

## PART III

### DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE CONFRATERNITIES OF CHARITY

#### 124. - GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR CHARITIES OF WOMEN - I

##### *Aim of the Confraternity of Charity*

- (1) To honor the love Our Lord has for those who are poor.
- (2) To assist poor persons corporally and spiritually.

##### *Membership*

Wives, widows, and unmarried women.

##### *Direction*

There are three officers: the Superioress, the Treasurer, and the Supervisor of Furnishings. They are appointed the first time by the Pastor, and then every six months by a plurality of votes.

##### *Office of Superioress*

To admit poor persons after the physician has seen them, and give them a paper indicating that they are poor, have been members of the parish for three months, and are sick with an illness that is [not]<sup>1</sup> contagious.

Beggars are sent to the Hôtel-Dieu, and the Charity assists the bashful poor.<sup>2</sup>

She sees that the poor persons are registered the day they are admitted, will then see that their confessions are heard, and will visit them once a week, if she can.

When they die, she will arrange with one of the Ladies for their burial, if she cannot go herself.

She will often discuss her ministry with her officers, and will take care to see that the Ladies meet at the Pastor's residence every three months.

##### *Office of Treasurer*

She will receive, keep, and use the funds of the confraternity, see that bequests made to the confraternity are paid, have a monthly account given to the Servants of the Poor, serve as an

adviser to the Superioress. make no expenditure without her advice, and give an account of her office before she leaves at the end of her eighteen-month term.

### *Supervisor of Furnishings*

She will serve as adviser to the Superioress, will look after the furnishings of the confraternity, of which she will keep a written inventory; she will keep a list of the furniture she lends to the patients, with their names and addresses, give a report on the furnishings at the end of eighteen months, and, once during her term of office, together with the Treasurer, she will take up a collection to buy linen.

### *Duties of Each Lady*

To serve the sick, each on her designated day; rise early for this purpose, hear Mass, go to confession and Communion, or at least make an act of contrition.

They will honor the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin going to visit her cousin cheerfully and promptly, keeping their minds occupied with some good thought.

## **124a. - FOUNDATION OF THE CHARITY IN CHÂTILLON-LES-DOBES<sup>1</sup>** (August 23, 1617)

### *JESUS, MARIA*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

On this day, August 23, 1617, the Ladies named below have charitably joined forces to take their turn to assist the sick poor of the town of Châtillon, having decided unanimously that, for an entire day only, each will be responsible for all those whom they have decided together to be in need of their help. To do so, they propose two aims, namely, to assist body and soul: the body by nourishing it and tending to its ailments; the soul by preparing those who seem to be tending toward death to die well, and preparing those who will recover to live a good life.

And because, when the Mother of God has been invoked and taken as patroness in important matters, everything can only go well and accrue to the glory of Jesus her Son, the Ladies take her for patroness and protector of the work, most humbly entreating her to take special care of it, as they also entreat Saint Martin and Saint Andrew, true examples of charity and patrons of Châtillon.

Starting tomorrow, the feast of Saint Bartholomew, they will begin, with God's help, to function in this good work in the order in which they are listed here:

First, the chatelaine<sup>2</sup> on her day;

Mlle. de Brie<sup>3</sup> on hers;

Mme. Philiberte,<sup>4</sup> wife of M. des Hugonières;

Benoîte, daughter of M. Ennemond Prost;

Mme. Denise Beynier, wife of M. Claude Bouchour;

One of the daughters of Mme. Perra;

Mme. Colette;

And, lastly, Mlle. de la Chassaigne.

After her the chatelaine will do the same service on another day, and the others will take their turns successively, according to the above order, unless, one of them is unable for some justifiable reason to carry out this ministry on her day. In that case, she will notify the person next in line--or have her notified--that she will be unable to take her turn, so that she can replace her on that day in caring for those who are poor. If that Lady can do so, she should not refuse because, in so doing, she will be freed of the responsibility for the following day, which she would have had according to the above order.

They should daily ask our good Jesus to kindly maintain this order and to shower with His divine blessings all those men and women who will work with their hands or contribute from their resources for its support. He will undoubtedly do so, since He Himself is the one who assures us by His own mouth that, on the great, awesome Day of Judgment, those who assist persons who are poor will hear that gentle, pleasing voice of His saying: ACome, you blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world,@ and, on the contrary, those who have taken no care of them will be rejected by Him with those other harsh, appalling words: AOut of my sight, you condemned, go into that everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.@<sup>5</sup>

To the Father the Judge, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

## 125. - GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR CHARITIES OF WOMEN - II

The Confraternity of Charity<sup>1</sup> was instituted to honor its patron Our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Mother, and to assist the sick poor corporally and spiritually in places where it is established: corporally, by giving them their food, drink, and the medications required during the time they are ill; and spiritually, by having the sacraments of Penance, Holy Eucharist, and Extreme Unction administered to them, seeing that those who are going to die will leave this world in a good state and those who recover will resolve to live well in the future.

