themselves.

As for your illness, I hope it will go away with a little care. I ask God for this with all my heart. Perhaps you are already over it; in that case, this letter may reach you in Pouy or Hinx,² since you sent me word that you would be able to open the mission there at the end of the month. When I hear that it is finished, I shall be very glad. There is no need for the Bishop³ to be concerned about expenses, since you have enough to cover them. After the mission you will be welcomed by M.Bajoue⁴ as if you were a man sent from heaven. He really needs you, and awaits you eagerly and patiently, as he told me in his last letter. You may take a hundred livres with you and leave the rest with M.de Saint-Martin.⁵

I have not heard that the plague is anywhere near Agen or Montauban. There may be the usual illnesses there, as everywhere else.

Thank you for wanting to come and see me. I would be consoled to see you, too--more than I can tell you--but, until God makes provision for that, let us see one another in Him

and conform ourselves to His Will, which is to be preferred to any other good. What you will be doing in the places where He calls you will benefit you more than the good example you might find here.

To get here right now from anywhere is very difficult. You think, however, that by boarding a ship in Bayonne and disembarking at Nantes or La Rochelle you could reach Paris with no danger. This is not the case; you would be in the same difficulty in those towns as you are now. Look at M. Barry, who was in Nantes; I had written to him to come here, but he found the roads so impassable that, even though he was just as anxious as you to get here, he was, nevertheless, obliged to stop at Richelieu, where he still is.

I approve the request you made to M. de Burgo to send us the balance of the boarding fees for Thomas and Peter Butler.⁶ We shall be much obliged to him for going to that trouble. As for the vestments and furnishings you may have left there, if he sends them to us, fine, but do not put any pressure on him to do so. How do we know whether or not God will restore peace and religion to Ireland, and whether or not we will still have to send men there? I also do not want you to revoke the order you have already given him on this matter.

M. du Chesne⁷ has sent someone to get Peter Butler from the Collège des Bons-Enfants. I have to tell him that his father wants him to go home and to get a written declaration from him of how long we have boarded him and the amount to which these fees come. When this is done, I shall let you know, and he will remain at the Bons-Enfants because our minor seminary⁸ has been pillaged and is in danger of being so again, so we have left the place and sent the students home.

M. Almérás was Superior there and is now Director of the Internal Seminary. M. Portail is still First Assistant and M. Grimal is Second Assistant. M. du Chesne was Superior at the Bons-Enfants, but in two or three days he is going to leave to make some visitations. He will begin with Le Mans, if he can get there with the help of an escort. We shall put someone in his place in the meantime. M. Admirault⁹ will be in charge of the collège, where he is still residing. As for good M. Gilles, God took him to Himself two months ago in Crécy, where he was Superior; he is a great loss to us. It has only been a week since we lost a coadjutor Brother named Jean Geneset.¹⁰

I conclude with a renewal of the offer of my obedience, which I ask you to present to His Excellency in gratitude for his incomparable acts of kindness in your regard. I am, in Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant....

M. du [Chesne] has just told me that the [boarding fees] of those two gentlemen will be set, [as]¹¹ in the beginning, at two hundred fifty livres, even though others are paying three hundred livres; in this way, things will not go as high as we thought. If I can, I will write to M. de Saint-Martin and ask him to keep that money for us; if not, you will ask him and get a receipt from him for that amount. Please greet him and the Dean of the Cathedral of Bordeaux¹² for me, and assure them both of my perpetual obedience.

1555. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

September 25, 1652

Thank you for informing me about M.... I am quite upset about his behavior because it will have very bad effects. He acted as he did through zealous enthusiasm, thinking that it was a means of procuring some relief for the poor. I have written him my humble thoughts about it. It is true that M... is basically very good at heart, even though exteriorly he may be too agitated and undisciplined. We have to bear with some of this and urge him to correct the rest by timely admonitions given gently and cordially in a spirit of charity.

We must pay no attention to the complaints people make of us when it is a question of some good custom in the Company, such as not going to eat in the homes of persons outside the Company. M.de Santeuil is not one to take offense at your not going to eat at his house, if you explain why: that our customs forbid it, on the one hand, and, on the other, the consequences of the contrary if we disregard this.

As for being more open with the leading citizens, I see no disadvantage in that for important parish business pertaining to its welfare and your pastoral duties, provided you do not pass from these external affairs to the internal affairs of the house or worldly news. No, it would not be a good idea for you to ask the Governor's advice on what to say in your homilies, whether or not they concern controversial points. I am surprised that you even had that thought.

You have proposed to yourself, when you are in that person's¹ house, to tell him privately about anything improper he may say. I think, Monsieur, that you should not do so because, using his good intentions as an excuse, he might take your admonition the wrong way. Also, he is undoubtedly wiser than we, such as we are.

You did the right thing in establishing good relations with the Jesuits in Charleville, but saying that you did so in order that they might support us when people speak ill of us to them is a very base motive and a far cry from the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to which we should consider God alone in our actions and make everything serve the love we owe Him. You, on the contrary, with your own reputation in view, want to use the charity that binds you to these Fathers to preserve that reputation. This is vanity, if it is not founded on virtue, and if it is established on such a basis, what have you to fear?

You wrote me something else which smacks no less of human respect, namely, that when you write and tell me something good about certain persons, I should see that their friends hear about it so they can tell them. Mon Dieu! Monsieur, of what are you thinking?

Where is the simplicity of a Missionary, who should go straight to God? If you do not see any good in these persons, then say nothing, but if you do see some, speak about it to honor God in them because all good proceeds from Him.

Our Lord reproved a man who called Him good, because he did not do so with the right intention.² With what greater reason would He reprove you, if you praise men out of flattery, in order to ingratiate yourself with them or for some other ignoble purpose; still more, if this purpose should have some other good motive, such as yours! I know you are not trying to gain the esteem and affection of anyone except to advance the glory of God and the welfare of the Company; remember, however, that duplicity is displeasing to God and that, to be truly simple, we must have only Him in view.

You also mention that one of these Jesuits preached in your church on the feast of its holy patron, and you want to know if, in similar circumstances, you should return the compliment, in the event that they desire this. No, Monsieur, please excuse yourself, saying that our way of preaching is geared to poor country people, and we have neither the grace nor the practice of preaching in towns.

1556. - LOUISE-MARIE DE GONZAGUE, QUEEN OF POLAND, TO SAINT VINCENT

September, 1652

Monsieur Vincent,

I am most grateful to you for all your marks of affection and joy regarding My Lord the King's health and my own; I thank you for this.

When good M.Lambert saw how the Polish people feared the plague, he wanted to go to Warsaw to organize better relief efforts for the poor than what already existed there. I gave orders for him to be housed in the château, in the King's own room. I have news of

him every day, and I recommend to him daily not to expose himself to danger. He has whatever he needs to come back to me as soon as he has everything organized, and I told him to hurry in order to return to us as soon as possible. Without this disease, which has upset all our plans, we would have completed their establishment in Warsaw.

Your Daughters of Charity arrived two days ago, which pleased me immensely. They seem to be very fine Sisters.

1557. - TO PHILIPPE VAGEOT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINTES

Paris, October 2, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very sorry to hear you are ill, but since this is the good pleasure of God, we must submit to it and await from His Goodness the recovery of your previous state of health.

You can imagine how heartily I ask this of Him, since, after the mercy of God, the salvation of many depends on it. The polluted air, your close contact with the sick, and your heavy labors have all contributed to overwhelm you. In the name of God, do whatever you can to get well again. I ask the same of God for M.Rivet, and make the same recommendation to him.

Yes, Monsieur, we shall send you the relief you request as soon as possible, with the help of God. This will not be easy because the misfortunes of the times are carrying off all our workers, keeping us very busy here, and because we have a large number of sick men. For the past two or three months we have had sixteen to twenty of them, and even more. As soon as some are on their feet, others fall ill, and these illnesses bring them to death's door. We shall, nevertheless, do our utmost to give you the means of continuing your missions and your seminary.

Just a short time ago, God also took from us good M.Gilles (O Monsieur, what a loss!) and also one of the most virtuous coadjutor Brothers in the Company, named Jean Geneset. I recommend their souls to your prayers.

We had seven or eight men in Étampes, assisting the poor inhabitants of the town and the surrounding area, and all of them have fallen ill because the air there is so bad.¹ I think they are now in the château² of one of our good friends,³ who wanted to do this act of hospitality. We sent a priest⁴ and a seminarian⁵ there to take care of them, and four others to Étampes to replace them. We still have seven or eight men scattered around that diocese, seeking out and serving parishes abandoned by their pastors and priests, especially the sick poor who have no one to console them, administer the last sacraments, and bury them when they die. One of these men is M.Watebled,⁶ who is doing immense good near the army.

I must conclude after I tell you that M.du Chesne has left to make visitations. He is going to Brittany and will stop at your house on his way back, I hope. M.Cornuel⁷ has taken his place at the Bons-Enfants, and M.Alméras is now Seminary Director here.

Enclosed is my reply to M.Maurisse;⁸ I left it open so you could read it, but please seal it before you deliver it.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Vageot

1558. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, October 2, 1652

Monsieur,

You can be sure that any suggestion coming from you is pleasing to me. I am grateful for the one you made about the Bishop of Sarlat,¹ and I thank you most humbly for it. I would

gladly give my own blood to see it put into effect. I sent him the letters I wrote to the Queen, the Cardinal,² and Father Paulin.³ To this end, I ask your help in this affair--at least your good advice, if you can do nothing else right now.

I really think you are losing nothing personally in being freed of the burden you had,⁴ but this is a great loss for the Church, so it would be most desirable if you were still in that position.

I want to thank you also for informing me of what is going on. It is very important for me to know this in the times in which we are living, and I benefit from it personally. I would be glad if that good man who is bothering you knew that I have never been in better health than I am now nor had more strength and desire to do my duty, so that he might direct his ambitions elsewhere.

If we have peace, they will probably call for a meeting of the Estates.⁵ If you hear about this, please let me know and whether you think I should go. Unless it is necessary for the service of God, His Church, and the King, I do not think I should leave my diocese. In the meantime, please believe that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1559. - TO LOUIS THIBAULT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINT-MÉEN

Paris, October 8, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am sending you a letter which your father wrote you. You will note that he has changed the foundation of three catechisms to three missions to be given by us every six years in each parish, and he has asked me to accept that. I have sent him word, however, that we cannot do so because we made the decision not to take on such foundations and because that would oblige us to maintain men expressly for that purpose. Lastly, we would have commitments in so many places that we could not give missions elsewhere nor be available for more urgent needs. That is why, as I said, we are determined not to take on such foundations. I am annoyed that you did not know this because you might not have advised your father to set up one. Nevertheless, I thank you for the benefit you wanted to procure for the Company in this, and I thank your father for his good will.

M. du Chesne is in Le Mans now and will soon be leaving there to go and see you. Please notify those men who want to enter the Company because I would be glad for him to see them, if they are in Saint-Méen or somewhere along his way. If not, they will have to go to Richelieu when he can be there, because we are going to open a second [internal] seminary there for candidates for the Company. Other postulants will meet him there at that time.

I wrote to the Bishop of Saint-Malo¹ at court, as you had wished. A few days after that, I had the honor of seeing him in Paris, but he did not want to talk business then. He told me he wanted to come to our house to discuss matters. However, the difficulty raised at the gates about allowing persons of his position to leave has prevented him from so doing up to the present.

We still have more than twenty sick and convalescent men here. These illnesses bring people to death's door, and recovery is very slow and difficult. Besides that, almost all those who were working in Étampes fell sick there. We had to send three or four replacements for them and two men to have them taken to a nearby castle and look after them. In addition, we have six or seven other workers scattered here and there in that diocese, seeking out parishes without priests to prepare the sick poor in them for death or to live a good life.

Because of all this we are really short of workers right now. We must wait until God restores strength to those who are getting over their illnesses, or who are still sick. We are still being led to hope for peace, but it has not yet come.

So much for our little news. I am waiting to hear from you, having received no news since I sent you the report on Corsica.

I send my warmest greetings to your community and am, more than I can say, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Thibault

1560. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[Between May 1652 and May 1654]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

The urgent need of evangelical workers for the people of the Hebrides and the Scottish Highlands, as Your Eminences have learned from the short report of Dermot Duiguin, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, who is working with your authorization at the conversion of these people, abandoned for so many years, has prompted Vincent Depaul, Superior General of the same Congregation, to propose that Your Eminences send there the additional assistance of three workers of his Congregation. These are: Gerard Brin, an Irishman; Thomas Lumsden, a Scottish theologian and a former lecturer in philosophy; and John Ennery, an Irishman, formerly a lecturer in theology. Their competence gives reason to hope that, with the help of God, an abundant harvest may be gathered, if Your Eminences deign to accede to and foster his decision by declaring the three above-mentioned men Apostolic Missionaries for those regions.² He will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Written on the back: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide for Vincent Depaul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1561. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN

October 15, 1652

If I told you that all possible means except sin may be used to attain a good end, I should have added, "reasonable and suitable" means, in line with the rule: *Omnia mihi licent, sed non omnia expediunt*.¹ It is indeed permitted to use all licit means to do the good God asks of you, but it is not good to cultivate the friendship of persons or Communities in order to win them over to defend our reputation. That end is not directed to God and, consequently, is vain. If you say that a good reputation serves to benefit the neighbor more, I admit that. However, since it should be based on a good life, it is, therefore, preserved by the practice of virtue and not by human intrigue.

Let us do our duty well; let us go straight to God; let us work to become very humble, very patient, very mortified, and very charitable. That is the only way to be highly esteemed, but we lose that esteem when we seek it in some other way. Did Our Lord seek His own fame when He was living on earth? Did He not forbid people to speak of the miracles He was performing?² Let us entrust our reputation to Him, Monsieur, to do with it as He sees fit. To Him alone glory is due; let us never do anything that does not give glory to Him and, to that end, let us trample underfoot human respect and self-interest.

1562. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, October 17, 1652

Monsieur,

In the letter M. Treffort is writing you, on my orders, you will learn of the state of the town of Cahors, which has the plague at its gates; it is also thought to be in one of the

faubourgs. Please notify us by the next mail what you want to be done about the seminary and the service of Saint-Barthélemy parish,¹ about which I have instructed M.Treffort to write to you. The slightest hint of a minor expense stops him short. There are four fine rooms in the house given by the late Archdeacon, about one league away from Cahors; some of the seminarians closest to ordination could be accomodated there.² When I mentioned this to M.Treffort, he told me that furnishing it would be an expense. In two or three days I will go to Cahors for a meeting with the pastors to learn their dispositions. I will also see the monks to find out whether they would be willing to endanger themselves, and what help I can expect from them. I have to tell you my dilemma because I want to ask your wise advice and assistance. I decided to take the risk and to give my life willingly for the service of my people, if God wills to punish them by this calamity, which is thought to be inevitable. You can see my difficulty in doing this before having resolved the problem of a Coadjutor. I do not think this is God's Will; that is what obliges me to beg you to help me all you can to get this matter settled promptly. To save time, it would be advisable for the brother of the Bishop of Sarlat to have M.Camus³ draw up the act whereby I shall give my consent to the King's appointment of the said Bishop⁴ as my Coadjutor and future successor, with the proviso that he act in my diocese only with my consent, and he should send this official record to me. Please inform him of this, without mentioning to him or to any other person what else is contained in the document.

As for Chancelade, for a long time now I have only been waiting to have the way cleared for the election of an abbot. However, since it is necessary for a person of rank to be present for this act in order for it to be done properly, I said to ask the Bishop of Sarlat to go, and I am sure he will do so.

My greatest concern is that I foresee quite plainly that this poor town will be deserted and that everyone, with very few exceptions, is preparing to leave, with the result that only those who do not have to seek refuge and food elsewhere will be left. That being the case, it is inevitable that the enemies of the State will take possession of it. In speaking of that, the First Consul told me: "I see clearly that I am going to die without serving the town and the people." I foresee the same thing for myself, if God does not give us peace soon, for even though there were question only of myself, I think that, if people knew I was in this town and that it was abandoned, they would come and capture me and seize my châteaux, which would be the ruination of peace.

I tell you all this in my spirit of simplicity, as if I were speaking to God Himself, who is giving me a very passionate desire to die in the service of my people. I am, however, asking your advice about the following: in the event that we do not have peace, and objections are raised about giving me the Bishop of Sarlat as Coadjutor, and they agree to naming him only if I resign, I would like to know if it is more important for me to resign or to remain in office. I have been thinking of asking you about this for a long time. It is true that, in this time of plague, I felt I should not do it without consulting the Pope because of its importance and because this is unusual for a Bishop who is in good health and not too old. Please advise me and tell me what [you] think is best for me to do and most pleasing to God, which is the only thing to which I aspire in this world.

I ask you also for the assistance of your prayers for me and our poor town, which is suffering so much.

You may have your secretary write your reply, asking him to keep it confidential.

After I had written and closed this letter, M.Bonichon arrived, bringing me a letter from my doctor, who informed me that the plague is now in one of the faubourgs of the town

and that the seminarians should be sent away. We shall do so tomorrow morning; they would be leaving in any case. May God take pity on these poor people, who are terrified! Please send me word of what you know about the peace. In the meantime, I shall remain, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1563. - TO THOMAS BERTHE, IN LAON

Paris, October 19, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I am still worried about the state of your health, while hoping that you have completely recovered, if this is the good pleasure of God. Nevertheless, I ask you not to be in too great a hurry to be doing something but, rather, take great care to get better.

I have not yet received your letter, which I should have had yesterday. They say that the regular mail has not arrived; I sent someone for it four times. When you feel strong enough to come here, you may do so. The assembly¹ will continue to assist poor pastors and will give monthly the one hundred écus it has been giving up to now. Arrange for someone there--either M.de Séraucourt² or some other charitable and disinterested person--to receive the money and to distribute it exactly.

Sedan will also be given the usual amount. Give instructions for M.Coglée to receive it, as always. I am not sure if it is one hundred francs a month; please let me know. All the barley could then be used for the sick poor.

I embrace you cordially and am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Berthe, Priest of the Mission, at the home of Monsieur Marqueth, former Procurator of the King, in Laon

1564. - TO CARDINAL ANTONIO BARBERINI

FROM THE FRENCH TEXT

October 25, 1652

Monseigneur,

On September 27 I received, with all the respect and reverence I owe to Your Eminence and to the Most Eminent Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Regulars, the letter Your Eminence was pleased to do me the honor of writing to me pridie idus martii¹ of this same year. In this letter Your Eminence did me the honor of ordering me to enquire confidentially about the contents of the petition presented to Our Most Holy Father the Pope² on behalf of the Franciscan Abbess³ of Longchamp Monastery in the Paris diocese. In it she represents to His Holiness that there have been major disorders in the monastery for several years now,⁴ causing public scandal, through the fault of its Superiors, Fathers of the French Province of the same Order of Saint Francis.

Instead of taking steps to remedy them, they have fostered them by their own conduct and bad example, living in such dissension themselves that up to now they have taken one another to court before most of the tribunals presided over by lay judges. The result is that, for a long time now, there has been no recognized Provincial to settle these disputes in that province. The last one was even removed about two years ago from the office of Provincial by apostolic authority.

Consequently, this monastery, a very old royal foundation with considerable revenue, is today burdened with several heavy debts. For this reason, the Abbess, who wants to remedy these disorders and public scandals, has had recourse to His Holiness. She most humbly entreats him to exempt the monastery and even all its nuns from the jurisdiction

and authority of the said Friars Minor of Saint Francis and to place them in future under the Ordinary, as was formerly the case when this monastery was founded. This is the substance of the said petition sent to me by Your Eminence.

Now, Monseigneur, when I received this order with which Your Eminence has honored me, I went to see several very upright, pious persons who lead exemplary lives, including some Doctors of the Sorbonne and other priests, monks, and laymen. These persons are acquainted with the monastery and what goes on there. I also saw some nuns belonging to the house, from whom I received in confidence information about the contents of the petition. All, without exception, told me that all the clauses of the petition were true, except perhaps the one stating that this monastery was formerly under the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, of which they were unaware. Two of them, however, think that this is probably true, using as their authority an author of their Order, whose words are as follows... by which we see that, since this monastery was founded by Blessed Marguerite, sister of Saint Louis, almost contemporary with the birth of the Order of Saint Francis, to whose Superiors apparently all the monasteries of nuns of the same Order were not as yet subject....⁵

The following details are what I have learned about this house, Monseigneur, in addition to what is contained in the above-mentioned petition:

It has been in a state of disorder for two hundred years and, by a decree issued in the year 1560 by the Parlement of Paris, which had been informed of the existing disorders, it was ordained, by request of the Attorney General of the Parlement, that the Bishop of Paris should strive to reform the said monastery.