The confraternity is composed of a fixed number and limited to wives and unmarried women; the latter with the consent of their parents, and the former with that of their husbands. Every two years, on the day after Pentecost, in the presence of the Pastor, they will elect, by a plurality of votes,<sup>2</sup> three of their members to be their officers. The first will be called *Superioress* or *Directress*; the second, *Treasurer* or *First Assistant*; and the third, *Supervisor of Furnishings* or *Second Assistant*. These three officers will supervise the entire confraternity. On the advice of the Pastor, they will also elect one of the devout, charitable men of the parish to be their Procurator.

The Superioress will see to it that the present regulations are observed and that all the members of the confraternity do their duty well. She will admit the sick poor of the parish who present themselves, and will discharge them on the advice of the other officers.<sup>3</sup>

The Treasurer will act as an adviser to the Superioress; she will keep the money of the confraternity in a strongbox with two different locks, of which the Superioress will have one key and she the other, except that she can keep one écu on hand<sup>4</sup> for current expenses. At the end of

her two years<sup>5</sup> she will render an account to the newly-elected officers and to the other members of the confraternity, in presence of the Pastor<sup>6</sup> and of any members of the parish who wish to be there.

The Supervisor of Furnishings will also act as an adviser to the Superioress. She will keep, launder, and mend the linen of the confraternity, supply the sick poor with it when needed, on the order of the Superioress, and see that it is returned; like the Treasurer, she will render an account at the end of her two years.<sup>7</sup>

The Procurator will keep track of the collections taken up at the church or in the homes, and of the donations made by private individuals; he will distribute the receipts, oversee the operation of the confraternity and the increase of its goods, prepare the accounts of the Treasurer, if need be; keep a register in which he will copy the present regulations and the Act of Establishment, having it verified, if possible. He will write in the same register the list of wives and unmarried women who will be received into the confraternity, the date of their reception and of their death, the elections of officers, the documentation of accounts rendered, the names of the sick poor who are assisted by the confraternity, the date of their admission, their death or cure, and, in general, the most noteworthy and outstanding happenings occurring there.

The Sisters<sup>8</sup> of the confraternity will each have their day to serve the sick poor admitted by the Superioress;<sup>9</sup> they will take to them in their homes<sup>10</sup> the food and drink they have prepared; on Sundays and on the principal solemn feast days they will have their turn to take up the collection at the church and in the homes; they will give the donations to the Treasurer and will tell the Procurator what they have taken in; they will have a Mass said at the altar of the confraternity every first and third Sunday of the month,<sup>11</sup> at which they will assist. On that same day, they will go to confession and Holy Communion, if this is convenient for them, and will also participate in the procession that takes place on that day between Vespers and Compline, during which the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin will be chanted. They will do the same each year on January 14, the feast of the Name of Jesus, their patron.

They will cherish one another as persons whom Our Lord has united and bound together by His love; they will visit and console one another in their afflictions and illnesses; will go as a body to the funeral of the members who die, receive Communion for their intention, and have a high Mass sung for each. They will do the same for the Pastor and for their Procurator when they die. Likewise, they will go as a body to the funerals of the sick poor whom they have helped, and have a low Mass<sup>12</sup> said for the repose of their souls. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

For every meal, each sick poor person will be given sufficient bread for him or her to have enough to eat, five ounces of veal or mutton, some soup, and a demi-setier<sup>13</sup> of wine, Paris measure.<sup>14</sup>

On fast days, in addition to the bread, wine, and soup, they will be given two eggs<sup>15</sup> and a little butter. Those who cannot take solid meat will be given some broth and fresh eggs four times a day. A nurse will be provided for those who are dying and have no one to stay with them.<sup>16</sup>

**126. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (CHÂTILLON-LES-DOBES)**  
(November-December 1617)

Since charity toward the neighbor is an infallible sign of the true children of God, and since one of its principal acts is to visit and bring food to the sick poor, some devout young women and virtuous inhabitants of the town of Châtillon-les-Dombes, in the Lyons diocese, wishing to obtain from God the mercy of being His true daughters, have decided among themselves to assist spiritually and corporally the people of their town who have sometimes suffered a great deal, more through a lack of organized assistance than from lack of charitable persons.