The parlors of the monastery are always open to all kinds of persons, even many young men who are not relatives. Most of the nuns go there alone, without permission, often against the wishes of the Abbess. It has also been noted that in these parlors there are little windows entirely contrary to religious enclosure; this has very grave consequences. The monks who govern this monastery, particularly the confessors, instead of taking measures to remedy the disorder, promote it by going to the parlors themselves to talk with the nuns, sometimes at night and at unsuitable times.

One night a monk of the Order was found in the nuns' enclosure, where he had been let in by a young nun.

There have also been nuns who have brought young men into the same enclosure of the nuns at night.

Once, the Abbess forbade a nun to speak to or have any more contact with a young man from a prominent family, who used to come and visit her quite often, even though he was not a relative. This contact was dangerous and was causing great scandal. However, the Father Provincial allowed her to keep up the contact, as the nun declared in the presence of all the other nuns and the Provincial himself. Because of this, rumor had it that the young man had given him a large sum of money for this.

The confessors of this monastery, who are monks of the same Order, are too familiar and have particular attachments to some of the lay Sisters, making the latter proud and unbearable. These monks have fomented division in the abbey and, instead of remedying the disorders, have only helped to augment them by opening their confessionals several times to laymen to use for speaking secretly to certain nuns, against the will of the Abbess and in spite of her express prohibition.

When the nuns sometimes ask to go to confession to others, these confessors are unwilling to give them permission, and take offense at this.

The novices and young professed are very poorly formed, and before receiving the habit and making their profession, they are not examined at all, as the holy Council of Trent ordains.

Several are very immodest in the way they dress, wearing gloves to the parlor, combs with rosettes of ribbons, or scarlet streamers, and gold watches. When they are reproved for this by the Abbess, they say that the Father Provincial has given them permission.

It is also a fact that, since the Community of these nuns has at present taken refuge in this city of Paris, several of them are living very scandalous lives, spending the day enclosed in rooms alone with men in the homes of the citizens, where they go to visit. When the Abbess was warned of the scandalous conduct of these nuns by a very pious priest, she replied that there was nothing she could do, and she asked him to speak to the nuns himself. He did so and told me that they answered him as licentiously as fallen women would have done, which greatly scandalized him.

Since this is the situation, as I believe it is, because of the uprightness, piety, and virtue of the persons who gave me information on the state of this monastery and who are very well acquainted with it, and because of my own knowledge about it, I think His Holiness would do a work worthy of his pastoral office, and so would you, Monseigneur, and our Most Eminent Fathers of the Sacred Congregation of Regulars, were you to inform him that he would be doing a work most agreeable to God, most efficacious for the correction of the disorders of the monastery and the introduction of good order there, if you were to remove the monastery from the jurisdiction of the monks of the Order of Saint Francis and place it and the nuns under that of the local Ordinary. This should be done on condition that he appoint, for three years only, with a possibility of renewal, a Visitor, regular or secular but not a member of the said Order. He should be learned, upright, and pious, and have a very good reputation, with wide experience in the direction of nuns. He will give him authority to direct, visit, and discipline the monastery, and to appoint and dismiss confessors; in a word, to act in this situation as the Ordinary would do, were he present, except for recourse to the Ordinary in case of complaint.

At the end of three or six years, when order has been established in the house, the nuns will be permitted to elect every three years three persons having the above-mentioned qualifications and to present them to the Ordinary, who will choose one of them as Visitor of the monastery, conferring on him the same authority.

That, Monseigneur, is the opinion of a poor priest, most unworthy of such a commission. He most humbly entreats you, Monseigneur, prostrate in spirit at the feet of Your Eminence, to grant him your blessing, as to one who is, in the love of Our Lord....

FROM THE LATIN TEXT

Most Eminent Prince,

I received on September 29, with all respect for Your Eminence and for the Eminent Fathers and Lords of the Sacred Congregation for Regulars, the letter Your Eminence deigned to address to me on March 14, and by which Your Eminence ordered me to inquire secretly and prudently into the contents of the petition presented to His Holiness the Pope by the Abbess and the nuns of the Longchamp Monastery, of the Order of Saint Francis, in the Paris diocese. This petition indicated that regular discipline in that monastery had been lax for many years and a scandal to the public, through the fault of the Superiors of the monastery, Friars Minor of the Province of France of the same Order, who not only have neglected to apply remedies but, by their government and bad example, foster the disorders themselves. Furthermore, the Friars live in such dissension and disagreement that they file suits against one another with most of the lay judges, and there is no appointed Provincial to settle these differences. The last of these Provincials was

deposed by apostolic authority about two years ago, and the ancient monastery, erected by...,⁶ sister of Saint Louis the King, and endowed with a large property and income, is today burdened with numerous heavy debts. Since the Abbess is seeking some remedy for the ruined discipline and property of the monastery, and for the public scandal, she has had recourse to the Supreme Pontiff, urging His Holiness to free this monastery and the nuns from all jurisdiction and authority of the Friars Minor of the Order of Saint Francis, and henceforth, as formerly when the foundation of the monastery was made, subject them once again to the Ordinary. This is the substance of the petition which Your Eminence deigned to send me.

Now, in order to obey the mandate of Your Eminence as best I can, I immediately contacted many men known for their uprightness, learning, and wisdom, some Doctors of the Sorbonne, and several others of both the secular and regular clergy, and [pious and experienced laymen, who are well acquainted with the discipline and property of the monastery]⁷ of Longchamp, of the Order of Saint Francis, in the Paris diocese. I also consulted a nun of this monastery whom I know very well. They were almost unanimous in telling me that everything contained in the petition was true.

Nevertheless, in order that everything may be even clearer to Your Eminence, I will try to explain, briefly and specifically, the state of this house. It is certain that for two hundred years the good odor of Christ in this monastery has been turning into the offensive odor of the corruption of flagging discipline and morals. Therefore, upon the demand of good people and the urging of the Royal Attorney of the Parlement of Paris, an ordinance was passed in 1560 to the effect that the Bishop of Paris should proceed with the correction and restoration of discipline.

The parlors are not closed but open to anyone, even to young men who are not relatives. Several nuns go there as they please, alone, without witnesses, without telling the Abbess and even against her will. It has been observed that there are in the parlors lattices and little windows, contrary to the rules of religious cloister, which pose certain dangers for virgins. The Friars, rectors of the monastery, do nothing to remove the evil; on the contrary, they make it worse. The confessors especially slip in there at night, at inappropriate hours, and gossip with the nuns. One of these Friars, brought into the cloister at night by one of the younger nuns, was caught. There are other cases where the nuns have brought certain young men into the cloister at night.

Once, when the Abbess placed a prohibition on a young nun who was too familiar and engaged frequently in dangerous and scandalous conversations with a young nobleman of corrupt morals, who was no relative of hers, the Father Provincial allowed such familiarity and conversations, as the nun herself declared in the presence of all the nuns and the Provincial. Rumor has it that the young man gave the Provincial a large sum of money to obtain such permission.

Often the confessors have opened to laymen the places destined for confessions, for secret conversations with the nuns, and locked them in, disregarding the will and prohibition of the Abbess.

It is also a fact that when, on account of wars raging around this city, the whole Community of nuns fled the monastery, a good number of them gave scandal by their dissolute life, remaining alone with a man, spending entire days in private homes and rooms under the pretext of visits. When one of the clergy, a very religious man, warned the Abbess about that, she answered that she could not suppress the evil and pleaded with him to speak to them himself. When he did so, he received a spiteful and abusive answer and was greatly scandalized. This I learned from the man himself.

Those Fathers who are appointed confessors are involved in particular friendships and familiarity with the nuns called lay sisters or servants. As a result, the latter have become so proud that they are bothersome and unbearable to the others.

If some disputes arise among the nuns, the Friars take no trouble to allay and settle them; on the contrary, they encourage and increase them.

If the nuns sometimes ask to confess their sins to other priests, these confessors do not give the permission and, in fact, become annoyed and refuse them.

The novices and newly professed are formed with almost no religious discipline, nor are they examined and approved before receiving the habit and are admitted to profession, according to the decrees of the Council of Trent.

Some nuns wear indecent and immodest clothing; in the parlors they wear flame-colored headbands and gold watches. They also put on special gloves they call Spanish gloves.

[I can have no doubt, Most Eminent Cardinal,] about the facts, because of the exceptional uprightness, truthfulness, and sincerity of those who are well acquainted with the state of the monastery, from whom I received these testimonies, and because of my own knowledge. This being the case, let me say in all humility that it seems to me that Our Most Holy Father the Pope will make provision for this, in his paternal providence. Your Eminence and the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation will do likewise, if you advise His Holiness that it will be most pleasing to Almighty God, and the most convenient and efficient means to remedy the corruption and vice and to restore discipline in the monastery of Longchamp, if he completely removes from it the Friars of the Order of Minors, exempts the nuns entirely from their government, authority, and jurisdiction, and places the monastery and the nuns under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Paris in both spiritual and temporal matters. Let His Holiness also give orders to the Archbishop to place over these nuns someone who is learned, pious, and experienced--secular or regular--provided he is not from the said Order of Minors. He shall appoint him Visitor for three years, to direct, visit, and correct the said nuns and the monastery, name confessors, and, in a word, do everything that the Archbishop himself would do, except for recourse to him in case of complaint. If he thinks it useful, after the expiration of the first three-year term, he may extend the term of the same Visitor for another three years. Once this term expires and regular discipline is restored, let him grant the Abbess and the nuns permission to elect every three years three priests--secular or regular--of upright life, knowledge, and experience, by ballot and by majority of votes, with the Visitor presiding and in the presence of the confessors whom they shall present to the Archbishop. The latter will appoint one of them as Visitor with the power and authority over the monastery and the nuns.

These are the answers I submit to Your Eminence in accord with the order you have deigned to give me. They are stated as briefly as possible by an unworthy priest, incapable by far of fulfilling your mandate, and who, prostrate in spirit at the feet of Your Eminence, earnestly and humbly asks your blessing, since he is forever, Most Eminent Prince, the most humble and obedient servant of Your Eminence.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Paris, October 25, 1652

1565. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

Paris, October 25, 1652

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Do not worry about sending either M.Martin or M.Morando to Rome. Your reasons for keeping them in Genoa are too important to consider taking them away. Provided you

send the two others of whom you wrote to me, when they complete their studies, that will suffice.

As for Brother Sébastien, I highly approve of your assessment of his temptation¹ and what you said to him about it. He will be making a big mistake if he does not believe you. If he persists in his resolution, we shall see what we have to do. I am also greatly consoled by the wise, gentle spirit with which you act in all things. I thank God for it and for the present state of your community and each member in particular, mentioned in your letter. I ask His Divine Goodness to continue to grant you the same spirit and through you to pour it out on all those He has entrusted, and will entrust in future, to your guidance. Despite my deep sorrow at the knowledge that the plague is ravaging Poland, I have been greatly consoled to hear that our men are devoting themselves willingly to the assistance of the plague-stricken. M.Desdames and Brother Zelazewski have been working with them for some time; now M.Guillot and Brother Posny are also involved, and they are even distributing the Queen's alms to them. I thank God for having given the Company subjects who belong more to Him than to themselves, and who serve the neighbor at the risk of their lives! They are like unrefined gold, which becomes visible in fire and which would otherwise remain hidden under ordinary actions and sometimes under faults and failings.

I have never experienced this more clearly than I have recently, not only in those who have died in Barbary for the sake of charity, and in several others who have willingly exposed themselves to the same danger for the salvation of the slaves, but in almost everyone we have here. They have devoted themselves zealously to the relief of the people in their present affliction, despite the perils of war and disease into which they have fallen. I am not saying that they have all been mistreated by the soldiers, but they have all been sick and are having a hard time recovering, except for the last ones to leave--but they are sure to succumb like the others. The fact is that we are at the end of our tether. We have no one else to send to the country to assist the abandoned parishes. In the past two days, M.Desvignes,² M.des Jardins,³ M.Watebled, and Brother de Nelz⁴ have come back sick, along with a coadjutor Brother, a servant, and two Daughters of Charity. M.Deschamps was at death's door in Étampes. When he was feeling a little better, he was taken to Bâville, where once again they gave him up for dead because of a kind of gangrene in his buttocks. They cut away the flesh, causing great suffering to his body. Nevertheless, he has improved a little but I do not know what the outcome will be. He is a gifted man, who has done wonders for the sick poor. M.Labbé⁵ is still with him. They are being cared for by M.Goblet and Brother Caset, who are having great difficulty nursing them but are also doing this charitable act in a worthy manner. I recommend all our sick to your prayers; we still have a large number, although most of them are getting better. I urge you to thank God for having brought the King and Queen back to Paris. The joy of their return is so great everywhere that it is hard to imagine. There does not seem to be the slightest trace of the upset of the past. This gives us great reason to hope for a complete cessation of the internal troubles of the kingdom.⁶

I ask God to shower you with peace and blessings, and your family as well, to whom I send greetings. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Blatiron, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Genoa, in Genoa 1566. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[Shortly after October 25, 1652]¹

This letter will doubtless distress you, but there is no remedy for that: God has called to Himself Monsieur Deschamps in Bâville, where he had been brought from Étampes. He

has left behind the strong fragrance of his virtue because of the grace that accompanied him both inside and outside of the Company. It must be acknowledged that the Spirit of God was evident in his life and in his death. Our loss is greater than I can express to you-- if it is possible that being deprived of those whom Our Lord takes to Himself is a loss.² Yesterday God also took good Monsieur Watebled.³ He had fallen ill while assisting the villages in the neighborhood of four armies, which had been camped for a month before Villeneuve-Saint-Georges⁴ and the surrounding area. He worked very zealously and used to give the poor the food we sent him for himself. He has left behind the fragrance of his virtue because of the grace which accompanied him.

1567. - DERMOT DUIGUIN TO SAINT VINCENT

October 28, 1652

As soon as we arrived in Scotland, God granted us the grace of having a part in the conversion of Glengarry's father. He was an old man, ninety years of age, raised in heresy from his youth. We instructed him and reconciled him to the Church during a serious illness that soon took him to his grave. However, this was after he had received the sacraments, expressing genuine regret for having lived so long in error, and unutterable joy at dying a Catholic. I also reconciled several of his servants and some of his friends, although in secret.

Once this was done, I left my companion in that mountainous region of Scotland because there were great spiritual needs there and much good to be accomplished, and I went over to the Hebrides. There, God in His all-powerful mercy has performed miracles beyond all hope. He disposed hearts so well that Clanronald, laird of a large part of the island of Uist, was converted, along with his wife, the young laird his son, and their whole family. All their subjects and their families did the same.

I also worked with the people on this island and went on to the islands of Eigg and Canna, where God converted eight hundred to nine hundred persons, who had so little instruction in matters of our religion that not even fifteen of them knew the mysteries of the Christian faith. I hope the rest of them will soon give glory to God. I found thirty or forty persons of seventy, eighty, and one hundred years and over, who had not received holy Baptism. I instructed and baptized them, and they died shortly after. Doubtless, they are now praying to God for those who procured this great benefit for them. Many of the inhabitants were living in concubinage but, thanks be to God, we rectified that, marrying those who were willing, and separating those who were not.

We have taken nothing from these people for the services we rendered them, but I still have to pay two men. One man helps me row from one island to another and carries my vestments and belongings overland--sometimes we have to walk four or five leagues on bad roads before I say Mass. The other man helps me to teach the Pater, Ave, and Credo, and to say Mass. He is the only one capable of doing this, after I have first instructed him. We usually eat only one meal a day. This consists in bread made from barley or oats, with some cheese or salted butter. Sometimes we go entire days without eating because we cannot find anything, especially when we have to cross deserted and uninhabited mountains. We hardly eat any meat, but there is some in places quite far from the sea, especially in the homes of the upper class. However, it is so bad and prepared in such a dirty manner that it gags us. They throw it on the ground on a little straw, which serves them as table and chair, tablecloth and napkin, serving dish and plate.

If we wanted to buy meat for ourselves to prepare it as we do in France, we could not find any sold by the piece because there are no butchers on these islands, so we would have to buy a whole ox or an entire sheep. But we cannot do this because we have to travel constantly to go and baptize and administer the other sacraments. There are fish in the sea

surrounding these islands, but the inhabitants are not anxious to catch them, being lazy and not very industrious by nature. It would unquestionably be a great service rendered to God to send to this country good evangelical workers, who knew how to speak the language well and, even more, to put up with hunger, thirst, and sleeping on the ground. They would also need an annual income; otherwise, there is no way to survive.

1568. - TO LOUIS DONI D'ATTICHY,¹ BISHOP OF AUTUN

The last day of October, 1652

Excellency,

M. Ozenne, Superior of the house in Troyes, has told me several times of your kind remembrance of me, who am so unworthy of this honor. My unworthiness does not prevent me from having a lively gratitude for this, which leads me to take the liberty, Excellency, of thanking you. Please accept my gratitude, since I offer it with all possible respect and submission, and certainly with an ardent desire to render you my obedience, if God were pleased to give me opportunities to do so. I shall ask this grace of Him all my life, together with that of preserving you for the good of His Church and the sanctification of your own [diocese].

In the name of God, Excellency, please make use of the sovereign power He has given you over me. I am, in His love, Excellency, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

1569. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

Mercuès, the last day of October, 1652

Monsieur,

I am sending you the letter I have written to Father Paulin,¹ with its copy, as you wished, so you may read it. If you think I should write another one in different terms, just send me the format and I shall do so immediately. I think it will be a long time before they see a Bishop with my health and strength asking for a Coadjutor, and perhaps never one who is requesting someone who is neither a relative nor an ally nor on whom he has some claim. But this is my case because there is no family tie nor alliance between the Bishop of Sarlat² and me, and all I have in view in this whole plan is the pure glory of God, His service, and His Church. So do not be afraid that this example will create a precedent. Your letters will never be too long for me, and you will be doing me a favor by informing me of what is going on. It is important for me to know, and I always benefit from it. What you wrote me concerning the doctrine of the day has filled me with joy, and I thank you most humbly for it. There has been only too much delay in doing what you wrote me. Its outcome cannot be bad.

The plague has not spread in Cahors, thank God. It has not yet reached the town and has been found in only two or three houses in one of the faubourgs. I was just in the town, and the consternation and affliction I encountered there are almost unbelievable. It is becoming a ghost town from one day to the next and, in the end, will be deserted, if the disease reaches it. I pray God that it will profit from this affliction and that He will bestow on you the fullness of grace and health I wish for you....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1570. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION

[End of 1652]¹

Another one of our seminarians has just passed away: Brother Hervy,² who was one of the best. He was already studying at the Bons-Enfants but came here to die. It will suffice for each of our priests to say one Mass for each of the deceased. This makes six or seven men that the Company has lost in a short space of time, and all of them were young, except Monsieur Gilles, who was middle-aged when he entered. Four or five of our servants have

also died, and among others, one who died here yesterday, who was one of the best and most loyal to the house that we ever had. I recommend him to your prayers.

1571. - MADEMOISELLE POLLALION¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

November 3, 1652

Monsieur,

For fear of thieves coming into our church at night because there are only glass panes in the windows and our enclosure is very low, we have decided to have two of our good Sisters take turns at night guarding the Blessed Sacrament, our treasure, which must be done during the day as well.² When two of the most devout have been chosen, they will keep vigil just once a week. In other words, that night they will get only five hours sleep. Although I am not one of the good ones, I ask your permission, Monsieur, to take my turn keeping vigil. I assure you that this will do me no harm, for to order others to do things which I do not do myself would give them cause to grow lax. Besides, Monsieur, you know that, even if I had a thousand lives, I should use them to make amends for all my Communion made so unworthily. I hope you will grant me this grace and that of remembering before God the needs of your daughters and my own needs because I am your most humble and obedient servant.

MARIE LUMAGUE

1572. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS¹

[November 1652]

There is no way, Excellency, I could express to you my distress at the sickness threatening your town, nor how humbled I am at the trust with which you are pleased to honor me. I ask God with all my heart to avert this scourge of nations from your diocese and to make me worthy of replying in His Spirit to your orders.²

My humble opinion is, then, Excellency, that a bishop finding himself in these circumstances should keep himself ready to provide for the spiritual and temporal needs of his entire diocese during this public calamity. He should not confine himself to one place nor busy himself with any work that might deprive him of the means of providing for others, especially since he is bishop not only of that place but also of his entire diocese. He must divide his care so well that he does not limit it to one particular section of it, unless he is unable to provide for the salvation of the souls in that part through the pastors or other priests. In that case, I think he is obliged to risk his life for their salvation and to entrust the care of the rest to God's adorable Providence.

That, Excellency, is how Bishop..., one of the greatest prelates in this kingdom, acts. He has prepared his pastors to risk their lives for the salvation of their parishioners. When the disease breaks out in a place, he goes there to see if the pastor has remained firm where he is, to encourage him in his decision and, in a word, to give him advice and suitable means of assisting his parishioners. He makes this visit without risking his health by going to see the sick, then goes back home, prepared to risk his life if others cannot provide for the needs of a parish. If Saint Charles Borromeo acted differently, it was probably because of some special inspiration from God or because the plague was confined to the city of Milan.