Because, however, it is to be feared that this good work, once begun, might die out in a short time if they do not have some union and spiritual bond among themselves to maintain it, they have arranged to form an association that can be set up as a confraternity with the regulations that follow. All of this is, nevertheless, subject to the good pleasure of their most honored Prelate the Archbishop, to whom this work is entirely subject.

The confraternity will be called *Confraternity of Charity*, in imitation of the Charity Hospital in Rome, and the persons of which it will be mainly composed will be called *Servants of the Poor or of the Charity*.

#### *Patron and Purpose of the Work*

Since, in all confraternities, the holy custom of the Church is to propose a patron, and since the works gain their value and dignity from the purpose for which they are performed, the Servants of the Poor will take for patron Our Lord Jesus and for its aim the accomplishment of His very ardent desire that Christians should practice among themselves the works of charity and mercy. This desire He makes clear to us in His own words: *ABe merciful as my Father is merciful,*<sup>@<sup>1</sup></sup> and in these words: *ACome, blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat . . . I was sick and you visited me . . . for what you have done to the least of those, you did to me.*<sup>@<sup>2</sup></sup>

#### *Members of the confraternity*

The confraternity will be composed of women: widows, wives and unmarried women, whose piety and virtue are known and whose perseverance can be counted on. Nevertheless, the wives and unmarried women must have the permission of their husbands or parents and not otherwise. In addition, to avoid the confusion that comes from too large a number, it should be limited to twenty, until further orders.

And because there is reason to hope that there will be foundations made in aid of the confraternity, and that it is not appropriate for women to handle them on their own, the Servants of the Poor will elect as their Procurator some pious, devout priest or an inhabitant of the town who is virtuous, devoted to the good of persons who are poor, and not too caught up in temporal affairs. He will be considered a member of the confraternity and will participate in the indulgences granted to it, will come to the meetings, and, like the Servants, will have a voice in decisions regarding matters proposed during the time he is in office as Procurator, and no longer.

In addition, the confraternity will choose two respectable, devout poor women, who will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor<sup>3</sup> because their duty will be to watch over those who are alone and cannot move about and to serve them according to the instructions the Prioress will give them. They will pay them decently according to their work; consequently, they, too, will be considered members of the confraternity, will participate in the indulgences, and will come to the meetings

but will not have a deliberative vote there.

### *Offices*

One of the Servants of the Poor will be given the status of Prioress<sup>4</sup> of the confraternity. So that everything may proceed in an orderly fashion, the others will love and respect her as their mother and obey her in whatever concerns the property and service of those who are poor, all for the love of Our Lord Jesus, who became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross.<sup>5</sup> It will be her duty to do her utmost to see that all the poor persons are fed and assisted in accordance with this organization; to admit into the care of the confraternity, during the period between meetings, those sick persons who are truly poor and to discharge those who are better. All this, however, will be done with the advice of her two Assistants, or of one of them. She can, nevertheless, without asking them, instruct the Treasurer to give what she thinks is necessary to do those things that cannot be postponed until the next meeting. When she admits any patients, she will notify immediately the Servant whose turn it is to be on duty that day.

For the counsel and ordinary assistance of the Prioress, two of the most humble and most discreet members of the Company will be given her to attend to the public good of those who are poor and the management of the confraternity.

One of her Assistants will be named Subprioress and Treasurer<sup>6</sup> of the confraternity; it will be her duty to carry out the functions of the Prioress in her absence, to take in the money and give receipts for it, take care of the linen and other furnishings, buy and store the provisions needed for the assistance of poor persons, give the Servants each day whatever they need for the food of those who are poor, see that their linen is laundered, carry out the instructions of the Prioress, and keep a book in which she will write down whatever she receives and uses.

It will be the duty of the Procurator<sup>7</sup> to manage and negotiate business involving funds for the temporal affairs of the confraternity, with the advice and direction of the Pastor, the Prioress, the Treasurer, and the other Assistant;<sup>8</sup> to explain at each meeting held for this purpose the state of the affairs he is managing; to keep a book in which he will record the decisions that will be made during it; to ask, on behalf of the confraternity, the Lord of the town of Châtillon, one of the Syndics, and the hospital Administrator to be present for the rendering of accounts of the confraternity. It will also be his duty to decorate its chapel, to have the Masses said, to look after the vestments and, with the advice of the above-mentioned persons, to purchase some when necessary.