But since it is difficult in a large diocese to do what is easily done in a small one, it would seem good, Excellency, for you to visit the plague-stricken sections to encourage your pastors. If some difficulty or the danger of being taken prisoner during this time of war were to prevent you, you could send into those areas some archdeacons or, if there are none, some other priests for the same purpose. As soon as you hear that the disease has broken out in a certain place, send some priest to support the pastor and to give some corporal assistance to the plague-stricken.

When the Queen of Poland³ heard that the plague had broken out in Krakow and that the houses of those who were stricken were closed up as soon as anyone contracted the disease, causing both the healthy and the sick to suffer hunger and cold, she resolved to send a large sum of money there with two Missionaries, who had instructions to provide food for the houses of the plague-stricken, without, however, putting themselves in danger. Some monks risked their lives to administer the sacraments. By this means, that good Queen has, if not stopped, at least greatly reduced the ravages caused by this disease, and infinitely consoled that city, which is also the capital of the kingdom.

And because the city of Warsaw, where the Kings now reside, was stricken by the same disease, one of our priests sent me word that she gave the same orders and assistance to that city through a priest and Brother of the Mission.

The poor country people stricken with the plague are usually left abandoned and very short of food. It will be an action worthy of your piety, Excellency, to make provision for this by sending alms to all those places. See that they are put into the hands of good pastors, who will have bread, wine, and a little meat brought in for these poor people to pick up in the places and the times indicated for them. If there is some question about the honesty of the pastor, these instructions will have to be given to some other neighboring pastor or curate, or to some good layperson of the parish, who could do this. There is usually someone in each area capable of doing this act of charity, especially if they do not have to come into direct contact with the plague-stricken.

I hope, Excellency, that if God is pleased to bless this good work, Our Lord will be greatly glorified by it, you will be consoled both in life and in death, and the people of your diocese will be greatly edified. But, in order to do this, it is absolutely essential that you do not close yourself in.

Your Missionaries, Excellency, have sent me word that Our Lord has granted them the grace of being willing to risk their lives, one after the other, with the plague-stricken, either in their own neighborhood or in other parts of the town, as obedience and necessity demand. Now, I am writing to tell them, Excellency, to take orders from you, and I most humbly entreat you to use us in whatever way your incomparable goodness sees fit.

There are usually many monks who volunteer to assist the plague-stricken; I am sure there are some in your town, Excellency, and perhaps you will find enough of them for this good work both in the town and also to send some to the rural areas, instead of using the archdeacons and priests I mentioned above. You will see in this publication⁴ I am sending you how the Archbishop of Paris has organized this diocese to remedy the unspeakable misery existing in it. That can give you some idea of how to help the poor people of your own diocese.

1573. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT

[November 1652]¹

Monsieur,

Since, as you know, the Rector of Caussade² is spreading slanderous libel against me and having it published, do not be surprised if he is writing lies to you, as I saw in your letter and in the one from Monsieur de la Marguerie.³ The following is the absolute truth, which alone I love, while I detest lies.

As soon as he returned from Paris, after the decree was issued, I made it public and informed the leading citizens that I was ready to give everyone absolution *ad cautelam*⁴ in my chapel in Mercuès, until the decree was enforced in the synod. We waited for them to accept the offer; however, no one came forward, nor has anyone since then. There was just one of his friends who spoke in his favor to the Prior of the Carthusians, asking that I treat him gently. I told him I would not say an angry word to him and, if he wished, I

would say nothing to him and would simply give him absolution. The Prior was very pleased and satisfied with that. However, I have not laid eyes on him.

No good or honorable man can honestly say that I have ever said a single word that might indicate resentment, either before or since you took charge of this affair. I am amazed that he is so bold as to say that I am unwilling to uphold what you have decided, since I have done nothing that gives evidence of this. He gives two examples: first, the printing of orders made public several years ago in the synod--but he is forgetting that they asked for this--and I was careful not to fail in it, nor will he find that you ordered anything to the contrary.

As for the seminary, your men will certify in writing that clerics from my diocese are obliged to remain there one year only, as the statutes themselves state. But here is where this man is prevaricating: that after the year and before subdiaconate, I give them to understand that, if they expect me to dispense them from the interstices,⁵ they must remain in the seminary, for I do not dispense any of those who leave. I think that four months in that seminary are worth as much as one year outside of it. Furthermore, all that is left up to each individual. And since he is trying to make an obligation of something that is a free choice and common knowledge, consider whether people should put any faith in what he says.

As for the boarding fees, this year food costs four times what it does in ordinary years because of famine in the region and the soldiers, who are destroying everything. See how irrational this man is. He should have waited until food prices returned to normal and then, if I did not adjust the fees, he could lodge his complaint. Would to God that we may not be obliged to increase them! I really fear this will happen.

With regard to my Officialis, I shall tell you quite simply that one time, when I was very sick, he came here to see me. After he arrived and I had greeted him, I said to him: "Father Garat⁶ will speak to you." It was about the account of his expenditures. This was the period when many people were ill in Cahors, and he fell sick. I sent someone at once to visit him and offered to do whatever I could for him--not that I did not have good reason to complain about him, particularly because of an important affair he had ruined for me, for which I had to send someone to Paris and obtain two decrees from the Great Council.

As for that man named Pontie, whom he says he kept in his own home for some time, I do not know why he blames me for that because I never directed him there nor had anyone do so. On the contrary, I disapproved of his giving him hospitality, and even more that he made a public issue of it. Furthermore, there is much fault to be found in this person. In any case, should he not have waited until the synod was held? All matters must be implemented there; what is stated in the decree must begin to be done. I have not yet received nor seen the decree because Monsieur de Marmiesse⁷ has it but has not dared to send it to me, so he tells me, because the mails are risky.

He is also well aware that I am still unable to hold my synod because of the soldiers making raids right up to the gates of Cahors. A short time ago, they even took prisoner a Councillor of the Cour des Aides⁸ of Cahors.

Do me the favor of sharing this letter with Monsieur de la Marguerie. I ask both of you to disregard whatever that Rector writes to you and to trust that I shall not fail to carry out all that you have decided.

I think I told you previously my reasons for not going into our seminary, although I really wanted to do so. However, those difficulties no longer exist, so I intend to go there often. I already reserved a room for the reason I wrote to you before. Then the town heard about it--how, I do not know-- and decided, so I am told, not to allow it. The First Consul told

me recently, swearing before God, that he would close the gate on me if I presented myself there. He said that I would serve them better and more effectively than if I enclosed myself with them. Nevertheless, they will not be the judges of that, for we will do what we know is most pleasing to God. The plague has not yet entered the town but it is at the gate, and we dread the return of the full moon.

In the meantime, I am, Monsieur, your most humble and affectionate servant.

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

I forgot to tell you that the Rector of Caussade has formally contravened the decree by the intervention he made in a case I had against my Chapter in Le Vigan, where he acted as representative of the unionized priests and seminarians.

1574. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON¹

November 20, 1652

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

The needs of our Consuls in Barbary, especially in Tunis, have obliged me, Madame, to put pressure on M.Blavet for money. The Tunis Consul used five hundred écus of ransom money for a slave, who was found dead, to free Brother Huguier from the chain gang, where he had been sent by the Dey; this cost eleven hundred livres. In addition, the Marseilles merchant who sent M.Le Vacher² the five hundred écus wants the money right away, according to what M.Chrétien³ tells me. I asked M.Pepin to act as intermediary to get the money, which he did, and he has arranged with M.Blavet that, of the five quarters' rent he will owe at the end of the year, we will settle with him for two, which he will pay immediately. We are doing this because he does not enjoy the use of his goods and has lost a large number of horses.

I entreat you most humbly, Madame, to let me know if this arrangement is agreeable to you. M.Pepin who, like us, is concerned in this, has examined everything, found the above to be reasonable, and agrees to that price. If Madame du Vigan⁴ and M.de Sercelles do not accept this, our settlement will not oblige them to release M.Blavet from the debt. I most humbly entreat you, Madame, to let me know if you accept our concluding this business today, and to send me a reply to the letter I took the honor of writing to you the day before yesterday about a small parish that is vacant near Crécy. In the meantime, I am, in the love of Our Lord, Madame, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1575. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON

November 21, 1652

Madame,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

One of the finest men in the world whom I know is M. de Saveuses,¹ Counselor of the Grand'Chambre.² His sister has written him that Gisors³ Priory, which depends on Marmoutiers,⁴ is about to become vacant. I offered to write to you about it, which I now do, Madame, with all possible affection, assuring you, Madame, that you could not make it over to anyone more deserving than he, nor to one from whom you ought to expect more gratitude. For these reasons, Madame, I most humbly entreat you once again to keep him in mind on this occasion. O mon Dieu, Madame, what a joy to consider the true servants of God in matters which concern the service of His Divine Majesty!

I am, in His love, Madame, your....
1576. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, November 21, 1652
Monsieur,

After thanking you for so kindly offering your men to risk their lives, if need be, for the service of the plague-stricken of our town of Cahors, I want to tell you that, since they are working so effectively for my entire diocese, I would not want to put them in any danger, unless it were absolutely necessary. I do not think this can happen in the present state of the town because, as soon as I heard that the plague had been discovered in the faubourg, I went there and summoned the pastors of the town to a meeting at the episcopal palace. I tried to impress on them the obligation they had to risk their lives for the service of their parishioners, and I found all of them ready to do so.

I also called a meeting of the Superiors of religious houses to see what help I could expect from them, in case of need. It was truly something worthy of admiration and gave me great consolation, for they offered me themselves and all their monks, and so willingly that I do not think the likes of it can be seen in any diocese in France. Several good priests also volunteered, and we have sent two Capuchins to that faubourg where the plague has broken out. It is only in a very small area where just fifteen people in all have died. There may be seven or eight sick persons who have been taken to some cabins in the fields, so we are hoping that the disease will not be widespread and that God will preserve the town, which is separated from this faubourg by the Lot River and has no contact with it.

I shall follow your advice in everything. I had made up my mind not to risk my life unless I knew that this was the Will of God. I found out that everyone, without exception, was against it. Although I had kept this decision secret, mentioning it only to one or two of my staff and enjoining them to say nothing about it to anyone, nevertheless, it was immediately public knowledge. I met with such universal extreme opposition that the town had determined to close its gates on me. I held everything in abeyance until I saw in your letter that you were of the same opinion. So, I will put all thought of it out of my head and, with great pleasure, will do what you have written me.

One of the Capuchins who are at risk is responsible for administering the sacraments to the plague-stricken in the countryside around that area. Recently, I sent one of the priests on my staff there to visit him for me and to bring them some alms, since obviously I could not go myself without the danger of being taken prisoner by the troops of the Prince. They are making raids everywhere, pillaging and taking prisoners without any resistance. I would be very glad to go myself to visit and console these poor people, but I do not feel in conscience that I can risk being

captured by those raiders. So, during this time of danger, I will use the means you indicate to me in the letter.

As soon as I receive the official record of the act of consent I am supposed to give, I shall sign it and send it on to you.

I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1577. - TO BROTHER NICOLAS SENÉ,¹ IN LAGNY²

Orsigny, November 24, 1652

My very dear Brother,

I cannot thank God enough for His guidance of you, and I beg Him to continue. We are sending you a hundred francs, which the Ladies want you to use to assist those twenty-two villages as soon and as best you can. Strike a bargain for this purpose with the surgeon you mentioned to me, so that every two days he will visit and take care of the sick who need him. We give M. Gaucher fifteen sous a day; if he is not satisfied with that, give him more.

We hear that you have spared nothing to save the lives of all the sick poor in those places. If some localities have no parish priests, you could ask Monsieur Hennin,³ who is being recalled, to take care of the spiritual needs while you continue with the temporal ones. If you need powder for purging, ask Monsieur Portail and, through him, Brother Alexandre.⁴ If you have to bargain to get provisions everywhere, do so, and three and all⁵ to cover needs on time everywhere. Write to Madame de Herse, asking for a little money to help these poor people harvest their grapes. I had not yet received your letter on the day of the meeting; tell her that is why I have asked you to write her about it.

The doctor has sent me to Orsigny for a little fresh air because of a slight fever I get at night.

I embrace Brother Lamirois and ask God to preserve you both. Please send a weekly report to the Vicar-General⁶ and me, and spare nothing to save the life of the souls and bodies of those poor people. Some persons of rank will soon be coming frequently to see how you are doing, and they expect the poor to be assisted in the way I indicated to you. I am, in the love of Our Lord, my very dear Brother, your brother and servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Brother Sené, seminarian of the Mission, in Lagny

1578. - TO THE MARQUIS DE CHÂTEAUNEUF

December 2, 1652

My Lord,

I was ill when you left Paris and did not hear of your departure until about two weeks later. Only Our Lord can make you understand how this distressed me. The doctor had advised me to go and take the country air for a week or so, and it was only on my return that I learned that you, My Lord, were not in Bourges, as I had been told, but in Leuville.¹ I intended to go there to tell you how sorry I was that you were not in Paris and to renew to you the

offers of my perpetual obedience. However, because of a situation that has arisen, about which the bearer of this letter will have the honor to tell you, I felt that you, My Lord, would accept my depriving myself of this consolation and honor, reserving the honor of seeing you in a few days. This, My Lord, is what I now do, perfectly confident that you will find this for the best.

I am, in the meantime, in the love of Our Lord, your....
1578a. - TO CHARLES BAYART, IN MONTMIRAIL
[December 7, 1652]

I approve your having the garden enclosed with walls and including in it the small plot of land belonging to the Hôtel-Dieu, and that in exchange you buy a plot the same size near that Hôtel-Dieu to serve as a garden for the Sisters.¹ However, you may do so on condition that the leading citizens of the city agree to it, for that is a public hospital and we are only its administrators and may not dispose of its property.

The Montmirail foundation² obliges us to maintain the hospital, to take in travelers--even the sick--and, lastly, to do whatever good we can on the founders'³ estates by visiting the sick, instructing and consoling those we meet who are in need of this, and by other good works which priests can and should do. You did well to take the three wounded soldiers into the hospital. A refusal would have scandalized the people and angered M. de Leuze.⁴ It is better to go beyond the limits of charity than to fail in it. These occasions do not arise very often, and there is no consequence to be feared.

1579. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
December 10, 1652

The Missionaries in Poland are being greatly blessed in their work; I do not have time now to explain it in detail so I shall just tell you that the plague has been raging in Warsaw, the city where the King usually resides. All the inhabitants who could do so have left the city. There, as in other places afflicted with this disease, almost no order exists but, on the contrary, mass confusion. No one buries the dead; they are left in the streets where they are devoured by the dogs. As soon as someone in a house is stricken with the disease, the others put him out in the street, where he must die, for nobody brings him anything to eat. Poor artisans, poor servants, poor widows and orphans are totally abandoned; they cannot find work nor anyone of whom to ask bread because the rich have all left town.

It was into this desolation in that great city that M. Lambert was sent to find some solution to all these miseries. In point of fact, he did so, by the grace of God. He had the dead buried, and the sick who had been abandoned taken to places where they could be assisted and cared for both in body and soul. He did the same for other poor persons who were suffering from illnesses that were not contagious. Lastly, he had three or four houses, separated

from one another, set up as hospices or hospitals, and had all the other poor who were not sick brought there to be housed, putting the men on one side and the women and children on the other. They are being aided there by the alms and assistance from the Queen.

1580. - TO FRANÇOIS HALLIER, IN ROME

December 20, 1652

Monsieur,

I thank God for the fine progress He is giving to your dealings there;¹ my most humble thanks to you for your kindness in consoling me by it. I assure you, Monsieur, that my greatest joy is the one your letters bring me, and there is nothing in the world for which I pray more fervently to God than for you and your business.

Moreover, His Divine Goodness gives me great hope that He will soon restore peace to His Church and that, thanks to your efforts, truth will be acknowledged and your zeal exalted before God and men. We shall continue to ask Him for this. Please send us your precious news.

1581. - TO N.

December 26, 1652

Vincent de Paul gives news of the Missionaries in Ireland, who had written him on October 28. He received the letter in December, a few days before leaving for Villepreux, where he was going in order to console Father de Gondi for the disgrace of Cardinal de Retz, his son, recently imprisoned at Vincennes.

1582. - TO THE MARQUIS DE POYANNE¹

Paris, New Year's Day, 1653

My Lord,

I have heard how you protected a relative of mine by extricating him from his oppression.² I thank you for this with all possible respect and affection, with as much gratitude as if this favor had been done for me. I most humbly entreat you, My Lord, to grant me the favor of giving me your orders whenever opportunities may arise to be of service to you.

If I ever have this happiness, I shall consider it a blessing from God. With this desire, I venture now to renew to you the offers of my perpetual obedience, on the occasion of this New Year and to assure you, as I do now, of my prayers that God may be pleased to bless you, your army, and your illustrious family more and more.

I no longer recommend this poor young man to you, for the kindness you have already shown him leads me to hope that its powerful and charitable effects will continue in his favor. For myself, I ask you, My Lord, for the honor of allowing me to be your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the page: The Marquis de Poyanne

1583. - TO SAINT LOUISE

January 1653

Mademoiselle,

It seems you are right in doubting that the Lady who is pressuring you to give her our Sister from Suzy¹ is planning to do what you told me, and that it is advisable for you to insist on one thing: either that they promise you that the Sisters will keep their Rule about confession,² for if we say that there should be no fixed time for confession, then the Church was wrong in ordering the faithful to confess once a year; or you must remain firm in not giving her that good Sister, whom it is well to assign elsewhere and offer them another one; or that Ménard³ be returned to you, if you give her this one.

It will be a good idea for you to ask her to come and see you and for you to explain to her that you have commitments elsewhere. When all is said and done, if they are unwilling, see if you are strong enough to break with them, rather than risk spreading the spirit of the times in the Little Company through those three. I am afraid that this savors of Port-Royal.

1584. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX, SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW

Paris, January 3, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I renew to you the assurances of esteem and special affection God has given me for you, not only for this new year but even beyond centuries. I pray that, after granting you an entire one to serve Him in this world, the Divine Goodness will then give you a blessed eternity with Him.

I received your two letters of November 28 and December 5. Since you told me you had the report on Madagascar¹ read at table, I am sending you one on the Hebrides.² It is not quite so detailed but is full of matter for consolation. We are not preparing to send anyone to the first-named island, which deeply distresses us because of what good M. Nacquart must be suffering, if by chance he is still alive.³

Your letters have consoled me greatly, but this consolation has been followed by sorrow, since you tell me that perhaps the Queen's illness will delay Their Majesties' journey to Lithuania. The Queen's good health is precious both to her States and to the poor members of Jesus Christ. My distress is increased by the fact that it is being said here that the general of the Cossacks has committed some act of disloyalty. We continue to pray to God for the King, the Queen, and their armies.

I thank God that M. Guillot is still caring for the poor in Warsaw and that he is a good priest. I ask Our Lord to lead him more and more to perfection and to make his stay and work in Poland...pleasant.⁴

You have good reason to admire God's guidance of you and your little community, especially for His taking you out of the house where you were living, in which seven or eight persons have died since you left.⁵ That was surely the hand of Providence; but, Monsieur, over whom will God watch if not over His servants? And since He is so very good to you

and has given the Queen an inclination for your establishment, it is to be hoped that, despite the delays up until now, it will be made in His own time. Then again, this same Providence will not leave you without persons to do His work.

I praise God that the Daughters of Charity are in Warsaw and have work to do. May God bless and preserve them!⁶

I was on my way to Mademoiselle Le Gras' house to give a little conference to her Daughters, when the Duchesse d'Aiguillon and Madame de Herse, the President's wife, sent for me to go to the home of one of them, where I now am, to discuss means of assisting poor Champagne, where the armies are at present and are reducing it to a pitiful state.⁷ I greatly fear that we will not be able to do much because assistance for this diocese is already a great expense; six or seven thousand livres a week are needed for it.

All of Paris contributes to this, supplying all sorts of things people need by way of food and clothing, for illnesses, and for work. There are several warehouses in the city, where people bring whatever they want to donate. The general warehouse has a salt barrel, which is never empty, even though some is taken from it every day to be sent to the country, as is done with everything else.⁸

If I were at Saint-Lazare, I would send you the organizational plan for this holy distribution, which has been printed.⁹

The members of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament are doing wonders in this city, and the monks do likewise in the rural areas for the distributions and the assistance of the poor.¹⁰ We have only three men there, in addition to the ones we still have in Étampes, because the deaths among our priests have prevented us from giving more. For that reason they have had to turn to the religious Orders.¹¹

I am well, thank God, as is the whole Company here. We are sending M. Berthe to Rome.¹² M. du Chesne is going to the Richelieu house as Superior and, at the same time, to open an Internal Seminary. We have sent our best seminarians there to teach the others the customs and to be an example to them. M. Cuissot is returning to Cahors and is supposed to go to Montauban to discuss with the Bishop the plan for his seminary.¹³ We are recalling M. Le Vazeux from Rome; perhaps we shall send him either to Agen or to Montauban.¹⁴ Enclosed is a letter from Barbary.