### *Admission of the sick and how to assist and feed them*

The Prioress will admit to the care of the confraternity those patients who are truly poor, and not those who have the means of taking care of themselves, with the advice, however, of the Treasurer and the Assistant, or of one of them. When she has admitted someone, she will notify the person whose day it is to be on duty, and the latter will go immediately to see him. The first thing she will do is to see if the patient needs a nightshirt so that, if that is the case, she may bring him one from the confraternity, along with some clean sheets, if they are needed and he is not in the hospital, where there are some. All of this is in the event that there is no way to launder them there.

When this has been done, she will see that the patient goes to confession in order to receive

Communion the next morning because it is the intention of the confraternity that those who want to be aided by it go to confession and Communion. Before anything else, she will bring the patient a picture of the Crucifixion, which she will put up in a place where he can see it so that, by looking at it sometimes, he may reflect on what the Son of God suffered for him. She will also bring him other small items he needs, such as a bed tray, a napkin, a cup, a pitcher, a small plate and a spoon; afterward, she will notify the person whose turn it will be the following day to see that the patient's house is cleaned and adorned in preparation for him to receive Communion, and to bring him his everyday fare.

Each of the Servants of the Poor will prepare their food and serve them for an entire day. The Prioress will begin, the Treasurer will follow, then the Assistant, and so forth, one after the other, in the order in which they were received, up to the latest arrival. Afterward, the Prioress will start over, and the others will follow, observing the order begun, so that, by this continual rotation, the patients will be served always in line with this organization. Nevertheless, all will be done in such a way that, if one of them falls ill, she will be excused from her service, informing the Prioress so that the latter can continue the succession with the others. If, however, one of them is prevented for some other reason, she will see that someone else takes her place, substituting for her in a similar situation.

When the person whose turn it is has received from the Treasurer whatever is needed on her day for the food of the poor persons, she will prepare the dinner and take it to the patients, greeting them cheerfully and kindly. She will set up the tray on the bed, place on it a napkin, a cup, a spoon, and some bread, wash the patient's hands, and then say grace. She will pour the soup into a bowl, and put the meat on a plate. She will arrange everything on the bed tray, then kindly encourage the patient to eat for the love of Jesus and His holy Mother. She will do all this as lovingly as if she were serving her own son--or rather God, who considers as done to Himself the good she does for persons who are poor.

She will say some little word to him about Our Lord, making an effort to cheer him up if he is very downhearted; sometimes she will cut his meat or pour him something to drink. Once she has him beginning to eat she will leave if he has someone with him, and will go to find another patient, acting with him in the same way, remembering to begin always with the person who has someone with him and to end with those who are alone so she can spend more time with them. Then, she will return in the evening to bring them their supper, using the same system and order as above.

Each patient will have as much bread as he needs, with a quarter of a pound of mutton or boiled veal for dinner and the same amount of roast meat for supper, except on Sundays and feast days, when they may be given boiled chicken for their dinner. Two or three times a week, they will be given ground meat for supper. Those who do not have a fever will receive a pint of wine daily, half in the morning, and half in the evening.

On Fridays, Saturdays, and other days of abstinence, they will be given two eggs, along with some soup and a little butter for their dinner, and the same for supper, with their eggs cooked the way they like. If fish can be found at a reasonable price, it will be given to them only at dinner.

Permission will be obtained for the seriously ill to eat meat during Lent and on other days when it is forbidden. Those who cannot eat solid meat will be given, three or four times a day, broth, soup with toast cut up in it, barley water, and fresh eggs.

Because the aim of this organization is not only to assist poor persons corporally, but spiritually as well, the Servants of the Poor will strive and take great pains to dispose those who recuperate to live better, and those who seem to be approaching death, to die well. They will arrange their visit for this purpose and pray often for that, making some little elevation of their hearts to God for this intention.

In addition, they will occasionally read some devotional book that might be useful to those listening who might profit from this, exhorting them to bear their illness patiently for the love of God and to believe that He has sent it to them for their greater good. They will have them make some acts of contrition, consisting in sorrow for having offended God, for love of Him, to ask His forgiveness and resolve never to offend Him again. In the event that their illness [becomes worse], they will see to it that they go to confession as soon as possible. For those who seem to be dying, they will be sure to notify the Pastor to administer Extreme Unction, encouraging them to trust in God, to reflect on the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus, and to commend themselves to the Blessed Virgin, the angels, and the saints, particularly the patron saints of the town and those whose names they bear. They will do all this with great zeal to cooperate in the salvation of souls and, so to speak, to lead them by the hand to God.

The Servants of the Charity will take care to have the dead interred at the expense of the confraternity, providing a shroud for them and having the grave dug if the deceased has no one else to do this, or the hospital Administrator does not take care of it, as he should be asked to do. They will also attend the funerals of those patients whom they have nursed, if they can do so conveniently, taking the place of mothers who accompany their children to the tomb. In this way, they will be practicing to the full and in an edifying manner the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

#### *Meetings: their purpose and the order to be followed during them*

Because it is very useful for all holy communities to come together from time to time in some place intended for discussing the spiritual progress and what concerns the general welfare of the community, the Servants of the Poor will meet every third Sunday of the month in a chapel of the church in the town intended for this purpose, or in that of the hospital, where, on that same day or the next day, at a time agreed upon by them, a low Mass will be offered for the confraternity. In the afternoon, at a time convenient for them, they will meet in the same chapel to listen to a short spiritual exhortation and to discuss matters concerning the welfare of those who are poor and the support of the confraternity.

The order to be followed at the meetings will be to chant the Litany of Our Lord Jesus or of the Blessed Virgin before each work, and then say the prayers that follow. Next, the Pastor or his assistant will give the short exhortation aimed at the spiritual growth of the entire Company and the preservation and progress of the confraternity. After that he will propose what is to be done for the welfare of the sick poor, and will conclude by a plurality of votes, which he will collect for this purpose, beginning with the Servant of the Charity who was the last one received into the confraternity, and continuing by order of reception up to the Procurator, then the Treasurer and the Prioress. Lastly, he will cast his own vote, which will have deliberative weight, as that of the Servants of the Poor will have.

It will then be helpful to have someone read five or six articles of the organization; they will

also charitably remind one another of the faults that have arisen in the service of the poor persons. All this, however, will be done without any fuss or disorder and with as few words as possible. Each time, they will devote half an hour after the exhortation for this meeting.

#### *Administration of temporal goods and rendering of accounts*

The Pastor, the Prioress, the two Assistants, and the Procurator will be responsible for all the temporal goods of the confraternity, movable as well as immovable. Consequently, they will have the authority to give orders in its name to the Procurator to do whatever is necessary for the preservation and collection of these goods.

The Treasurer will keep the money, documents, and furnishings, as has been stated, and give an annual report on the day after the holy feast of Pentecost, in presence of the Pastor, the Prioress, the Procurator, and the other Assistant, as well as the Lord, one of the Syndics, and the Administrator of the Châtillon Hospital, provided, however, that he be a member of the Roman Catholic apostolic religion. The latter three will always be requested, on behalf of the confraternity, to be present and will have faith in the declaration the Treasurer will make that her accounts are accurate, not allowing any article in them to be crossed out nor that either her husband or her children may be questioned regarding them because, being completely trustworthy--since only such persons are chosen for that, people may have entire confidence in her. Furthermore, if she were subjected to being questioned in this matter, none of the members would be willing to accept this office.

After his accounts have been reviewed, the Procurator will report to the same gathering the state of the temporal affairs of the confraternity and what he has administered and negotiated during the year so that the Lord, Syndic, Administrator, and Council members of the town may be adequately informed by the report of the management of the temporal welfare of the confraternity. If they find it faulty, they may have recourse to our most honored Prelate the Archbishop to have it put in order since the confraternity is totally subject to him. Should that be the case, the Council members are very humbly requested to do this for the love of God.

The Prioress will keep a book of expenditures, in which she will record the responsibilities of the Treasurer for the documents, money, and furnishings of the confraternity. In the event that neither she nor anyone else is willing to take on this responsibility, except for the furnishings and part of the money that will be needed for a few months for the food of those who are poor, the confraternity will instruct the Procurator to take charge of the rest and to give an account of it. He will be bound to do so, without being able to refuse the Treasurer anything the confraternity or the Prioress orders, which he will give her for the support and food of the poor persons.

The collection box in the church, placed there for the upkeep of the confraternity and the relief of those who are poor, will be opened every two months in the presence of the Pastor, the Prioress, the Treasurer, the Procurator, and the Assistant. The Treasurer will be given whatever is in it and will record the amount of what will be found there; if she is unwilling, the Procurator will do it, as has been said.