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Poland, who is now in Warsaw
1585. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
Paris, January 11, 1653
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

In this new year, I renew to you the gift of my heart, and I am enclosing the two Briefs you requested.

I am very distressed at the miseries of your border areas and of the large number of poor people overwhelming you. All I can do is pray to God for their relief, as I now do, because you must not expect anything in addition to the hundred livres we are giving you for them each month. Sedan is the only place on the border to which Paris in its charity is still sending alms. It has been forced to stop sending them elsewhere, so as to meet the urgent needs of this diocese, where the armies have been encamped for so long.

You will do well if, without sending the woman to Paris, you can discreetly separate those two persons who are living as man and wife, but who are not. Quietly advise the woman to go somewhere else or tell the man to leave her. Paris is like a point of arrival for everyone; there are so many of these poor common-law wives here that we do not know where to put them. They remain exposed to the dangers of sin and poverty, which they thought they were going to avoid! You have an example of this in that good convert you and M. Dufour recommended to us some time back, for it has been very difficult to keep her here.

The Abbé has gone to Saint-Méen. He mentioned your confraternity to me but in such a way that he seems to have changed his original intention. He has the miseries of his own region at heart. I do not know if his money will stay there. He did not tell me clearly what he will do with it; perhaps also he has not made a final decision.

If I said nothing to you about M. R.,¹ it is because you spoke to me only vaguely about him. Tell me his faults--his wishes, I might add--and whether or not he had stated on his return that he wanted to have them no longer. Please tell M. Dufour that a ship is available for Madagascar and that it would be well for him to be ready to go in March, the month the ship is leaving.² In the meantime, let me know if any way or passage can be found to get him to Paris safely.

A third thing I ask you to tell me is whether five priests will be enough for you during this wretched time.

We have nothing new to tell. Everyone is fairly well here, thank God. I frequently present you to Him for this same end and so that He may be pleased to sanctify more and more you and your community, whom I greet. I am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Coglée
1586. - TO JEAN LE VACHER, IN TUNIS
January 1653

I thank Our Lord that, through your efforts, several Frenchmen, captured at sea and taken to Tunis, have not been made slaves and that others who were, have been set free. You are rendering a great service to God in these persons. May His Goodness be pleased to give you the grace to act

forcefully and effectively with those who have power and authority in such matters!

1587. - TO FATHER JEAN GARAT, IN CAHORS

Paris, February 1, 1653

Reverend Father,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter with the respect I owe to a very good servant of God who has an aversion for high positions.¹ I am greatly consoled by the opportunity this affords me to renew to you the offers of my most humble services; I thank you for all the favors you have done for us and for the patronage with which you honor us there. I ask Our Lord to be your reward for all this.

Perhaps you are now aware, Reverend Father, that I am no longer involved in ecclesiastical affairs;² consequently, I am no longer in a position to take action on the matter in question. Even if I were, I would certainly not want to place any obstacle in the way of the workings of the Holy Spirit in the widespread request being made for you. It seems to me, Reverend Father, that after giving what you owe to the humble sentiments of your heart, you would do well to submit to the holy inspiration of those who have nominated you. Furthermore, positions of authority should be given to those who try to avoid them. Would to God there were many such monks in the Church! I ask the Divine Goodness, Reverend Father, to conclude the matter in the way most expedient for Him, to preserve you for His glory, and to make me worthy of the happiness I have of being, in His love, Reverend Father, your most humble and obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Reverend Father Garat, Vicar-General of the Bishop of Cahors, in Cahors

1588. - TO PROPAGANDA FIDE

[February 1653]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lords,

Vincent Depaul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, humbly informs Your Eminences that, hopefully, a ship will set sail this spring for the island of Madagascar. He plans to send there, if it pleases the Sacred Congregation, Claude Dufour and François Mousnier,² priests of his Congregation, already approved previously by Your Eminences for the mission on that island, but who have been unable to leave because no ship could embark at that time.³ He humbly asks that you grant them the usual faculties.

And because two other priests, approved for that mission by the Sacred Congregation, have died, and because the petitioner, Vincent Depaul, has not yet decided whom he can present to Your Eminences in their place, he most humbly requests of you at the same time, that, if the departure of the ship becomes imminent, he be allowed to choose those whom he can substitute for the men who have died, have them

examined by the Nuncio of France, and send their names as soon as possible to Your Eminences so that the usual faculties may be sent, as above.⁴ He will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminences.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, for Vincent Depaul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission

1589. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

February 14, 1653

As for M..., I share your distress at his mental weakness, but it does not surprise me because his behavior in the past has always given me reason to fear some instability in him. You know, Monsieur, that we must be submissive to God in these circumstances, determined to want nothing but His Will, even though others may shrink from it.

You did what a wise Superior should do to preserve order in the house. If this good priest should become so angry that he leaves the state to which God has called him, and in which He has bestowed on him many graces for himself and others, the signs of a true vocation, he shows clearly that he himself is confused. May the Divine Goodness be pleased not to allow him to deviate from His adorable guidance! I am not writing to him, since a sick mind cannot be cured by the sheer force of persuasion.

1590. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA

February 21, 1653

You did the right thing, Monsieur, in letting M...'s little fit of bad humor run its course, without saying anything to him about the failings into which he let himself fall. During these mental aberrations, forbearance and patience are better remedies than correction, and there is reason to hope he will recover from them. Perhaps he excused himself from preaching to those girls because some men have a strong aversion from any kind of communication with that sex.

I am only sorry that the whole burden falls on you, but why not entrust some of the responsibility to others? You should give all your men practice in preaching and have them work outside the house; otherwise, they will never become good workers. I am well aware that they will not be as successful as you might be, but they will have as much success as God chooses.

With regard to that, I will tell you what I heard M. Lambert say, which I shall long remember. He said that if God has not given us excellent subjects to succeed in our works, He highly approves of our making use of those we have, weak though they be. I am always fearful that you may be taking too much on yourself, and that your heavy labors will overwhelm you. Not that--apart from this fear--I am not greatly consoled by this; often I even console the Company with it. Just two days ago I was telling the men

about the frequent large missions you give and the special graces with which God is blessing them.

1591. - TO LAMBERT AUX COUTEAUX,¹ SUPERIOR, IN WARSAW
Paris, February 21, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

While waiting for your letters, of which I have been deprived for the last fifteen to twenty days, I shall continue to send you mine to wish you a continuation of the Spirit of God and His workings in your leadership and actions, and an increase of His grace for the King, the Queen, and their intentions.

We have no news other than what I have sent you. Still, I think I forgot to tell you that nine or ten of our students are studying theology under M. Cruoly, who is also their spiritual director. Some of the other students, who are more numerous and have finished their theology courses, are preparing for Holy Orders; others are to be sent to other houses, while awaiting the time of their ordination. These latter are spending their recreation with the older men, and I am nearly always present. It is a great consolation for me to see that we are over the faults of our former recreations and to spend these two hours daily in holy conversations, where each man speaks in turn seriously and usefully, yet gaily.

In addition, Monsieur, for some time now, we have been training the Company in matters of controversy. There are three or four persons in the city who have the grace of God to win over the members of the so-[called] Ref[ormed] rel[igion]² and are leading a large number of them back to the Church. Every Monday they come to us here in this house to demonstrate their method. Two of our men practice with it each time by debating in their presence, one taking the part of the Catholic, the other acting as the Huguenot. One of those gentlemen is M. Girodon, a Doctor of Theology³ and a disciple of the late Father Véron.⁴ One of the others is M. Beaumais, a haberdasher.⁵

I add to this that all of us are in good health, thank God, except Perrin,⁶ who is still sick. May God be pleased to keep you well!

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Lambert, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Poland, who is now in Warsaw

1592. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
February 28, 1653

I praise God that your family is faithful to keeping our Rules, with the exception of the two men you mention. I highly approve your indulgence for a time in their regard. Some grow lax at certain times and not at others, even behaving badly in one place and doing very well in another. We must hope for similar improvement in the case of these

two men by being patient with them rather than by pressuring them.

With regard to communications,¹ it would be well for you to recommend to the community, in their presence, to be exact in making them, and if they fail to do so, speak to them about it in a cordial, pleasant way, inviting them by this gentle appeal to this useful and necessary practice.

1593. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

[March 1653]¹

The little family did not fail to assemble, except for one on each side, who had not yet arrived.² However, I think it is necessary, Monsieur, for your charity to take the trouble to establish them there tomorrow morning and have some devotions for them, such as adoration of the Holy Cross and an exhortation on the Passion. It is very bold of me to suggest that.

Will your charity also kindly give instructions, this evening or early tomorrow morning, about distributing the clothing prepared for them?

Your blessing, please, for the entire Company.

1594. - TO BROTHER LÉONARD LAMIROIS, IN GENOA

March 14,¹ 1653

You have written me two letters, and I have not answered you. This has not been for want of affection but because of the pressure of business preventing me from doing all I would like. Do not refrain from writing to me whenever necessary. I hope it will not take me so long in future to reply to you.

I praise God for the satisfaction you are giving both within the house and outside.² Continue to be very faithful to God in the practice of humility, obedience, and the Rules. That is the means of drawing upon yourself abundant graces from heaven and of preserving yourself in your vocation and, through it, in the Will of God, which should be our only aspiration in this world and in the next.

Concerning your doubt as to whether you should compensate the apprentice master, whom you left before the proper time, let me say, dear Brother, that, because he has had a summons issued since then to your good mother for that, it is probable that she has paid him, if the law so ordered. Even if she did not, you are not obliged to do so, since you are no longer in that state. God requires only that you do what you can, and a confessor never obliges his penitent to pay what he owes, unless he is able to do so. Now, you have nothing at your disposal with which to compensate this master; consequently, you are released from this before God and men.

Furthermore, it is questionable whether you owe him anything if, because of his bad treatment of you, he forced you to leave, as he did. Personally, I strongly doubt that you do. I ask you to remain at peace about it and to be more and more closely united with Our Lord by detachment from the things of this world.

1595. - FRANÇOIS CHARLES¹ TO SAINT VINCENT

March 14, 1653

Monsieur,

Your blessing!

A week ago I sent you news of the death of M. Guérin,² our very dear and most worthy Superior, who lived only four or five weeks longer than M. Gurlet³ and was not long in following him. Apparently, M. Gurlet, during his illness, gave him to understand this because he asked M. Guérin if he was ready to leave and go with him. He often kept after him on this point, as if he did not want to leave without taking him with him; he used to say that he would come and get him.

Once, he got out of bed, going in his nightshirt to warm himself by the fire. He asked someone to go get his papers and bring them to him because he wanted to throw them in the fire to be burned. (These were signs that he was near death.) When M. Guérin tried to stop him and to pick up his papers, M. Gurlet got up and rammed him with his head, leaving him with a bruise over his eye. This stayed with him and was visible during his own illness, and even more so after his death. He took it to the grave with M. Gurlet, beside whom he was buried in the church of Notre-Dame in Annecy.

I felt it my duty to inform you of this for the second time so that, if the first letters happened by chance to get lost on the way, this one would take their place and would get the news to you.

I also thought it fitting to add here something about the virtues we noted in him, according to the custom and practice of the Company in such instances. Last evening M. Huitmille⁴ and I, together with Brother François, shared, by way of a conference, those things about him that were most noteworthy and edifying. I think, however, that we do not see his virtues and perfections as clearly and with the same sentiments as persons outside the Company, who were further removed from him than we, who were constantly associated with him and saw him regularly for such a long time. Being so close to him prevented us from discovering and admiring him. Unfortunately--strange to say--our close contacts and, consequently, our knowledge of one another, were very prejudicial to the proper esteem we desired in doing good. Wherever it is found, a tiny straw of the least failing and imperfection that may be noticed often takes away part of the enjoyment and greatly diminishes the splendor of the virtues shining in others. This makes me realize that I am incapable of recognizing the virtues of our virtuous deceased Superior and to have them esteemed as they deserve.

Humility and simplicity, inseparable companions, the foundation and faithful guardians of the other virtues, were especially apparent in him--not only in the eyes of those in the house but also of persons outside, who were deeply edified by them. I noticed this simplicity in everything, even in the slightest things. To thread rosaries, he would

allow us to use only a bit of string instead of the thin ribbon ordinarily used for that purpose.... He bought a large number of small medals to apply indulgences to them. I was surprised when I saw them, but did not express this to him because they were probably not worth a quarter of a voije apiece, the smallest possible coin. Instead of using some poor, ordinary laces for a pair of new shoes, he wanted us to use the cheapest, simplest leather thongs made of the same material as the shoes. It was the same way with clothing.

But this simplicity stood out most clearly in his conversations, words, and the way he replied to all kinds of people of rank and high position, expressing his thoughts and feelings plainly and simply, as he felt them in his heart. This was apparent, with no duplicity, dissimulation, or affectation; and his words were straightforward. This made a deep impression on people, and those who knew him admired and esteemed him greatly. Even the Bishop of Geneva,⁵ who was speaking to me recently about him after he died, was really impressed by this spirit of simplicity, which he had noticed during the visitations in his diocese, when our priest had the honor of serving and accompanying him. He did so with the simplicity of the dove and, at the same time, with the prudence of the serpent.⁶ This led him to speak appropriately about everything, keeping in view the consequences which he well knew might ensue.

This virtue caused him to perceive God clear-sightedly and to perform all his actions with great purity of intention, without human respect, even for the good example he could have given people by doing good before them. Speaking of this, I remember making my interior communication to him and telling him that it might have been good to do certain things for the edification of the people. He immediately replied that we should have no thought of that but perform our actions solely for God, meaning that we should go directly to God without dwelling on any other intentions, which may be truly good but less excellent and more dangerous.

As a consequence of his humility, he also made himself all to all; thus, everyone found him admirable and amiable. If he happened to be in a garden and came across some people he knew, who were pruning their vines, he willingly set to work at this and shared with the others whatever he knew about it. As a matter of fact, he had a broad knowledge of things and was ready for anything.

On this solid foundation of humility and simplicity, he had built the other Christian virtues and all those best suited to the spirit of his vocation, especially charity and zeal for the salvation of souls. The latter was prodigious and most admirable, for, outside of the time of rest marked out in our Rules, he could not bear to see people fail to work continually in the missions. Even three or four days before his death he told me, while we were rather busy

listening to and serving the ordinands, that we should steal a few hours to go to the place..., as if he had wanted to send us two poor priests out on mission after dinner on the very day of the ordination or the next day, while he was sick, to do what we could in one of the huge parishes in the diocese.

To illustrate more clearly how, during his life, his mind was occupied with thoughts of the mission and the salvation of souls, in the final days of his illness, when he had a raging fever, his delirium was always about the missions..., that we had to go and give missions in the city of Geneva, that letters had been sent for this purpose, and the heretics were waiting for us there. About six years ago during a mission in our mountains in the dead of winter, I saw something similar happen to him when he was very sick. I remember that he was dreaming that Geneva had been converted and the local bishop had made his entry into the city. This stemmed from the great desire he had, when he was well, for the conversion of that poor town, and he himself was hoping to go there soon to celebrate Holy Mass.

Whenever he could get hold of any reports of the great successes God was giving to works in foreign countries, he would read them, his heart deeply moved; tears would stream from his eyes, showing clearly the joy and satisfaction of his soul. If obedience had so indicated, he was ready to go to Barbary, despite his advanced age and numerous ailments. I heard him say that, when he was a student with the Jesuits he would have volunteered for China, Japan, or Canada, if they had been willing to take other persons with them.

His zeal was as disinterested as it was ardent. In truth, he loved only the glory of God, never seeking himself nor worrying about who had procured it. Even when one of the priests working with us on the missions had been very successful in something, he rejoiced more than if it had been himself or another member of the Company.

This truly genuine zeal was accompanied by all the other virtues, without which it either cannot exist or can be, at the very least, useless for the glory of God. He was very patient in putting up with the difficulties and labors which must be endured to win souls, and I know that when he was on mission he continued to catechize, preach, and hear confessions, despite a painful ailment which greatly inconvenienced him. Nor did it prevent him from taking always the worst of everything for himself, as if he were in good health.

His zeal was just as evident in his role as Superior. He had an ardent desire for the welfare and perfection of his subjects and strove to make the spirit of the Company and its principal virtues--above all, perfect obedience to the Rules--flourish among them.

All these virtues, as I said at the beginning of the letter, had won him the esteem and affection of everyone. This was quite evident in the regrets and sorrow expressed

by all sorts of persons at his death--diocesan priests, members of religious Orders, and the good Sisters of the Visitation--who prayed fervently for him during his illness and assisted him in several ways. The laity as well expressed similar regret. Recently a poor peasant came in the name of a leading family of the region to get news of him and to bring him some food. As soon as he learned of his death, he burst out crying with as much sorrow as if it had been his own father.

It would take too long to go into greater detail on the other virtues of our dear departed and to recount the other difficulties, stresses, and labors he endured for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will close by telling you that his funeral was extraordinary because of the presence of the Comte de Sales, Bishop of Geneva; a large number of the Canons of the cathedral; and the ordinands, who were meeting at that time. When members of the diocesan clergy heard of his death, many of them hastened to celebrate Holy Mass for the repose of his soul.

In the love of Our Lord and His holy Mother, I have the honor to be, Monsieur, your unworthy son.

F. CHARLES, i.s.C.M.

1596. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT

March 20 [1653]¹

Most Honored Father,

It is quite obvious that Our Lord is the sole general proprietor of the Congregation of the Mission, disposing in this way of the good subjects He places in it. He certainly has entrusted an excellent mission to the one He has taken from us. What can we say? Nothing, except that I think that this new arrival in heaven will draw down upon the rest of the Company great graces from God and that this universal sorrow will produce holy results in many souls.

Am I not truly bold, Most Honored Father, to dare to mingle my tears with your usual submission to the ways of Divine Providence, and my weakness with the strength God has given you to bear the generous portion of Our Lord's suffering, which He gives you so often? For love of Him, give nature what it needs for its relief and what you need in order to keep well.

I could not conceal from you, Most Honored Father, the extent of my sorrow, but your charity has taught me to love the Will of God, who is so just and merciful and whose goodness has made me, Most Honored Father, your most humble and very grateful daughter and servant.

L. DE MARILLAC

Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, General of the venerable Priests of the Mission

1597. - TO EDMENESTRIER,¹ IN AGEN

Paris, March 23, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever, and may His holy consolation be in all of us so as to bear lovingly the incomparable losses the Company has just suffered of two of its best members. One is M. Guérin, Superior of the Annecy house. The Bishop of Geneva has spoken to me very highly of him--with tears in his eyes and inexpressible sorrow in his heart, to use his own words. God had indeed always blessed the leadership and works of this servant of His to the satisfaction of those within the family and outside of it. He died on the sixth of this month, after an illness of nine days.

I think I have already told you of the death of the late M. Gurlet, who died like a good Missionary. This happened a few days before, in the same house.

The other one about whom I have to tell you is good M. Lambert, who went to God at the end of January.² He was sick for just three days, but the illness was so painful that he himself said he could not bear it long without dying, and that is what happened, after he had received all the sacraments from M. Desdames.

The confessor of the Queen of Poland³ has written me that he is mourned by everyone and that, according to human thinking, it is difficult to find a more perfect priest or one better suited for the work of God. He added that he could be described as dilectus Deo et hominibus, cujus memoria in benedictione est.⁴ He sought God alone, and never, in such a short time, had anyone won the esteem and good graces of the King and Queen more than he, nor had anyone been more universally esteemed, for wherever he went, he spread the fragrance of his virtues. This is the opinion of that good doctor.

The Queen wrote me a long letter in her own hand about him. After expressing her satisfaction with his leadership and her regret that he was no longer with her, she concluded in the following words: "In short," she said, "unless you send me another M. Lambert, I do not know what I shall do." This shows what perfect confidence she had in him. He also persuaded her to donate about one hundred thousand livres more in alms than what she would have given, since the time he had the honor of approaching her, as our men have informed me. They have distributed a good part of them to the poor plague victims in Krakow and Warsaw, as well as to other sick persons and poor abandoned people.

I am sure, Monsieur, that the loss of this holy man, which grieves the entire Company, and even more the loss of all three together, affects you deeply. Mais quoi! the ways of God are adorable, and we must love their effects. This is what we are striving to do in our crushing grief in these events, confident that our dear deceased will be more effective in heaven than they might have been on earth. We are working on filling their places, particularly that of M. Lambert, because of the urgent needs of that kingdom, where people are very well disposed, and where the remaining

workers are not strong enough. Please pray and have prayers offered for the living and the dead.