#### *Elections and leaving office*

The Prioress, the Treasurer, and the other Assistant will leave office on the Wednesday after the holy feast of Pentecost, and a new election will take place on the same day by a plurality of

votes of the entire confraternity. The Prioress, Treasurer, and Assistant may not continue in office so that humility, the true basis of all virtue, may be perfectly honored in this holy institute.

In the event that the Pastor should be non-resident, or that his assistant does not take the responsibility required for the work, it will be permissible for the confraternity to take another Spiritual Father and Director of the work, accepted and approved for this purpose by the Archbishop.

The Prioress, Treasurer, and Assistant may be removed from office before the end of their term by the confraternity, if, in its judgment, they do not carry out their duty well.

The Procurator will remain in office as long as the confraternity sees fit, and no longer.

Those members of the confraternity who commit some public sin or neglect notably the care of those who are poor will be completely dismissed from the confraternity, after the warnings required in the Gospel have first been given to all those whom they wish to remove from office or dismiss from the confraternity.

### *Common Rules*

The entire Company will go to confession and receive Communion four times a year, when they can do so conveniently, namely, on the feast of Pentecost, the feast of Our Lady in August, and the feasts of Saint Andrew and Saint Martin.<sup>9</sup> This is done to honor the ardent desire of Our Lord Jesus that we love the sick poor and help them in their need. In order to fulfill this holy desire, they will ask for His blessings on the confraternity, that it may flourish more and more for His honor and glory, the relief of His members, and the salvation of the souls who serve Him in it or have given of their resources to it.

And so that the Company may be preserved in sincere friendship according to God, when one of the members is ill, the Prioress and the others will take care to visit her, see that she receives the last sacraments of the Church, and pray for her together and privately. When God is pleased to take from this world a member of the group, the others will attend her funeral with the same sentiment as if she were their own sister, whom they hope to see one day in heaven. Each will pray three rosaries for her intention and will have a low Mass celebrated in the chapel of the confraternity for the repose of her soul.

### *Personal Devotions*

Upon awakening they will invoke Our Lord Jesus, making the Sign of the Cross and saying some other prayer to His Holy Mother. Then, having risen and dressed, they will take holy water, kneel at the foot of their bed before some holy picture, and thank God for the gifts, general as well as particular, they have received from His Divine Majesty. They will recite three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys in honor of the Blessed Trinity; one Creed, and one Hail Holy Queen, after which they will hear holy Mass, if convenient for them. They will be mindful of the reserve with which the Son of God carried out His actions on earth and, in honor of the imitation of these actions, will carry out their own in a reserved and tranquil manner.

Those who know how to read will read unhurriedly and attentively a chapter of the book by the Bishop of Geneva, entitled *Introduction to the Devout Life*.<sup>10</sup> Before the reading, they will raise their minds to God and will implore His great mercy in order to derive the fruit of His love from this devotional practice.

When they have to go into society, they will offer this contact to Jesus Our Lord in honor of His contacts with people on earth; they will entreat Him to keep them from offending Him and will strive especially to give great honor and reverence interiorly to Our Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother, since this is one of the principal requirements this confraternity asks of those who aspire to it.

They will take care in practicing humility, simplicity, and charity, each deferring to her companion and to others, performing all their actions for the charitable intention of persons who are poor and with no human respect.

When the day has been spent in accord with the preceding observations, and the time to retire has come, they will make the examination of conscience and say three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys, and one De Profundis for the deceased. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

We, Thomas de Méchatin Lafaye, Canon and Comte of the Church of Lyons, Officialis and Judge of the Primatial See, spiritual and temporal Vicar-General of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Father in God Messire Denis-Simon de Marquemont, by the grace and permission of our Holy Father the Pope Archbishop and Comte de Lyons, Primate of France, Councillor of the King in his Council of State, and his Extraordinary Ambassador in Rome before our Holy Father:

To all those who will read these present letters we make known that we have read the above-written articles of the regulations of the Confraternity of Charity intended to be established and erected in the town of Châtillon-les-Dombes, Lyons diocese, for the spiritual and corporal assistance of the sick poor of their town who, for lack of order in helping them, have sometimes suffered a great deal. These articles were presented to us by the Reverend Messire Vincent de Paul, Bachelor of Theology, Pastor in Châtillon. After having considered them and heard his humble petition asking us to permit the erection of the confraternity, and to approve, sanction, and ratify the articles contained in the regulations, on the authority of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop and under his good pleasure, everything to be added or taken out as he pleases, we have allowed and do allow the erection of the confraternity in the format of the articles stated in the regulations, which, on the authority of the Archbishop, we have approved, sanctioned, and ratified by these present letters, on condition that he may add or curtail anything he pleases, as has been stated, and that the confraternity and everything dependent on it will be subject to the immediate authority of the Archbishop as their Superior or, in his absence, of his Vicar-General.

In testimony whereof we have signed these present letters, have had them countersigned by M. Jean Linet, Diocesan Secretary and citizen of Lyons, and have had the seal of the office of the Archbishop of Lyons affixed to them, November 24, 1617.

MÉCHATIN LAFAYE

By order of the Vicar-General.

### **ERECTION OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, on December 8, feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mother of God, 1617, in the hospital chapel of the town of Châtillon-les-Dombes, the people being assembled, we, Vincent de Paul, priest and unworthy Pastor in the town, explained that M. de Lafaye, Vicar-General of our most worthy Prelate the Archbishop of Lyons, approved the articles and regulations contained above, drawn up for the erection and establishment of the Confraternity of Charity in the town and in the chapel.

By this means, we, the above-mentioned Pastor, in virtue of this approval, have today erected and established the confraternity in the chapel, having first informed the people in what the confraternity consists and its aim, namely, to assist the sick poor. Having invited those who wished to belong to it to come forward and be enrolled, the following presented themselves:

Françoise Baschet; Charlotte de Brie; Gasparde Puget; Florence Gomard, wife of the Lord; Denise Beynier, wife of Messire Claude Bouchour; Philiberte Mulger, wife of Philibert des Hugonnières; Catherine Patissier, widow of the late Philibert Guillon; Eléonore Burdilliat; Jeanne Perra, daughter of Gui Perra; Florence Gomard, daughter of the late Denis Gomard; Benoîte Prost, daughter of Ennemond Prost; Toinette Guay, widow of the late Pontus; and Guichenon, who applied to be a Nurse of the Poor.

The election to the offices then took place in the manner stated above. Mlle. Baschet was elected Prioress; Mlle. Charlotte de Brie, Treasurer; Mme. Gasparde Puget, Second Assistant; and the honorable Jean, son of the late honorable Jean Beynier, was elected Procurator, by the plurality of votes of the persons named above. This took place in the hospital chapel, with the following present and participating: the honorable Messires Jean Besson, Jean Benonier, and Hugues Rey, members of the Society of Priests at Saint-André Church in Châtillon; M. Antoine Blanchard, royal notary and Lord of the town; and several other persons present as witnesses.

BESSON  
BLANCHARD

BENONIER

H. REY  
BEYNIER, *Procurator*

V. DEPAUL, *Pastor of Châtillon*

### **MODIFICATION OF THE REGULATIONS FOR THE OFFICE OF TREASURER**

And because the Servants of the Poor, all assembled, felt that the responsibility of the Treasurer was a little too heavy for one person, they directed, by a plurality of votes, I, the Pastor, being present, that the responsibility of Treasurer be shared by two persons, namely, that the Treasurer will keep and distribute the money, give an account of it, and stock the provisions;

the Second Assistant will look after the furnishings and linen, and give an account of this at the time she leaves office, all of this subject to the good pleasure of the Most Reverend Archbishop.

Drawn up in Châtillon, December 12, 1617.

V. DEPAUL	FRANÇOISE BASCHET
CHARLOTTE DE BRIE, <i>Treasurer</i>	
GASPARDE PUGET, <i>Assistant</i>	BEYNIER, <i>Procurator</i>

Marie Rey was admitted that same day as a Nurse of the Poor.

VINCENT DEPAUL, *Pastor of Châtillon*

### NEW ADMISSIONS

On June 7, 1626, the meeting of the Charity took place in the hospital chapel. By the unanimous vote of the Servants of the Poor the following Ladies were enrolled and inscribed among the number of the Servants: Mme. Sarra Girard, widow of the late Jean Gonod; Mme. Jacquemet Bricaud, widow of the late Jean Levy; Mme. Hélène Tillon, widow of the late Jacques Porchod.

GIRARD, *Pastor of Châtillon*

BEYNIER, *Procurator*

### 127. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (JOIGNY) (September 1618)

#### *Regulations of the Association of the Charity*

The Association of the Charity has been instituted to feed all the sick poor of the place where it will be established; to see that those who are going to die do so in a good state and those who will recover resolve never to offend God again; to honor Our Lord Jesus in the person of his poor members; and, lastly, to fulfill His ardent desire that we be charitable.