I am sending you a power of attorney for M. Pignay⁵ so he can get what is due him from the revenue on his priories,⁶ of which he is making a gift to you, up to the time when you took possession of them. There are also two letters to the same end.

I approve of your accepting the foundation of that good girl who died and made you responsible for her younger brother until he reaches the age of twenty-five. I also approve the celebration of two Masses a week in perpetuity and agree that the forty écus income she has given can meet these expenses. I wrote you the same thing a week ago.

I cordially embrace M. Fournier⁷ and am waiting for a letter for his father, in place of the one I lost. Please have the enclosed delivered to La Rose.⁸

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

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Monsieur Edme,⁹ Priest of the Mission, in Agen 1598. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, March 26, 1653
Monsieur,

My most humble thanks for the advice you gave me on the Chancelade business and your offers to M. Sevin.¹ He had informed the Bishop of Sarlat about it, from whom I learned of it. You saw in my last letter that going to Paris is out of the question. Oh, no! it must not even be considered. I dare to say also that, if I could do so (which I cannot), it should not be done because my presence would delay the business of my diocese more than it would advance it, and would, perhaps, ruin it.

I was very glad to hear of the success of the affair against the doctrine of the times.² May God be forever blessed for it!

The Rector of Caussade and another unionist had me served a notice in which they say they had gone to Cahors, assuming that I had summoned my clergy--which is false--to execute the decree of expediency and articles passed later, and they have registered a protest against me. I had them served another notice, wherein I order them to appear at my next synod for the execution of the said decree and articles. I wanted to inform you about this so that, if they write to you, you will know what it is all about. I am sending these acts to the agents.

Do me the kindness of praying to God for me and to believe that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors
1599. - SAINT LOUISE TO SAINT VINCENT
April 3, 1653

Most Honored Father,

I forgot to tell you that, two days before he became ill, the late M. Lambert did me the honor of informing me that

our Sister Françoise,¹ who is in Poland, was acting as the bond between the other two, who were not getting along well.

I also want to remind your charity to keep the Pastor of Saint-Laurent² in mind when you get permission to have Holy Mass celebrated in the home for poor workers,³ so he will have no reason to complain.

I took the liberty yesterday of telling M. Le Gros⁴ that I thought it was too soon to have an outside door into the chapel. Do me the honor of informing me when you would like to speak to persons outside about the house, and whether more women than men should be admitted so as to increase the number.

I beg God to do His holy Will in this and am, Most Honored Father, your poor daughter and most humble servant.

L. DE M.

1600. - TO ANTONIO DRAGO,¹ IN GENOA

My very dear Monsieur,

It was a very great joy for me to receive your letter, in which you tell me that you have finished your time in the seminary and wish to make vows in the Congregation. I certainly hope you will find in them a remedy against weakness and human inconstancy and will unite yourself more closely and perfectly to God.

You also disclose to me your intention of placing a restriction on your vows, in the sense that you may be free to dispose of your patrimony to your blood brothers or to other persons. In this regard, let me tell you frankly, Monsieur, that the mind of the Congregation is that those members who have benefices or patrimony should leave the administration and income of these goods to the Congregation during their lifetime, but on condition that they may dispose of them by will and testament to their relatives or to anyone else. If, however, you wish to do this right now and dispose of your property immediately as an alms to your relatives who, I suppose, are poor, I give my consent most willingly, provided you do so as soon as possible, lest these goods become a source of temptation later on.

I thank God, who has given you such love for your vocation, and I hope it will increase daily for His glory and the salvation of souls.

Please keep me in your prayers, and I shall remember you daily in the most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

I am, my very dear Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Paris, April 4, 1653

I am sending you the vow formula you requested, although Monsieur Étienne Blatiron has one in the house.

Addressed: Signor Antonio Drago, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, in Genoa

1601. - TO GERARD BRIN, SUPERIOR, IN LA ROSE

Paris, April 6, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

Yesterday we buried one of our good coadjutor Brothers, who had been sick for seven or eight months in one way or another. It pleased God to try him in various ways for the sanctification of his soul. This was obvious to us in the good use he made of his illness and his gentle, constant submission to the wisdom of God in this long, painful trial. His name was Brother Nicolas Perrin. He had served God in the Company for twelve or thirteen years and has left us many good examples of the practice of the virtues which make a good Missionary. I recommend his soul and mine to your prayers.

I say no more to you about our dear departed, Messieurs Lambert, Guérin, and Gurlet, who died recently, because I have written you in detail about them. I shall simply add that the more time goes on, the more we find to say about them--at least the first two, especially the incomparable M. Lambert.

I am waiting for news from you about the present condition of M. Biminet's¹ mother, and whether you have given her the small sum of money I asked you to send her.

You know well enough what the mind of Our Lord is. Therefore, if you guide your family according to this spirit, you will guide it by the Rules of the Mission, for we do not have any that are not in keeping with that same spirit, with which I ask God to animate you. If you were to consider only your own spirit in your present office, you would have reason to fear. Since, however, it is Our Lord Himself who guides Companies and will govern yours through you, if you are truly submissive to Him and place all your trust in His grace, you should also be at peace and consider that He will be glorified by the care you take.

I do not know what to tell you about the difficulty in getting your wheat from Clérac,² except that I hope you will manage, using the ways you indicated to me, or others with which God will inspire you, especially if M. Bajoue, who got you into this situation, gets involved.

If M. Ducasse expresses a desire to return to La Rose, it will be well for you to take him back, but do not go after him so long as he does not answer the request I made him to declare whether or not he is one of us. On the one hand, he has pretended to be a Missionary but, on the other, people have informed me of the contrary.³

The large number of men God has chosen to take from us this year prevents us from sending you any relief for the present. That is why I ask you to do the best you can with the few workers you have. I hope God will give them double strength and you a double spirit to do His work without additional men.

Enclosed are several letters I am sending you, along with a renewed gift of my heart. I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

If you want to write to M. Ducasse to encourage him to help you, do so as coming from you, without letting on that I am aware of this.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Brin

1602. - TO FRANÇOIS FOURNIER, IN AGEN

April 6, 1653

It is true that neither the late M. Gilles nor any other Missionary took part in the philosophical or theological debates that are held in the city, but it is not so easy to avoid them in small towns like Agen. I do not think you would be acting contrary to the spirit of the Company to go to them sometimes, when your Superiors think it appropriate. Nevertheless, they should not force you to do so but, rather, leave you full liberty to go or not, as I do for my part. Even though I know how learned you are, you still might lack the necessary expertise in such circumstances.

1603. - TO NICOLAS TALEC,¹ IN TRÉGUIER

April 9, 1653

I have received two letters from you. They give me reason to praise God, as I do, for your simplicity and candor in writing to me to express so sincerely what you have experienced interiorly. This has greatly consoled me. May God be pleased to allow you to progress more and more in these virtues!

I am not at all surprised that you have been tempted by the benefice. The devil had taken care not to lose this opportunity without making some effort to keep you there, foreseeing his loss in the action you have performed and the glory Our Lord will receive from it. Such a generous act of virtue, performed for love of this same Savior, and leaving you victorious, can only be followed by other victories, which will undoubtedly draw down special blessings on you and your works.

I tell you once again, Monsieur, that far from allowing the attack you have undergone to lessen my esteem and affection for you, I consider you now, on the contrary, one of our best Missionaries, who has been sorely tried; consequently, my heart cherishes you tenderly. Please have no doubt about this.

As for the pension, let me tell you, Monsieur, that Missionaries, who must always tend to their perfection, must always also have no other possession than God. However, since it is proper to arrange with the Bishop of Tréguier,² as to how to rid yourself of it, I think you should wait a little longer, especially since we will soon relieve you, with the help of God, of the main source of your temptation. This will give you the means of serving God with greater liberty and peace of mind, even though we must never expect not to be tempted, no matter what our state in life. It is certain that the servants of God will be tempted; He permits this to try them. Should it happen that you had no temptation, you would be a source of temptation to yourself. Therefore, we must expect it and, asking God for the grace

never to give in to it, make up our minds to be firm in resisting. I expect this from the goodness of your soul, and I ask it of Our Lord for you, begging you to ask the same of Him for me and for the whole Company. I am, in His love, Monsieur, your....

Since writing this letter, I thought that the best way of getting rid of the pension, and the most effective way of having God alone as your portion, is to transfer it to the seminary, with the use of it during your lifetime. You can declare by the same act that this was your intention when you reserved to yourself the right to the benefice, in order to contribute by this means to the spiritual advancement of the diocesan clergy. I am writing to the Bishop of Tréguier about it. He will tell you in greater detail what has to be done in this matter. I think it is a good idea to keep it confidential. 1604. - TO JEAN-JACQUES OLIER
(Now 1453a.)

1605. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON
April 13, 1653

We have recourse to the Duchess in all our needs. I most humbly entreat her to give us her good advice in the present situation.

Enclosed is a note the Attorney General has just written me about the matter of the butchers not selling meat. It is likely that the city will buy the cattle and sheep the merchants have taken to Poissy, which the butchers have been unwilling to buy because of the new tax on livestock, and they want to use our enclosure for feeding these cattle and sheep. This, Madame, would be very damaging to us. The whole enclosure is sown with wheat, oats, and grass for forage. All the walls are planted with espaliers--bons-chrétiens winter pears for the most part--and peaches. These trees are five years old and are laden with blossoms. We are counting on a fine crop this year.

So you see, Madame, what a loss this will be for us. In addition to the damages we will sustain from the loss of about a hundred acres of wheat and oats, the cattle will graze on the plants, chew them up and ruin them. The result will be that only the stumps will be left and will not grow for another three or four years. As for the peach trees, they will be a total loss.

I most humbly entreat you to give us your advice on this and to forgive me for interrupting your devotions on this holy day.¹ But after all, this is an act of charity you are doing for your servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL

1605a. - TO MARTIN HUSSON,¹ IN MONTMIRAIL
April 13, 1653²
Monsieur,

In celebrating Holy Mass, I offered your anxieties, groans, and tears to Our Lord. After the Consecration, I cast myself at His feet, asking Him to enlighten me. Having done this, I carefully considered what, at the hour of my

death, I would have wanted to advise you to do. It seemed to me that, if I had to die at that very instant, I would have been consoled to have advised you to go to Tunis because of the good you can do there. On the contrary, I would have bitterly regretted having dissuaded you from that. This, in all sincerity, is my thought. However, you can go or not go.

1606. - TO FATHER PHILIPPE-EMMANUEL DE GONDI¹
[April or May 1653]²

My Lord,

Today I had the honor of going to see Madame Desd., as you requested. Immediately, she graciously offered to see the person on whom the Poissy affair depends. When she hears of the vacancy, she will make the request for the saintly soul in question, citing the testimony of Monsieur Vincent on the merit of the person. O My Lord, how fervently we are praying for the Sister working to reform that monastery; we pray also for conformity to the Will of God for the brother of that good soul who is sick!³

The recluse⁴ is suffering from a toothache, but there is nothing to fear, thank God. M. Salmon⁵ is in town; people say he was brought here for the express purpose of keeping M. de Buzay⁶ company, who celebrated Holy Mass very devoutly on Easter. There are conflicting rumors about his release. Our Lord will do what is best for His glory and for the deliverance of the person in question.⁷ I intend to have the honor of going to see you very soon, God willing. I cannot tell you, My Lord, how much I am looking forward to that blessed moment.⁸

1607. - TO ÉTIENNE BLATIRON, SUPERIOR, IN GENOA
April 18, 1653

The order I sent to all our houses in the past--about not taking in anyone who claims to be a member of the Company, unless he has a letter or a written obedience from the house he has left--can serve you as a guide in the case of those who admit they have left us, such as the man about whom you wrote to me. These persons are even less to be received than others. I do not mean that if they are in need we should not help them out in passing and do what we can for them, as you have done with that man; I strongly approve of that.

When someone leaves the Company of his own volition, we are not obliged to give him anything. But, if it is the Company that dismisses him, it is right to give him something, depending on how far he is from his native place.

1608. - JEAN LE VACHER TO SAINT VINCENT
[Tunis, between 1648 and 1660]¹

Recently a very beautiful Valentinian young woman, twenty-five years of age, was brought to this town of Tunis. Turkish corsairs had kidnapped her near her town. She was sold in the public square. To buy her back, I had someone go as high as three hundred thirty écus, lent to me by merchants, but a despicable Moor, who kept bidding higher,

got her because I did not have enough money. He already had two wives, and she made the third one. The poor creature cried for three days without stopping, and she could not be made to renounce her faith until she was robbed of her honor. These corsairs even captured some nuns in their convent near the sea, and they ran the same risk. Alas! if a few charitable persons would give something for similar occasions, they would certainly be well rewarded for it.
1609. - TO A CARTHUSIAN

Reverend Father,

The grace of O[ur] L[ord] be with you forever!

I read your letter with respect and even with embarrassment because you are consulting the most human and least spiritual of men, whom everyone recognizes as such. Nevertheless, I shall not refrain from telling you my humble thoughts on what you propose to me--not by way of advice but out of the simple condescension O[ur] L[ord] wants us to practice toward our neighbor, or, better still, out of pure obedience.

I shall begin then by telling you, Reverend Father, that I was consoled to see your attraction toward perfect union with O[ur] L[ord], your fidelity in corresponding to that, the acts of endearment with which His Divine Goodness has often favored you, the great difficulties and trials you have encountered in the various states through which you have passed, and, lastly, the philtres of love you have for that great teacher of the spiritual life, Saint Teresa.

Now, even though that may be the case, Reverend Father, I think there is greater security in the common life of your holy Order and in your total submission to the direction of your Superior:

(1) because it is a maxim that a monk must aspire to be animated with the spirit of his Order; otherwise, he would be a monk in habit only and not in spirit. Also, since your holy Order is recognized as the most perfect one in the Church, and that, consequently, all the others can transfer to the Carthusians, you thus have a greater obligation to work at the acquisition of that spirit. And since the spirit of your holy Order consists in silence, solitude, and vocal prayer, animated by mental prayer, I think, Reverend Father, that it will be well for you to give yourself to O[ur] L[ord] to enter into this spirit.

(2) It is a maxim that the Spirit of O[ur] L[ord] acts gently and sweetly, and that of nature and the evil spirit acts, on the contrary, harshly and bitterly. Now, from all you tell me, it would seem that your ways are harsh and bitter and cause you to hold tenaciously to your own opinions in opposition to those of your Superiors. Furthermore, you are inclined to be that way by temperament.
1610. - TO THOMAS BERTHE, IN ROME

Paris, April 25, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I thank God for your safe arrival in Rome, and I ask Him to keep you well there, as He did on the way. I ask Him also to bless what you are doing there, one of the most important works that can be done for the Company, since it is a question of its consolidation.¹ You will do well to start by making the seven churches² to ask God for the success of this affair. Next, you should consult someone with broad experience, capable of seeing that it turns out well.

I also think it will be a good idea for you to discuss it with Bishop Massari, who honors us with his benevolence, so that, through his influence, you will be placed under the protection of the Sacred Congregation.³ In this way, you will be able to make them understand how varied, difficult, and extensive our works are. As a result, they may scare away, discourage, and expose to many risks those who devote themselves to them. Consequently, it is not easy for them to persevere, unless there is some bond to retain them in the Company.

What has happened to a few other Congregations, where the members had no obligation to obey, and left whenever they pleased, might also happen to us. If the Superior thought of preparing some of his men to be sent near or far for the glory of God, he had no control over things, because he did not have the right to make himself obeyed. So, if the Missionaries were free to do or not to do the good proposed to them, to go or stay wherever they were most inclined, and to drop everything at their first whim, it would be almost impossible to function and to continue the good works that were begun, let alone to undertake any others, because many persons are so flighty that what they love today, tires them tomorrow.

Perhaps, when the Sacred Congregation is well informed of the need for our vows because of the inconvenience that might arise from not making them, it will do us the favor of using its influence with our Holy Father to obtain what we are requesting, since we are devoted in a special way to his service.

In the reports and the petition you present, be careful, however, not to call into doubt the permission we have to make the said vows, taking for granted our customary way of making them. Represent what was done in the past by certain other priests in Rome who were erected as a Congregation and used to make a vow of stability. They said that, after spending some time in the Congregation, many grow weary, are persuaded by relatives to leave or, under some other pretext, get themselves dispensed from their vows by the Ordinary. In this way, they may easily abandon their commitment, which is very prejudicial to the Congregation and its works. That is why the Congregation most humbly entreated our Holy Father to declare that no one but His Holiness and the Superior General of the Company may dispense a man from the said vows, to forbid the Bishops to

dispense anyone from them in future, and to forbid those who have already made them--or will make them later on--to go to them [the Bishops] for that purpose, or to anyone else who has the authority to give a dispensation from vows.⁴ This was granted to the above-mentioned priests; I will look for the Bull and send it to you.

I hope also that, with the grace of God, your case will have a similar outcome. I know that Rome has a certain aversion for the religious state, and if they think we want to pass to that state, it will be an obstacle to our plan. However, you can assure them of the contrary because our vows are simple and non-religious, and it is expressly stated in the Rule we have made on this point, and which the Archbishop has confirmed by the faculty the Holy See has granted him to approve our Rules,⁵ that we have no intention of separating ourselves from the ranks of the clergy nor to enter the religious state. Say that this year we have lost six or seven men from the Company because of the advice that some troublemaker gave them, stating that our vows are invalid, but while they thought they were valid, they persevered. How true it is that, by nature, we are very unstable when we have no bond to retain us.⁶

As for me, by the grace of Our Lord, nothing will prevent me from being totally, as I now am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.⁷

Addressed: Monsieur Berthe, Priest of the Mission, in Rome 1611. - TO A SUPERIOR

Continue, Monsieur, to be very docile to the guidance of God and to conform your own way of acting to that of Our Lord. He was always humble, gentle, attentive, and most accommodating to the moods and weaknesses of others, having in view the glory of His Father and the welfare of souls in general and in particular.

Endure patiently with Him work, opposition, poverty, and all the upsets of mind and body in yourself and in others. By these means, O Dieu! Monsieur, you will draw down riches on your soul and blessings on your work, and I venture to say you will draw persons to God!

1612. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION, IN GENOA¹
May 2, 1653

We must always observe the maxim practiced in our Congregation of not hearing in our houses the confessions of persons outside the Company who do not reside there. If such a need exists, as you tell me is the case with regard to French persons in Genoa, you can go to the parish church to hear them or to some other one, with the permission of the Pastor or Superior. But you are not allowed to hear the confessions of people living in the town or the region, either in your own chapel or elsewhere, except during retreats and missions, because there is no lack of other confessors who can hear them, as there is for the French who do not speak Italian.

1613. - TO EMERAND BAJOUÉ, IN LORM
Paris, May 3, 1653
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Recently I wrote you by way of Cahors because I could not remember your address in Montauban. If M. Cuissot received my packet and delivered my letter to you, you learned two things from it, one of which is the inestimable loss the Company has suffered in the deaths of M. Lambert, M. Gurlet, and M. Guérin, not to mention Brother Nicolas Perrin, who has since died. I recommend all these good souls to your prayers.

The second thing is that I have the same sentiments of esteem and affection for you as I had in the past. Since you have given me reason to feel this way, you likewise give me reason to keep and increase these sentiments. I have no difficulty in doing so because I am naturally inclined to this, knowing your goodness, the graces God has given you, and your attachment to the Company, and to me in particular.

I think I expressed this to you in my last letter, and I assure you of it in this one, especially since, in your letter of April 12, as in the previous ones, you do not seem to be convinced of this truth, although I am not aware of having deliberately done, said, or thought anything to the contrary. Please let me know, Monsieur, what has given rise to your distress, for, if I am at fault, it was not intentional.

In my opinion, however, here is what it is: persons who love very much, easily take offense at trifles. No doubt your excessive affection for me makes you a little diffident about mine. But there is no harm done; I hope you will soon be over this slight jealousy and be convinced that nothing can change the genuine affection Our Lord has given me for you.

Please suspend the resignation you wish to make of Notre-Dame-de-Lorm and the parish in Saint-Aignan,¹ and let me know why you are pressuring me about this, so I can inform the person we will appoint for you. M. Admirault is not at all suitable because his health is very poor, so we cannot give him anything to do except to assist the procurator of the Collège des Bons-Enfants. The least exertion causes him to spit up blood, and we could not send him there except at great risk to his life. We do not think he will last long, even resting as he is now doing.

Please let me know also what you would like M. Barry to do there, for he is not suitable for everything. He is also ailing with a condition he has had for three or four years. True, he could be given certain work that he might do very well; that is why I am asking you how you want to use him.

We have already assigned M. Lièbe² to teach in the Montech³ Seminary, and this is the second time he has left Richelieu to go there. The first time, he returned from Poitiers because he learned there that the roads had been

closed by soldiers. After that, he went directly to Saintes and wrote me from there that he was waiting for an opportunity to leave for Bordeaux and then for Montauban. I hope, then, that you will soon be seeing him, unless he has come up against some major obstacles.

I praise God for the steps being taken to get that seminary started and for the favor He has allowed you to find with M. d'Agan,⁴ who is so zealous about this good work and has such good will toward the Company. I take the liberty of thanking him in the letter I am sending with this one.

M. Cuissot will be sure to give you a copy of the act of establishment for Cahors, if you ask him. If not, I shall send you one from here. However, I think it is safer to follow the one for Saintes because all the formalities have been observed for the union of the rectorship.

The rest of your letter requires no other reply except gratitude to God for your fine leadership. I ask Him to be Himself His thanks for this and to continue to bless you and, through you, your family and the people.

Ten or twelve of us are going to open four or five missions at the same time, on the occasion of the Jubilee in this diocese. Notice that I include myself in the number; should I not be doing something?

Everything here is going fairly well, thank God. I hope to write you more often after this Jubilee. Do the same, and believe that I am, in the love of O[ur] L[ord],
Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I embrace M. Bajoue with all the esteem and affection due to a true servant of Our Lord, and I send him greetings, prostrate at his feet and those of the family.⁵

Addressed: Monsieur Bajoue, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Notre-Dame-de-Lorm, in Lorm
1614. - TO THE DUCHESSE D'AIGUILLON
Paris, May 14, 1653

The bearer of this letter is Monsieur Husson, that fine lawyer from Montmirail, whom I had the honor to recommend to you for the consulate of Tunis. I was already aware that he was one of the most virtuous men of his time, but I did not know he was such an intelligent, skillful negotiator in important affairs. He has just worked wonders in Montmirail in connection with a garrison stationed in that town, where the inhabitants held it down, and six cavalymen were killed in the surrounding area. The magistrates left town, and only Monsieur Husson upheld the inhabitants, making all the arrangements with the colonel and with the commissioner sent there on behalf of the King. In a word, Madame, I venture to say to you that he is a man whom Our Lord has given to you and to the poor slaves and will serve well those poor afflicted persons, your dear children.

I wonder if a commission from the King will be needed for that, or will it suffice to get a power of attorney from

Monsieur Le Gros, a priest of our Company? The contract for the office of Consul was drawn up in his name. I most humbly entreat you to do, as soon as possible, whatever will have to be done in this matter.

I am going to continue the mission of Sevrans, four leagues from here, as I have announced. I doubt if I can leave it on Friday to go to the meeting. Please make my excuses to the assembly, Madame. I think I would offend God if I did not do all in my power for the poor country people on the occasion of this Jubilee.¹

There is a certain disadvantage in leaving Monsieur Husson here very long because of his good mother and father, who will do their utmost to prevent him from carrying out this generous plan. I am going to buy twelve aunes² of scarlet cloth as presents for the Dey and for the Pasha of Tunis.

We went to a meeting about the Indies today. Things seem to be progressing little by little. Your charity was highly commended at it.

Good evening, Madame. I ask Our Lord to preserve you and to sanctify your soul more and more. I am, in His love, Madame, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: The Duchesse d'Aiguillon
1615. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, May 17, 1653
Monsieur,

Your constant goodness to me, manifested in all circumstances, obliges me to inform you of the important things going on in my diocese. I wrote you two years ago about the disturbances caused by the clergy during my synod. In the copy of the letter I am writing to our Prelates in Paris, you will see the ones caused by the hidden unionists at the synod I just held. I say "hidden" because they did not come forth at the proceedings, although they were united with the others and acted together with them. I was fairly well aware of this, but my great desire to preserve union and peace between my cathedral chapter and me made me close my eyes to it, hoping thereby to win these people over by kindness.

However, all that was to no avail, even though I treated them as they might have desired, and more so. Everyone has criticized me for this, since they do not acknowledge one another any more. Because of the way I acted toward them, they became even more obdurate, insulting me publicly and offending me in whatever way they could. The decree of the council was implemented in an edifying manner in our synod; everything else was as disorderly and scandalous as could be.

I am sending you the reply I gave when the article concerning the eight hundred livres was read, after having your letter read on this subject.

When you see M. de la Marguerie,¹ please show him the copy for the Prelates and assure him of my services. I am so busy that I cannot write to him. I sent the representatives of the clergy the statement I drew up concerning the implementation of the said decree and articles upon which you and he agreed. With his consent I have made the exchange of the chapel of ease of Borrèze² in perpetuity for a small parish, and gave him, for the latter, one of the most capable, virtuous priests in my diocese.

Father Paulin's³ death will delay the two matters he had been handling. The Bishop of Sarlat promised me he would write about them to the person replacing him, at least for the Chancelade business. I told him to write about the other one also. He is being urged to write to the Cardinal⁴ about it, so he tells me, but I would not dare advise him to do so, without your advice. Please give it to us on the above-mentioned matter and, if you are on familiar terms with the King's confessor,⁵ recommend these two affairs to him. Believe that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1616. - TO MATHURIN GENTIL, IN LE MANS

Paris, May 24, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am glad that the absence of M. Lucas gives me the opportunity to embrace you in spirit and to recommend myself to your prayers, as I now do, with all possible affection.

Please give me some news of your health and the state of the family, whom I greet warmly. As far as I know, we are well here and everywhere else, thank God, and, by His mercy, everything is going fairly well in all our houses. All are being blessed in their work. For some time now, we have been giving four or five missions at the same time; I myself have given one together with two or three of our priests. I returned from it yesterday and shall perhaps go back for another one.

Please pray for the success of these missions, and send the enclosed letters to M. Lucas and M. Gicquel as soon as possible.

I am, in O[ur] L[ord], Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: Monsieur Gentil

1617. - TO SAINT LOUISE

Saint-Lazare, Tuesday evening [After July 1639]¹

If you can come to the parlor tomorrow after dinner and are ready for confession, I shall try to be there, although I am supposed to be purged tomorrow;² otherwise, it will be Thursday morning.

You have good reason to honor the various times of sadness and distress of Our Lord in His solitude and the horrible temptations He had to endure.³ This should be a consolation to you.

I recommend myself to your prayers and am y[our]....

V. D.

1618. - ÉTIENNE BLATIRON TO SAINT VINCENT

[Between 1645 and 1657]¹

The pastors left last Friday, full of fervor and very edified. They say that God has granted them wonderful graces, and the graces are, in fact, great. I can say that I have never seen such dispositions nor so many tears shed. I cannot even think about this without amazement and admiration. They were so moved that they were making public confessions. When one of them saw how freely and generously each opened his heart, he said: "We are here in the valley of Jehoshaphat." They did so, as I said, with an abundance of tears in public and in private. These are the effects of an all-powerful grace.

But it is no wonder that God has been so generous to persons who were very faithful to the little regulation and especially to silence! I saw thirty of them together in a room, waiting for me, and no one ventured to utter a single word to another.

Right now we still have four retreatants, including a Jewish man who wants to become a Christian and who has come from Pisa specifically for this purpose. His Eminence sent him to us.

There is a senator who wanted to make a good general confession but could not leave public affairs to make the retreat. He has chosen these three holidays for it and comes twice a day to the house to talk with me about making his general confession. He has begun it very fervently, with deep sentiments of contrition. I hope he will finish it in the same way.

This evening we are expecting six or seven priests, who are supposed to be coming to begin retreat. They are planning to start a mission in town, as we do in the country. I ask your charity to recommend the matter to God.

1619. - TO A COADJUTOR BROTHER¹

May 29, 1653

On the one hand, your letter consoled me greatly, when I saw how candidly you explained what is going on within you. On the other hand, it caused me the same distress Saint Bernard once felt when one of his monks, under pretext of greater regularity, wanted to leave his vocation to transfer to another Order. That Father told him that this was a temptation and that the evil spirit would like nothing better than this change. The devil was well aware that, if he could lure him away from the first state, it would be easy for him to make him leave the second, and then to plunge him into a disorderly life, which is exactly what happened. What I can tell you, dear Brother, is that, if you do not practice continence in the Mission, you will not do so anywhere in the world; of that I can assure you.

So, be careful that there is no fickleness in your desire for a change. If this is the case, the remedy, after

prayer, which is necessary in all our needs, would be to consider that no state on earth does not experience times of repugnance and sometimes of desires to transfer to another. After reflecting on this, consider that, since God has called you to your present state, the grace of your salvation is attached to it, which He might deny you in another place where He does not want you to be.

The second remedy against temptations of the flesh is to avoid contacting and seeing the persons who arouse them, and, as soon as they occur, to reveal them to your director, who will give you other remedies. The one I advise for you again is to place your trust firmly in Our Lord and the assistance of the Immaculate Virgin, His mother. I recommend you to them with all my heart.

1620. - TO A VICAR-GENERAL OF CHARTRES

May 29, 1653

Monsieur,

I have replied to the Queen that it was true that ...had signed the books by Jansenius and De la Fréquente Communion,¹ but he did so without reading them because he did not have the time, and he did so in good faith. Her Majesty's reply to that was to ask if one could sign books without reading them. I said that...the late Bishop of...had assured me he had signed the book, De la Fréquente Communion without reading it.

1621. - TO SISTER CÉCILE ANGIBOUST,¹ IN ANGERS

Paris, May 30, 1653

My good Sister,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am writing to recommend myself to your prayers and to those of our Sisters, and to tell you how consoled I am by the good things I hear about you and your leadership. I think God is greatly glorified by it and everyone is satisfied. I ask Our Lord to continue to bless and strengthen you in your heavy labors. You should contribute to this by taking good care of your health, which I ask you to do. In the meantime, I thank Him for all the graces He is granting you.

Another reason for which I am writing to you is to ask you to send me some information about a certain M. Maillard, chaplain in your hospital--whether he is a good priest, whether he is truly zealous with regard to the poor and the salvation of the neighbor, the status of his father, whether they have a good reputation, and their usual state of health.² If you are not well enough acquainted with them to know these things, you could find out unobtrusively, without letting on or telling anyone whomsoever that I wrote to you about this.

Mademoiselle Le Gras is well, and God continues to bless your Little Company.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, my good Sister, your affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

Addressed: Sister Cécile, Daughter of Charity and Servant of Sick Poor of the Angers Hospital, in Angers
1622. - TO A PRIEST OF THE MISSION
June 4, 1653

In reply to what you inform me, let me say first of all that you should not be surprised if you sometimes feel impatient hearing confessions, and vain in your sermons and in your studies. You are a man and, consequently, a sinner. However, you are exaggerating these things a little, for there is a difference between the act, the consent, and the temptation, and you are mistaking one for the other. If you are tempted to pride in your sermons, you do not, however, preach for this reason. When you are inclined to impatience in the confessional, even if, by chance, you consent to it in some way, it does not follow that you act on it. As for eating, have no scruple about the desires this stimulates in you, nor think you are going to excess in that regard; I have been informed of the contrary. Speaking of that, I ask you to eat better than you have been doing.

In the second place, it does not seem to me that your thought of becoming a Capuchin comes from God: (1) because you are in another state, where His Providence has placed you; (2) because your work in the Company is being blessed; (3) because the Capuchin Order requires great submission of judgment and will and greater flexibility with regard to the opinions of others than perhaps you and I possess; (4) you have no obligation to transfer to this religious Order: what you said to Saint Francis is not a vow but an expression of the impulse you felt to give yourself to him. Even if you had promised him to become one of his friars, that would not be a vow because vows are made to God and not to the saints. Besides, Monsieur, you know that vows are made only after long, mature deliberation and not on a sudden impulse like the one you had.

I see another sign causing me to think that God is not calling you to the Capuchins; namely, that the impulses which come to you disturb and upset you because of their violence, which is usually the case with those the evil spirit suggests. The inspirations of God, on the contrary, are gentle and peaceful, inclining us lovingly toward the good He desires of us.

For all these reasons, Monsieur, you would do well to give yourself to God to persevere in the vocation in which you are now, especially since you can practice the same virtues in it as with the Capuchins, and at least as much mortification of body and mind. If they take vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, you can do the same in the Company; if they preach and hear confessions, as they are beginning to do in several places, is not that what you are doing, thank God? So, I see nothing they do which you cannot do with us, except for the rough habit and bare feet. I say all this without making any comparison between this insignificant Company and that great, holy Order.

If you say that by serving your neighbor you are not working out your salvation, you must not believe that but be convinced of the contrary, since it is the best means we have to attain our end, which is God, and to draw others to Him, following the same ways Our Lord and the Apostles observed.

1623. - TO A SEMINARY DIRECTOR

I praise God for the number of priests the Bishop of...is sending you. You will have plenty of them if you take the trouble to form them in the true spirit of their state, which consists especially in the interior life and the practice of prayer and the virtues. It is not enough to teach them chant, ceremonies, and a little moral theology; what is important is to form them to solid piety and devotion. To do that, Monsieur, we must be the first to be filled with the above, for it would be almost useless to instruct them on these things without giving the example. We must be full reservoirs in order to let our water spill out without becoming empty, and we must possess the spirit with which we want them to be animated, for no one can give what he does not have.

So, let us ask this earnestly of Our Lord and give ourselves to Him to study how to conform our leadership and actions to His. Then your seminary will diffuse sweetness within the diocese and outside of it, causing it to increase in number and blessings. On the contrary, trying to act as masters with those under our care, or to neglect or disedify them, would be a great hindrance to that good. This would happen if we were too anxious to be sophisticated, well-treated, esteemed, and honored, to amuse and spare ourselves and have too much contact with people outside.

We must be firm but not rough in our guidance and avoid an insipid kind of meekness, which is ineffective. We will learn from Our Lord how our meekness should always be accompanied by humility and grace so as to attract hearts to Him and not cause anyone to turn away from Him.

1624. - TO NICOLAS GUILLOT, IN WARSAW

Paris, June 6, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

A week ago I received three of your letters, dated April 14 and 22, and May 4. Only God knows the joy they gave me on reading such good things, especially how well you and our Brother are keeping, living together in the house where the Company is to be established, the growth in this foundation through the latest gift from the Queen of a house and garden, her continued benevolence, and the consequences of her royal charity for all of us and for the Daughters of Charity. I rejoice also at Their Majesties' good health, as well as for God's blessings on their armies, their forthcoming return to Warsaw, the disappearance of the plague in that town, and your holy work there. In a word, I

rejoice in the good you are doing there and all that you tell me good Brother Posny and our Sisters are doing.

These are many important reasons for thanking God, as I do, with all possible gratitude. I have also received rather good news from our men in Sokólka,¹ with whom you say you would like to be reunited; I certainly have no doubt about that. It is consoling and sometimes beneficial to be with those whom we love, but since you love the Will of God above all else, you will acquiesce willingly in this separation, since it is for His glory, and you have the means of promoting it in different places at the same time. If you were together, you would have to go your separate ways for such a good purpose, which must be our common ambition. Now that you are, in fact, separated, you are still united by special affection and are present in spirit by the grace of vocation. This binds all of us to God and causes us to pursue only what is most pleasing in His eyes and most in conformity with the progress of each individual.

The Daughters of Charity do not have any special directory. You can familiarize yourself well with their Rules and practices in order to be able to guide them as best you can in their observance of them, especially to love one another, to live in peace, and to have a deep, tender love for God and an ardent desire to serve and console the poor.

It could be that our establishment will be a long, drawn out affair, but this will allow it to become more deeply rooted in the esteem and affection of everyone. That is why we must accept this delay and even be prepared for a refusal, knowing that God in His goodness will permit this only for a greater good.

God be praised, Monsieur, for the distaste He gives you for the world! Doubtless, He wants to draw you closer to Him and to possess you completely so that you may be a worthy instrument in His hand to carry out His plans. He seems to have great ones for the exaltation of our holy religion in that kingdom where you now are and, consequently, for you, that you may contribute to the sanctification of the clergy and the people, since He has inclined the King and Queen to contribute to this, as they do in so many ways.

The Daughters of Sainte-Marie² will soon be leaving and will do great good, with the help of God. M. Ozenne will leave with them, if he does not go ahead of them. He is a zealous, detached man of God, with a talent for leadership and for winning hearts within the Company and outside of it. If, after these beautiful signs of hope, you were thinking of coming back here, how could you honestly say that you abhor the world and are well aware of its vanities and miseries? Please, Monsieur, allow yourself to be moved with compassion for Poland, where ignorance, sin, and so many heresies have established their thrones. You have been assigned there to try to destroy them. Oh! what a grace,

Monsieur, to have been chosen by God for such a holy undertaking! How do we know what God intends to do? The fact remains that it is no small thing for you to offer yourself to Him for that purpose, and in patience to allow God's Providence to bring you back here or to call you elsewhere, without trying to run ahead of Him. The blessing He has given to your work in Warsaw should encourage you to go on. I ask Him to give you an ever greater participation in His Spirit and total abandonment to His guidance.

Our little news is that we have no news. Everything is going along as usual here. Saint-Charles Seminary has reopened, for the troubles had forced us to close. The Bons-Enfants Seminary is full. Monsieur Cornuel is Superior there, and Monsieur Goblet is Superior of the former. M. Alméras is director of the seminary in this house and has charge of the ordination exercises now in progress here. Most of our houses are working very effectively, even the ones in Italy.

Enclosed is a letter someone is writing you from Auxerre, along with the renewed gift of my heart to yours, which I cherish tenderly. I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1625. - ÉTIENNE BLATIRON TO SAINT VINCENT
[Between 1645 and 1657]¹

Our ordination retreat was only average in number but abounding in blessings, since God bestowed the fullness of His grace upon it. The regulations were observed exactly-- profound silence at all the exercises, and with such moderation, especially during meals, that it seemed as if the ordinands had spent their whole lives in our house. But the grace of God was even more evident in prayer and in the conferences which followed.

I do not think anyone could perform this holy exercise more fervently than they did. Some of them were seen to dissolve into tears at the time of prayer and even during the conference on prayer. Others thanked God aloud both for granting them the grace of making the retreat and for the enlightenment they received there to understand better the state they were embracing, and what they had to do to correspond to God's plan by living as true priests.

As one, among others, was saying good-bye to me at the end of the retreat, he said to me in a voice broken by sobs-- which did not prevent him from expressing himself well-- that he was asking God to send him a thousand deaths rather than ever allow him to offend Him. Yesterday, when I reported that to the Archbishop, Cardinal Durazzo, he began to weep with joy and satisfaction; his heart could not contain his feelings for the blessings God had poured down upon this ordination retreat.

1626. - THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN POLAND¹ TO SAINT VINCENT
[1653]²

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Our very dear Most Honored Father, you would be only too right to accuse us of negligence in writing to you. We most humbly ask your pardon for this and also for our boldness in writing to you about our present state.

There are seventeen people with us, two of whom are mother and daughter. The Queen forbids them to go out unless one of us is with them. We would not dare to tell you the humiliations we have suffered from this. We do not know what kind of a life they have led.

We also have two boys around five years of age. We have raised all sorts of objections to this, saying that our Rules forbid us to have boys and girls together. We have also had a certain warning from God about one of the two boys and a little girl, and about the bad habits existing in this country.

Some of the people with us have ringworm; we do not dare mention the disease the others have. We are not permitted to care for such persons in France, but here we very easily take them into our house. Since our return to Warsaw, the only sick poor person we found is a woman, whom we hospitalized and who died. When one of the Queen's first ladies-in-waiting saw how little we had to do and the small number of poor, she told us that if this bothered us the Queen in her goodness and charity would send us back, without saying that it bothered us. We must not be annoyed nor upset, since we have come through obedience.

We beg you, prostrate at your feet, to do us the charity of informing us what we should do, if matters reach this point.

A week ago, a person with whom we had come from France returned from the Court. He told us that someone, who claimed to be a good friend of ours and who knew that we had come together, told him that we could leave together as well, knowing that the person was going back to France.

Our greatest trial is having no work to do. This certainly gives us reason to humble ourselves and to reflect often on the good advice you gave us when we were leaving you, particularly regarding humility, charity, and union, especially among the three of us. We hope God will grant us the grace to observe it until death. We can truthfully say that we are so closely united that the three of us are as one.

We recommend ourselves to your Holy Sacrifices and prayers, as well as to those of Monsieur Portail and the whole Community. We ask God to keep us always in His holy love. We realize that it is good to be close to the source.

In closing, we greet you at the feet of Our Lord Jesus Christ crucified, and remain forever, Monsieur, your most humble and affectionate daughters and servants.

The Daughters of Charity, unworthy Servants of the Poor.
Addressed: Monsieur Vincent, venerable Superior of the Priests of the Mission, at Saint-Lazare, Paris

1627. - TO MARC COGLÉE, IN SEDAN
Paris, June 11, 1653
Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

Besides the usual pressure of business here, which leaves me no time to write to you often, I have made several journeys to the rural areas to announce three or four missions there, to continue one of them, and to visit others. This is what has prevented me from replying sooner to your letters.

Since you are pressed for money and we have none, we shall try to find six hundred livres. Get them from some merchant and draw a letter of exchange on us, payable at the latest date you can get; we will pay it exactly when it falls due.

I praise God for the satisfaction M. Jeandé¹ is giving you. If you cannot manage without the preacher you are requesting, we shall make an effort to let you have one.

It is a great pity that Sedan has no hospital and is unwilling to designate a house to shelter the sick poor who are lying in the street. As for me, Monsieur, I see no remedy for that, and Mademoiselle Le Gras has no Sisters to send to Charleville. Furthermore, I do not think they are asking for them any longer.

I sent your letter to the Abbot² at Saint-Méen and am awaiting the reply. I would be delighted to see you and embrace you, if your absence from Sedan would not cause several problems, as it would. Please be patient until God gives you an opportunity to leave your post conveniently.

As for eating at the Governor's residence, please abide by what I told you about that.

I forgot to speak at our meeting³ about that good girl who wants to convert, provided a position can be found for her in Paris. I shall propose this at the first opportunity, with the help of God, because I personally know of nowhere to place her.

If the private correspondence between M. Regnault and Sirven⁴ is a fact and you are sure about it, it would be a good idea for you to ask that Brother gently why he has not shown you the letters. However, if this is only a suspicion, you would do well not to mention it to him.

As for the young man from Chémery,⁵ about whom you wrote to me regarding his acceptance into the Company, since it is the father presenting the son, there is reason to think he is doing so only to unburden his family of him. Nevertheless, if you think he may be called by God, and he is healthy and determined to work at anything, send him to me.

Please continue to hold the obedience⁶ on the three usual days, even though you may have nothing to recommend. Too much time would elapse from one Saturday to the next.

Since M. Regnault has a sister who is a nun in Charleville, I think it is only to her or for her that he is writing there.

I do not know of any Canon willing to exchange his canonry, nor of any other good priest who would not raise some objection to leaving Paris, to go and work in the vicinity of Sedan. Therefore, Monsieur, I feel absolutely helpless to be of service to the Dean in the way you and he would wish.

I send cordial greetings to your dear family. We are fairly well here, and everything is as usual. I think the same is true for the other houses. May God be pleased to continue to bless you!

I am, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble servant.
VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

I was given the report I am sending you, but I do not know what to do for the poor children mentioned in it. If you can do anything for them, fine; I shall be very pleased. It will be a consolation for me to receive letters from you every month.⁷

Addressed: Monsieur Coglée, Superior of the Priests of the Mission of Sedan, in Sedan
1628. - TO JACQUES LE SOUDIER, SUPERIOR, IN CRÉCY
June 14, 1653

I think I forgot to tell you before you left that it is one of the maxims of the Company not to associate with nuns by hearing their confessions, preaching, or directing them in any way, and we should even visit them as little as possible. Since, Monsieur, there are nuns in Crécy who might want you or some other member of the family to render these kinds of services, I ask you to refuse absolutely and have no scruple about it, especially since our work is with the poor people of rural areas, and those nuns have other good priests to assist them.

You might say to me that I do the opposite of what I am advising you. God knows that I have done my utmost to be freed of the Visitation nuns; I have never been able to obtain this from my Prelate, although I have done everything possible. Rest assured that I will withdraw from this as soon as I can. In the meantime, please take the advice I am giving you and observe it exactly.¹

I hope you will make good use of what you are suffering because of the Pastor. Let me say in this regard that I would not try to justify him to those who are criticizing him, so as not to give them any cause to think we are condoning his faults, nor would I try to get him to visit you or to go often to your house. However, if he does arrive, I would not refuse to welcome him with the same cordiality as in the past.

1629. - JÉRÔME LAGAULT, DOCTOR OF THE SORBONNE, TO SAINT VINCENT

Rome, June 15, 1653

Monsieur,

In my last letter I did not have time to write you at length about how the affair against the Jansenists ended because the Bull was not posted until the evening the mail left.¹ I can give you no better account of it than by saying with Saint Paul, Regi saeculorum, immortalis, invisibili, soli Deo, honor et gloria!² because God alone has so obviously been at work in this affair that it must be attributed entirely to Him. The Pope himself³ clearly recognized this and said several times that he never felt such great satisfaction as he did during the sessions, where he sometimes stayed up to five hours without tiring. He would have remained there eight or nine hours, except that he had compassion on the theologians, who could not stand on their feet any longer. Furthermore, he understood everything so clearly that the very same evening he would discuss with Cardinal Chigi, the Secretary of State,⁴ all that had been said.

The hand of God was also quite evident in this, since there were major obstacles to overcome, and the Pope had been urged by all sorts of persons to leave the matter undecided. Several of them were very prominent, and they tried to deter him with the excuse that his health was being jeopardized. I do not know whether there was any powerful maneuvering from your area. Time will tell.

Nevertheless, he has remained so steadfast in his decision that, from the time he made up his mind, he has not vacillated a single moment but has always asserted that, since this business was for the good of the Church, he wanted to conclude it. He had it so much at heart that, when his relatives went to see him to get his mind off things a little, he talked about it constantly to them.

He omitted nothing necessary to remove any pretext for complaint. After more than twenty-five sessions conducted by the Cardinals, he held ten of his own for more than four whole hours. Afterwards, he consented to hear the Jansenists,⁵ since they so desired, although he was in no way obliged to do so, especially since they had refused to be heard before the Cardinals. But they got off to such a bad start with him that he did not grant them a second meeting, which they were requesting only in order to stall matters, and they wanted to have as many as twenty-five audiences, so they said. They never said a word about the matter in question but spent the time hurling invectives at the Jesuits, trying to prove they were the authors of more than fifty heresies.

When the Pope saw their scheme, he finally decided to move on. However, they have no reason to complain of him because we had only one audience with him and they have had more than eight or nine since they have been in Rome. Since the decision, they have had another one more than an hour long, at which they declared they would obey. Frankly, however, I doubt they will do so. They are returning to France immediately, despite the terrible heat. There is

strong reason to fear that this is to prevent the Bull from being put into effect.

In the meantime, we⁶ are spending the summer here, by order of the Cardinals, who have told us that it is advisable for us to remain until there is news from France of how the Bull has been received, so as to supply anything that might be missing in it. I do not think, however, that people can find any fault with it. M. Hallier told me he was sending you a copy of the Bull, which is why I am not sending you one. I wanted to spell out these things in detail so that you might take the trouble to enlighten many persons who will probably be prejudiced by much false information.

I almost forgot to tell you that people here have already tried to take advantage of the fact that, two and a half hours after the Bull had been posted, it was taken down by order of the Pope himself. Understand, Monsieur, that this was done deliberately. The Pope had the manuscript posted and would not allow any copies of it to be distributed because he wanted to send the heads of state and the Nuncios copies before private parties sent any. So, he had guards posted to prevent people from copying it. When night fell, he had it taken down, as is customary, to go to testify and give proof that it had been posted.

That very day, it was sent to France with a special Brief to the King and another to the Bishops. The Pope sent an express messenger to Poland to get it there more promptly, since that country is farther away. I hope to be able to send at a later date a more specific report of what happened.

I implore you, Monsieur, to continue to thank God for having saved the Church of France from falling into Calvinism once again, and also not to forget in your Holy Sacrifices the person who is, with all his heart, Monsieur, your most humble and obedient servant.

LAGAULT

Since writing this letter, we went today, June 16, to thank His Holiness. He gave us an audience of over two and a half hours and told us that we must have known everything he had done before reaching that decision, how he had prayers offered to God publicly and in private, and all the sessions he had held to discuss the affair. Furthermore, he confirmed what I had already written you in this letter about the great pleasure he took in this discussion, and the special, tangible assistance he had received from the Holy Spirit on this occasion. He also said that no point of theology had been put forward which he did not easily understand and retain. Moreover, he gave us, point by point, all the reasons for his Bull. He went on to say that, after asking God's help one morning, he had sent for one of his secretaries and dictated it to him in a single morning.

He told us that our gentlemen, whom I no longer dare to call Jansenists--for I would like to believe that there will be no more of them--had come to thank him for his declaration and had promised him total submission to it, even to the point of shedding tears. Would to God that they keep their good resolutions! He added that their harangue at their public audience was just one terrible diatribe against the Jesuits--those are his own words--and that nothing they said was relevant.

1630. - FRANÇOIS HALLIER, DOCTOR OF THE SORBONNE, TO SAINT VINCENT

Last Monday I had time only to write you a note, explaining how the constitution issued against Jansenius was most favorable to the defense of the Catholic religion and the condemnation of error. The Jansenists are leaving the city today, traveling by way of Loretto; their attendants have been ready for the past two weeks. They have promised the Pope that they will obey him exactly. I have reasons to doubt this, since they told all their followers that they had not been condemned, and that their thinking, which is the same as that of Jansenius, remained the same.¹

I know they will make themselves a laughing stock by saying that, because Jansenius has been condemned, as have the propositions taken from Jansenius. Even the interpretation given the fifth proposition by the Jansenists was expressly and specifically condemned. Likewise, all their interpretations were rejected as irrelevant and received an absolute condemnation. Nevertheless, this is an indication of obduracy in error, which can find adherents as easily there as in this country. That is why we must work to enlighten the ignorant and pursue aggressively the publication of the Bull and its verification in the Parlements, dioceses, and universities, as well as by the King, the Chancellor,² the Keeper of the Seals,³ the Bishops, and the Doctors.

I am afraid M. de Saint-Amour⁴ may return to his post and report matters in an entirely different light from the way they actually happened, claiming that they did not get a sufficient hearing.⁵ This has been refuted several times, indicating that: (1) it was entirely up to them, since, for an entire year, they had the liberty to inform the Cardinals of the Congregation and the consultors, verbally and in writing; (2) they had access to our documents, as they themselves admitted in their harangue before the Pope; (3) it was useless to listen to them and to us, too, since it was a question only of a doctrine taken from Jansenius' book, which the Pope had had carefully examined, and it was even more useless to listen to them because the only other means they used to defend themselves were those written in Jansenius; (4) when a book is being condemned, it is not customary to receive any other clarification than what comes from the book itself and from persons knowledgeable about the matter treated in the book; (5) the Jansenist Doctors

were offered two, three, four, five audiences with the Cardinals--as many as would be needed--which they refused; (6) every time they presented a document, they always went off the subject, seeking only to slow things down and thereby to prevent the Pope from making a pronouncement against their heresies so they could disseminate them at leisure.

As for the means by which they are trying to evade the Bull, you have only to read them to condemn them. They came for the express purpose of defending the propositions presented to the Pope by the Bishops and to prevent them from being condemned; they tried to prevent the censure of the university, although it was milder; they wrote three Apologies for Jansenius; they interpreted the propositions the way the said author wanted, and the propositions can have no other meaning than that of Jansenius, unless they falsify the sense of the words in which they are stated. The Pope condemns them all as heresy and cannot tolerate any interpretation. Therefore, they are condemned in the sense they were trying to give them and had presented to the Pope: Ubi lex non distinguit, nec nos distinguere debemus.⁶

You know that the Nuncio⁷ has a Brief for Her Majesty, whom the Pope begs to enforce his Bull, and you see the importance of this. There is also a Brief for the Bishops. We have been asked to remain here until news has been received about how people react on reception of this Bull, since the intention here is to condemn the Apologies for Jansenius;⁸ the book, De la Grâce Victorieuse;⁹ the Théologie familière;¹⁰ and others, as soon as we see how the Bull is received.

When you read it, you will see that all the usual stylistic clauses have been taken out so as not to be prejudicial to our claims. This benevolent procedure obliges us to correspond by respectful obedience, and we must do our utmost in this. Since the Jansenists will do all in their power to prevent it, we must take care to work so as to render their efforts useless.

Someone will have to inform the Queen of the care, diligence, work, and goodness exhibited by His Holiness in this cause, and represent to her the duty of her conscience, her honor, and the security of the State for her son, the King; all these things are to be met with in these circumstances. We hesitated writing to her because the Ambassador¹¹ told us he was not going to write anything, relying on what we were writing about it. We had also thought of writing to His Eminence,¹² but in the end we decided to do nothing, for fear lest people think that our whole plan was in our own interest, which is very far from our minds. We think it will be better for others to inform them about it, however, as you judge appropriate.

Your most humble and obedient servant.

HALLIER

Rome, June 16, 1653

1630a. - TO THE ABBESS OF ÉTIVAL¹

June 16, 1653²

He [Saint Vincent] wrote to the Abbess of Étival to urge her to take in one of her former nuns, who was claiming that she had left her priory only because of the miseries of the times,³ and who was at a greater risk in the world than in her cloister, no matter how exposed to danger it might be....

1631. - TO NICOLAS DE BUZENVAL,¹ BISHOP OF BEAUVAIS

June 18, 1653

Vincent de Paul entreats the Bishop to consent to receive paternally into his diocese a poor hermit, who wishes to end his days in recollection and penance.

1632. - TO JEAN DEHORGNY, SUPERIOR, IN ROME

June 20, 1653

It may be that certain persons do not appreciate the accounts we sometimes give of what is being done for the glory of God in the other houses. These are ill-disposed persons who usually oppose good and, since they do little good themselves, think it is an exaggeration to say that others do a great deal. Not only do they think it but they complain about it because of the shame it causes them.

Because of the weakness of these gummy-eyed persons, who cannot look at the light, are we to stop enlightening others by the examples of those who are more fervent and to deprive the Company of the consolation of knowing what is being accomplished elsewhere by the grace of God? To Him alone is due the glory, and this practice of speaking among ourselves of His mercies is most pleasing to Him. It is consistent with the custom of the Church, which desires that the good works and glorious actions of the martyrs, confessors, and other saints be recounted publicly for the edification of the faithful. This was done even in the time of the first Christians, although most likely no one dared to contradict these accounts while the majority of people were praising God for them and encouraging one another to imitate the virtues of those being mentioned.

Please, then, do not be the one to put a stop to this worthwhile custom, but inform us of all the good results God will be pleased to give to the work of your family, taking care to put forward only what is useful and true, as I shall try to do in my reports here.

1633. - TO EMERAND BAJOUÉ, SUPERIOR, IN NOTRE-DAME-DE-LORM
Paris, June 21, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I received your letter with renewed sentiments of joy and affection because it is your letter, but with regret at the dissatisfaction given you by those persons whom you mentioned without giving any names. I know, however, that this has not happened through any lack of esteem and affection for you but in the way the b[lessed] Bishop of Geneva told me one day that porters bump into one another.

This occurs accidentally in passing but the collision does not stop them; they disregard it as if nothing happened.

Please let me know, Monsieur, the causes of complaint they have given you so that I may try to help them recognize their faults and avoid similar ones in future. I assure you that this will be done in such a way that no one will know where I got my information.

Regarding M. Brin, he will not ask you again for the two hundred livres you brought from La Rose. About a month ago I told him not to think about doing so because that money has been used for the Company. I will tell him that again.

You ask me if you can resign Notre-Dame-de-Lorm to M. Fournier. I ask you not to do so but rather to leave to us the choice of the person and the times for making this resignation because not everyone is suitable nor in condition for that. M. Fournier is a good Missionary, but he is not strong enough to be Pastor nor old enough to head a Community family.¹ Since you are on the scene and, thank God, have these qualities and many others, please be patient, especially since you are neither too old nor too infirm to fear dying soon.

I am not surprised that you have been summoned about the Brial² benefice, but what does surprise me is that you say it could not be conferred on a man who was absent, even though the Bishop knows him; this is done every day. No one goes to Rome, and yet parishes are given to priests who are far from there. Even as I dictate this, I have with me the nomination for a parish to be delivered to the appointee, who is 150 leagues away from here.

What is even more surprising to me is that M. Portail's absence is being used as a pretext to change everything. If there had been any danger, it might have been avoided by handing in to the Bishop, purely and simply, his resignation from the same benefice to have it united to the seminary.³ At least he was sensible enough to inform us of this change before making it.

True, this good Bishop could act that way since he is the master, but what really astounds me, Monsieur, is that you, M. Bajoue, accepted the title to this parish when you already had another!⁴ Moreover, you did so not only without discussing it with me but knowing it was against our intention. Up to that time there was nothing to be criticized in your leadership, by the grace of God. I would like to believe that you thought you were doing a good thing and that, from now on, with the help of God, you will pay closer attention to our obligation of doing everything after consultation and nothing on our own. There is a blessing to be had in adopting this practice, and you can rest assured that affairs of any importance will always succeed better when they have our approval than if you were to act otherwise. And why? Because it is a question of order, and order is in God.

You were quite right to refuse the Glatens⁵ parish-- whatever its merits--because it would have been a terrible scandal for you to have charge of two or three parishes at the same time, and also because parishes are not our business. We have very few of them, as you know, and the ones we have were given us against our wishes, either by our founders or by the bishops. We could not refuse them without breaking with them, and perhaps Brial is the last one we will ever accept because the further we advance, the more involved we get in such matters.

I thank God, Monsieur, for all the graces He grants you, especially for the dispositions He gives you regarding your vocation. I never thought you had any others, and would prefer to believe that of anyone else but you. I am, with the affection which only God knows, in His love, Monsieur, your most humble and affectionate servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

If my reply does not correspond with the sense of your letter and what you intended, please let me know; perhaps I have not understood clearly what you told me. If you are satisfied with it, Monsieur, in the name of God, please realize that I am speaking to you in the language of the heart, which cherishes you more than itself.⁶

1634. - JEAN LE VACHER TO SAINT VINCENT

[Tunis, between 1648 and 1660]¹

A French ship ran aground off the coast of Tunis. Six men, saved from the shipwreck, fell into the hands of the Moors, who took them to Tunis and sold them as slaves. Some time after, the Dey tried to make Turks² of them and, by flogging them, forced two of them to renounce their faith in Jesus Christ. Two others died steadfast under torture rather than consent to such infidelity. Since he wanted to do the same to the two who were left, charity obliged us to save them from this peril. We settled on six hundred piastres for their ransom, and I was accountable for two hundred. Those men are now free.

For my part, I prefer to suffer in this world rather than see my Divine Master denied. I would willingly give up my own blood and my life--even a thousand lives if I had them--rather than allow any Christians to lose what Our Lord has purchased for them by His death.

1635. - TO PHILIPPE VAGEOT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINTES

July 2, 1653

God knows, Monsieur, what a comfort it would be for me to give you the consolation you request regarding the journey to your native place, if I saw that it was the Will of God. But the great distance,¹ the roads, the dangers in the countryside, and the futility of this journey lead me to think it would be better for you to postpone it and, perhaps, even to forget about it. In addition, if we consider the maxim of Our Lord, who did not want His disciples to return home, although they had a good reason for doing so, such as going to bury a dead father,² and

selling what they had in order to give to the poor,³ I must ask you, as I now do, to make to God the sacrifice of this desire.

When you say that you do not know your father's present condition, it does not necessarily follow that this obliges you to abandon a family which God has entrusted to you and the opportunities you have to render Him good services through it and through yourself. You are well aware that your father does not need you to survive. Even if he should be in need, there are ways to assist him without exposing yourself to the danger of such a visit. If you allow me, I will take care of that. I shall write to the Intendant of Burgundy,⁴ who is a friend of ours, or will have his father, M. de la Marguerie,⁵ write to him, asking him to take the trouble to inquire about your father's present circumstances and condition so that, if he needs anything, he can provide him with it.

It seems to me that you can be at peace with that, especially since you would have reason to fear the judgment of God if you left His work for a slight satisfaction. As to your saying that I should not consider this a temptation, all I can reply is that it certainly has the signs of one because it upsets you too much, and you say that you could not bear a refusal. We [know],⁶ on the contrary, that inspirations which come from God are gentle and peaceful and must be proposed with indifference.

Please ask God, Monsieur, for the grace to do nothing which may displease Him in these circumstances. In the meantime, I am your....

1636. - TO ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS

Paris, July 5, 1653

Excellency,

I am sending you some news which will please you greatly: it is the condemnation of the Jansenists. As of June 9, their five propositions have been declared heretical. The Bull was posted in Rome the same day and reached this city on the feast of Saint Peter.¹ The Nuncio² presented it to the King and Queen, and Their Majesties gave it a very good reception. The Cardinal³ has promised to see that it is enforced.

All of Paris leapt with joy about it, at least those belonging to the good party, and the others have indicated their willingness to submit to it. M. Singlin,⁴ who, along with M. Arnauld, is one of the patriarchs of the latter group, has said that the Holy See must be obeyed. M. du Hamel, Pastor of Saint-Merry,⁵ one of the flying buttresses of this new doctrine, is of the same disposition and has volunteered to publicize the Bull himself in his church. Several of the most prominent persons among them, such as Monsieur and Madame Liancourt, say they are no longer what they used to be. In a word, we are hoping that all will acquiesce. Not that certain people have not found this a hard pill to swallow, and they even say that, although the

opinions of Jansenius have been condemned, theirs have not-- but I have only heard one person say this.

Nevertheless, the fact remains, Excellency, that this decision is such a great grace of God that everyone is rejoicing over it here, and those who know what harm those disturbances have done in the past cannot be grateful enough for such a boon. I hope, Excellency, that, since you have helped to obtain it by signing the letter written to His Holiness, you will also be one of the most fervent in thanking God for it and in asking Him to complete the work of restoring unity. The Bishop of Sarlat⁶ will do likewise if you will please send him a copy of the enclosed Bull, which has not yet been printed. We are awaiting the Archbishop of Paris,⁷ who is away, to have it translated into French and posted.

It is a counter-decree of the Holy See which, after full argument on both sides, has taken every possible precaution to remove from our parties all pretext for complaint. It gave them several hearings both privately and publicly, not only the first Doctors⁸ sent to keep His Holiness from making a pronouncement, but the second group,⁹ who had gone to back them up. They spoke for three or four hours at a time in his presence, reading from a large notebook which they had brought fully prepared from Paris. Blessed be God that all their efforts were in vain and that souls are now enjoying peace from knowing the truth that those people were trying to obscure!

May it please His Divine Goodness, Excellency, to preserve you for His glory! This is one of my fondest wishes. I am, in His love, Excellency, your most humble and very obedient servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

At the bottom of the first page: the Bishop of Cahors
1637. - TO POPE INNOCENT X
July 1653

Most Holy Father,

We, the undersigned, have been informed¹ of the admirable spread of the Christian faith in the kingdoms of Tonkin and Cochin-China,² where more than 200,000 Christians³ are deprived of shepherds and compelled to live and die without the assistance of religion; consequently, they are exposed to eternal damnation. We know that the reason for this sad situation is the impossibility of sending evangelical workers in numbers large enough to gather in such an abundant harvest.

In order to prevent this disaster, indigenous priests must be formed; accordingly, bishops must be appointed. Now, the dissensions among Christian monarchs do not permit the nomination of bishops in these places, with the powers and title of Ordinaries.⁴ Therefore, we humbly venture to entreat Your Holiness to create bishops in partibus⁵ and to send them as delegates to these regions in the name of the Apostolic See. We have several secular priests in Paris

capable of carrying out these functions.⁶ They are to be commended for their purity of morals, zeal, prudence, and learning. Moreover, they are prepared to be examined by whomever Your Holiness might care to designate for this.

Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, as before the Supreme Shepherd, we implore this grace with all our desire. HENRI, Archbishop-elect of Reims;⁷ VINCENT DEPAUL; DU PLESSIS;⁸ COLOMBET, Pastor of Saint-Germain,⁹ etc.
1638. - TO JEAN LE VACHER, IN TUNIS
July 15, 1653

Here at last is M. Husson, the young lawyer we promised you for the work of the consulate. Please receive him graciously, since he is one of the most accomplished men I know in his social class. You will soon recognize his moral strength--I do not mean the extent of it, since it surpasses whatever one might think, but sufficiently to oblige you to esteem it highly. He is not only wise, accommodating, vigilant, and pious, but he is an astute businessman and is always ready to interest himself on behalf of others.

He is going off to Barbary to serve God and the poor, despite the distance and the dangers of the place and of the sea. He is leaving Paris, where he is a lawyer in the Parlement. He also leaves his parents, who love him dearly and have tried to stop him by many tears, remonstrances, and stratagems. His detachment is indeed admirable for someone his age, as is the purity of intention he brings to this journey. Not only will he live the common life with you but will not settle any questions without your consent. Furthermore he is so gentle with everyone, so gracious with his friends, and so obedient to his director that when you see how docile he is with you, you will feel obliged to act the same way with him.¹

That is why, Monsieur, I do not have to recommend that you be the first to show him honor, confidence, and kindness, or to defer to him as much as possible, especially in the affairs of the consulate because, with the help of God, the two of you will have but one heart and one soul.²
1639. - TO JEAN BARREAU, CONSUL, IN ALGIERS
July 18, 1653

This letter contains, among other things, the announcement of the condemnation of Jansenism by Pope Innocent X.

1640. - TO THOMAS BERTHE, IN ROME
July 18, 1653

You have seen us wearing surplices when hearing confessions here, which we also do during missions in the country and at home. Now, I have learned that our family in Rome does not observe this custom, although the bishops have ordered it. Tell the men for me, then, that I ask them to do so, and tell those in charge of the house and missions to see to this.

1641. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC TO SAINT VINCENT
Mercuès, July 18, 1653
Monsieur,

On the tenth of this month, I received with great joy the Bull¹ of condemnation of the Five Propositions contained in Jansenius; I said a Te Deum of thanksgiving at the same time. Since then, M. Cuissot has delivered to me the one you so kindly sent. Thank you for it and for the news of the good results it has already produced in Paris; this has given me a new cause for joy, for which I thank God with all my heart.

I have read and reread the exact wording used by our Holy Father concerning these propositions, particularly for the first and the fifth ones, and I never weary of reading them because it gives me such pleasure. They cause me to see what a notable grace God has given to His Church, and especially to this kingdom, in protecting the latter from such serious, pernicious errors in which it ran the great risk of seeing itself involved with the passage of time, since so many persons in the capital had been tainted by them. Doubtless, this venom would have spread to other towns, if God had not made provision for this as He has done. May He be forever blessed for it!

My apprehension led me to groan about it many times, particularly when I saw that several prelates were upholding those propositions. People have written from Rome that the representatives of Jansenism had indicated there that they assented to the Bull, going so far as to declare their acquiescence loud and clear to His Holiness. Deo autem gratias qui semper triumphat nos in Christo Jesu!²

Please do me the favor of sending me the printed copy of the French translation of the Bull, and believe that I am, Monsieur....

ALAIN, B[ishop] of Cahors

1642. - TO A SUPERIOR

July 19, 1653

Please tell me what you think I should do about one of our houses, where they are upset because the Superior is not very regular. He rarely attends Community exercises, especially prayer, and shows little concern about assisting, either by word or example, the souls entrusted to him, in the love of regularity and their perfection. He is always off in the country, keeps a horse in the stable for this purpose, and does not want to be bothered about anything else.

Please give me your advice on this matter, Monsieur. He is an accomplished man in everything else.

1642a. - FRANÇOIS HALLIER TO SAINT VINCENT

[Rome] July 21, 1653¹

Indeed, it was soon recognized, both in Paris and in Rome, that the Jansenist protestations were not at all sincere. The notorious three-column declaration these gentlemen² disseminated throughout the kingdom caused people to believe that, under cover of the condemnation of a purely calvinistic meaning--which is not the point at issue--they were continuing to uphold the entire error of the meaning of

Jansenius--which was the only point at issue and the only one the Pope wanted to condemn.

This is what Doctor Hallier explained at great length in a letter he wrote to Saint Vincent. This letter, dated July 21, states in substance that the Jansenists had neither rhyme nor reason for trying to "hide behind such ridiculous evasions. They give the propositions³ meanings very different from what the words state. Although the propositions are clear, [they try] to make them ambiguous and cryptic by explanations far removed from the true meaning of the words and from the meaning of Jansenius."

Innocent X "condemned them according to what Jansenius meant, which is their true sense according to the meaning of the words. After listening to the representatives of the party, he did not find them acceptable in their imagined sense. He condemned the propositions outright because they could not be given any Catholic explanation. He said he condemned them in so far as they contain the opinions of Jansenius, which are the same as those of the Jansenists, as is apparent in their Apologies for Jansenius and the rest of their books." The Pope in his Bull gave "a meaning to the fifth proposition because it was not contained in the words but only in Jansenius, and he condemned it in that sense," which is the meaning given in the book and by its defenders. "He did not give any explanation of the other propositions because he felt they were clear enough," and he saw that they had no "need of any clarification."

After proving that, following the method of these new Doctors, there is no proposition, however wrong, that can escape censure, Hallier uses a large number of facts to demonstrate that there is no mistaking the Sovereign Pontiff's intention. If it is true, he says, that the meaning of Jansenius is obscure, why then has the Pope refused Bulls to a man whose only crime was signing the Augustinus of that Bishop? Why was the General of an Order, who favored the Jansenists, removed from office? Why, for the same reason, did he relegate to Malta another monk, and give a severe reprimand to the General of the N...? Why did he give a diocese in the kingdom of Naples to an Augustinian named Celestin Brun, who had defended Catholic truth in the congregations, against both the Jansenists and his own Superior?

The fact remains, continues Hallier, that Innocent X "indicated that he wanted to reward all those who spoke against the" Innovators "and to show his displeasure toward all those who were on their side." This, he adds, is why he "offered me the diocese of Toul and, with no thought of mine, gave me a priory in Brittany, which several important persons had requested of him. He also gave orders to his Datary to give the first ones that became vacant to Messieurs Joysel and Lagault." This Doctor goes on to say that the Jansenists realize better than anyone else that they are the targets of disapproval. That is the only

reason why "they fled Rome in a shameful manner, without taking leave of any of the Cardinals of the Congregation." 1643. - TO MARC COGLÉE, SUPERIOR, IN SEDAN
Paris, July 26, 1653

Monsieur,

The grace of Our Lord be with you forever!

I am very distressed about your illness and have recommended you to God and to the prayers of our Company. May His Divine Goodness be pleased to restore you to health and grant you the grace of making good use of whatever states in which you will be. Please, Monsieur, do all you can for your part to get well, and spare nothing to this end.

Your proposal to me about making Sedan a diocese is a question that none of us should even consider because of the almost insurmountable difficulties involved, particularly on the part of the Archbishop. He will never willingly consent to have such an important town cut off from his diocese. With regard to the matter itself, if a diocese were established, revenue would be needed. Where would they get it? True, the King could assign to it the revenue from some abbey, but he will not do so, at least not for the present.

Draw on us--or have drawn--a letter of exchange for four hundred livres, which we received from the Abbot¹ for the erection of your Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament. We will pay it, with the help of God, just when needed. I did not know that our procurator had received this money, nor did he know for what it was intended.

Our Ladies know that Sedan is a place of refuge for poor country people driven from their homes by the soldiers and that you are overburdened with needy sick persons. They have allocated to you one hundred livres a month to assist them. This is in addition to the similar amount you usually receive. So, M. de Séraucourt² has instructions to send you two hundred livres a month.

Thank you for the other information you gave me in your letters.

We shall try to let you have a preacher, even though this will be difficult for us. Good M. Dufour has been running our seminary since M. Alméras left for the visitation of our houses in Poitou and Brittany.

The sister of the late M. David, a priest of our Company, died recently. Her confessor, M. Gérard, chaplain at Saint-Pierre de Mézières, told me that she left to our house in Sedan an annuity she had there, with a capital worth perhaps two thousand livres. It is an obligation for us, and for your family in particular, to pray to God for her soul, as she desired and as I ask you to do, after recommending it to our Community. I thought this bequest he mentioned was a piece of property and part of a farm they had near Sedan, but apparently he means that it is a monetary legacy set up as an annuity.

When you have no further need of Brother Sirven's remedies, will you please send him for additional information to M. Gérard, the executor of the will of the deceased woman, and discuss with him what we have to do. In the meantime, I am, in the love of Our Lord, Monsieur, your most humble servant.

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

1644. - TO PHILIPPE VAGEOT, SUPERIOR, IN SAINTES

July 27, 1653

Monsieur,

I certainly was greatly consoled by your letter, and even more so by the mortification you are practicing by depriving yourself, for the love of God, of the journey you were planning to make. I am sure your father would be quite pleased with your visit, and rightly so. However, the glory you give Our Lord, by remaining where He has placed you, deserves to be preferred, not only because He advises us to give up our relatives, but also because by this act of virtue you draw down His protection on your family and greater grace on yourself.

I did not have the slightest thought contrary to the attachment you have for your vocation. Besides, you are only too well aware of the good you can do in it to abandon it, and I know you are far too good and too grateful for God's benefits for me to think you capable of such fickleness.

1644a. - FRANÇOIS HALLIER AND JÉROME LAGAULT TO SAINT VINCENT

[Rome, end of July 1653]¹

Hallier and Lagault, retained in Rome by the Pope, who was showering them with kindness, praise the charity of Saint Vincent in his efforts to bring the Jansenists back to submission and obedience. They express their pleasure at learning that a number of them had returned and accepted the truth. They approve wholeheartedly the respectful, gentle reception to be given to the Jansenists, with no sign of insult, cautioning at the same time that they should not be allowed to preach in places where they might spread their errors, unless they show true repentance for the past.

Hallier concludes:

I beg you, Monsieur, to do your utmost to see that no Jansenist teaches, preaches, or instructs others, verbally or in writing, unless his own conversion is sure and his honesty recognized. This is the opinion of all upright men in this country, based on all the Church Canons and the Rules of the Holy Fathers. If we act otherwise, either the error will continue or smolder under the ashes for a while, only to burst into flames with greater heat at a later time. Please ponder this truth, Monsieur, and believe that I am your....

1645. - TO N.

[Between 1649 and 1657]¹

I think, Madame, that, if there is any difficulty furnishing this sum of money and establishing this fund in Rome,² we should wait for the second letter. In the meantime, tell the Nuncio the objection being raised here, so that M. Massari, Secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, who wrote one of the letters--which, like the other, I have been unable to read--may investigate in the said Congregation whether there is not some other way to settle this affair. Our Lord is always present in replies that are made in accordance with things as they are, and blesses them....

VINCENT DEPAUL, i.s.C.M.

APPENDIX

1. - LETTER OF THE BISHOPS OF FRANCE TO POPE INNOCENT X¹ [1651]

Most Holy Father,

The faith of Peter, which never grows weak, most rightly demands that a well-established custom in the Church, namely, that questions of greater importance be referred to the Apostolic See, should be preserved forever. In obedience to this very just law we have considered it necessary to write to Your Holiness regarding a most serious religious matter.

It has now been ten years since France, to our great regret, has been disturbed by most violent disputes arising from the posthumous book and doctrine of Cornelius Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres. These disturbances should have been appeased both by the authority of the Council of Trent and by the Bull of Urban VIII, of happy memory, in which he pronounced against the dogmas of Jansenius and confirmed the decrees of Pius V and Gregory XIII against Baius. By a new decree, Your Holiness has established the truth and binding force of this Bull, but as each particular proposition has had no special note of censure attached, some have thought that there was still room for their quibbling and caviling. We hope that all these ways of evasion will be entirely eliminated if, as we ask, Your Holiness defines clearly and distinctly what is to be believed in this matter. Therefore, we beg Your Holiness to examine and decide conclusively and unequivocally the following propositions in particular, about which dispute is most dangerous and discussion most inflamed:

(1) Some of God's commandments are impossible for the just who wish and endeavor to obey them, considering the forces they possess; the grace that would make their fulfillment possible is also lacking.

(2) In the state of fallen nature, no one ever resists interior grace.

(3) To merit or demerit in the state of fallen nature, it is not necessary for a person to have freedom from necessity but only freedom from constraint.

(4) The Semi-Pelagians admitted the necessity of an interior prevenient grace for every action, even for the

beginning of faith; but they were heretical in that they held that this grace was such that the human will could not resist it.

(5) To hold that Christ died or shed His blood for all persons, without exception, is Semi-Pelagian.

Your Holiness has quite recently had the experience of how powerful is the authority of the Apostolic See in crushing error, in the matter of the Two Heads of the Church. The tempest was immediately calmed, and the winds and the sea obeyed the voice and command of Jesus Christ.

When Jansenius was about to die, he submitted his work to you. This has led us to beseech you, Most Holy Father, to pronounce a sure and certain judgment on the meaning of these propositions. By this means you will dissipate every kind of obscurity, reassure wavering minds, put an end to divisions, and restore tranquillity and splendor to the Church.

While our minds are enlightened by this hope, we offer to God our wishes and desires that the immortal King of the Ages may grant you many happy years in this life and a most happy eternity in the next.

2. - ALAIN DE SOLMINIHAC, BISHOP OF CAHORS, TO THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA

[July 2, 1651]¹

Madame,

Some time ago I asked Monsieur Vincent to represent to Your Majesty, as I did in the past, how important it is to the service of God and His Church for someone to succeed me in my diocese after my death. When he did so, Your Majesty was so kind in my regard as to tell him that I might choose the man I considered best suited, and you would have him approved by the King. This compelled me to have prayers offered throughout my diocese and elsewhere, that God might be pleased to make known to me the person who would be most pleasing to Him for this office.

After having considered those who came to mind, studied their qualifications, and sought the advice of persons of outstanding piety, I have decided on the Bishop of Sarlat,² for the reasons Monsieur Vincent will explain to Your Majesty, Madame, if you will allow him, as I most humbly entreat you to do, and to grant me this favor. In this you will render a great and notable service to God and to His Church, and will oblige me to continue to offer you my prayers and good wishes for your prosperity. I shall do so, with great affection, for the rest of my life. I am, in virtue of all sorts of duties, Madame....

3. - PETITION OF ACHILLE LE VAZEUX TO THE PREFECT OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

[Around December 1651]¹

Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord,

It has been learned that some priests from France² are seeking to obtain, through the intermediary of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, permission to form a new

Order of Missionaries in that kingdom. There is some doubt whether this might not be prejudicial to the Institute of the Congregation of secular Priests of the Mission, already established, apostolica auctoritate,³ in the same kingdom, under the government of Vincent de Paul, its Superior General. This Congregation has been extended and employed for many years not only in France and other provinces of Christendom for the benefit of the people and the service of the clergy, under the authority of the Most Illustrious Ordinaries, but also in partibus infidelium,⁴ under obedience to the said Sacred Congregation. The said Vincent, Superior General, the most humble petitioner of Your Eminence, fears with good reason that, if the above-mentioned permission be granted, the multiplicity of Congregations of secular priests, having the same name and the same employments, might not cause great confusion. Therefore, he most humbly entreats Your Eminence to be pleased to consider us kindly and to see that nothing be innovated in this domain without some understanding with the Superior of the Mission of Rome. And he will consider all this as a special favor from Your Eminence.

Whom God, etc.

Addressed: The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Cardinal Barberini for Vincent Depaul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission⁵

4. - DECREE OF PROPAGANDA FIDE

Decree of the Sacred General Congregation of Propaganda Fide, December 17, 1651

His Eminence, Cardinal Barberini, submitted the petition of Reverend Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission in France, asking the Sacred Congregation for a declaration to the effect that nothing should be changed in view of a request to establish a new similar Congregation or college in the said kingdom. Their Eminences have responded that it should absolutely not be permitted that similar Congregations be multiplied in the same kingdom, lest rivalry among them cause harm to religion. Therefore, a favorable response has been given to the petition: nothing is to be changed. Moreover, if any seminaries or colleges are founded in France, they are to be committed to the direction and government of the priests of the said Congregation; otherwise, the Sacred Congregation will give no consent or approval to such foundations.

C. CARDINAL PAMPILI

Dionigi MASSARI, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation

5. - MARIE-ANGÉLIQUE ARNAULD TO MADEMOISELLE DE LAMOIGNON [Around August 4, 1652]

I have heard, Mademoiselle, that M. Vincent received a letter from the Queen of Poland in which, he says, she expresses her intention that the twelve thousand livres she sent be distributed by the Ladies of his Company. I did not want to delay any longer telling you that I will follow this new order of the Queen as wholeheartedly as the one she had

previously given to Madame des Essarts. She has since confirmed this by the letter of June 9, in reply to the one I wrote to Her Majesty with my thoughts regarding the distribution of these alms. In her letter, she does me the honor of telling me to do with them whatever I consider most fitting for the good of the poor.

It is true, my very dear sister, that this change has surprised me somewhat, mainly because I know that the Queen's intention is not that her alms be made so public and cause such a big stir. I think I know her well enough not to be mistaken in my conviction that she would have been just as satisfied to have these alms used to provide for needs that are all the more dire and deserving of pity--because fewer people are aware of them--than to have them used to meet public needs. Although very great, the latter are known to everyone and can more easily find support in the charity of good people. I think that, by parting with some of their luxuries and superfluities, as they are obliged to do, in line with all the laws of the Church, these persons will easily remedy that.

It seems to me that, if Her Majesty intended that these alms be used only in the kinds of works of which the Ladies have charge, and not in others where I know a need exists, she would not have expressed the desire for me to participate in the distribution of this charity. Nevertheless, since I am told that this new order comes from Poland and is more in conformity with the Queen's intentions than the first, I am taking good care not to oppose it. I shall be very pleased for Madame des Essarts to give you whatever remains, to be used in whatever way you wish.

I am, etc.