This association has as its patron Our Lord Jesus. It will be composed of devout, virtuous women, who are either widows, wives, or unmarried women, but they will be admitted only with permission from their husbands or their parents. In order to avoid confusion, their number will be limited to whatever number the Rector of the association thinks suitable.

They will be called Servants of the Poor. One of them will be elected Prioress or Directress by a plurality of votes, for two years only, and will not be allowed to continue after that under any pretext whatsoever. She will have two members of the Company as her advisers, who will be elected as she was and named her Assistants. One of them will be responsible for the furnishings of the association, and the other for its funds, of which she will give an annual account to the Company on the appointed day, in presence of the Rector of the association, the Judge, the

*Procureur Fiscal*, and the Syndic of the town. They will give entire credence to the amounts she lists as expenses, to avoid the obligation of following the accounting procedure observed in other businesses, on condition, however, of not opening the collection boxes or the boxes placed in churches or other places in aid of the sick persons, except in the presence of the Rector, Bailiff, *Procureur Fiscal*, or Syndic of the town.

If some devout soul should donate an estate or annuity to the association, the Rector, Prioress, and Assistants may name a Procurator to receive the arrears of the annuities and administer the revenue from the estate, which the Procurator may not lease nor make any contract for, except in the presence and with the consent of the Rector, Prioress, and Assistants. He will be bound to entrust the money to the person commissioned to receive it, who will issue a receipt for the money to the Procurator, by virtue of which he will remain legally released.

Two devout poor women will be chosen to care for the sick in pressing need and deprived of any other help. They will be paid from the common funds of the association and admitted to membership in it, and will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor.

Patients will be admitted to the care of the association by the Prioress on the recommendation of the Rector and the Assistants, who, having seen that their clothing is laundered, will have them go to confession the same day they are admitted and receive Communion the next day.

Each Servant of the Poor will take her turn preparing the food of those who are poor; take it to them in their homes--or at the hospital if the poor persons judged in need of assistance are there--and serve them for an entire day. In case they should be legitimately prevented from doing so, the Prioress will be notified so she can provide another Lady of the association for this.

Each patient will have as much bread for dinner as he can eat. Those who drink wine will have half a liter, some soup, and four ounces of veal or boiled mutton, and the same for supper, except that the meat will be roasted or ground up. Those who cannot eat meat will have broth and fresh eggs, bread soup, and barley water, according to the instructions that will be given by the Prioress.

The association will furnish shrouds for the poor deceased who have none, and will go as a group to the grave.

And so that the Servants of the Poor may profit and be strengthened all the more in the spirit of charity, they will meet once a month in the chapel designated for the association, where they will hear Mass in the morning, and in the afternoon the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin, and a brief exhortation.

They will be advised to give great honor and reverence interiorly to Our Lord and His Holy Mother, this being one of the principal points of this association; to act humbly and charitably with the sick, sometimes saying a few pious, devout words to them, sometimes also consoling them; to have great charity toward one another; to visit and console one another in their trials and illnesses, giving instructions that the last sacraments be administered to them; to have prayers said in common and privately so that each may leave this world in a good state; and to attend as a body the burial of the Servants and the Nurses of the Poor. They will also have one Mass celebrated for each and will say the Rosary three times in a devout manner.

Upon awakening in the morning they will offer their hearts to God, invoking the Holy Name of Jesus and that of His Holy Mother, and will make their prayer when they get out of bed. They will assist at Mass daily, if possible; during the day they will act humbly, striving to perform their actions in union with those Our Lord performed when He was on earth; every evening, each will make a private examination of conscience, and will go to confession and receive

Communion for this intention at least four times a year. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

### APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY

To His Excellency the Archbishop of Sens

Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny,<sup>1</sup> humbly petitions, stating that, having witnessed the good resulting from the establishment of the Association of the Charity erected in aid of the sick poor in several places in the kingdom, she strongly desires that the association be established in the town of Joigny.

In consideration of this, Excellency, may it please you in your kindness to permit the establishment of the association in the town of Joigny in line with the regulations written below, and also to have a collection taken up in the three parishes of the town on Sundays and holy days by the members of the association delegated for this. Each one, in the presence of the Rector of the association, will hand over what she receives to the Assistant, who is to keep the money. She will not, however, open the collection boxes nor the boxes placed in the churches or other places in aid of sick persons, unless the Rector, Bailiff, *Procureur Fiscal*, or Syndic of the town is present.

If some devout soul should donate an estate or annuity to the association, the Rector, the Prioress, and the Assistants may name a Procurator to receive the arrears and administer the revenue of the estate, which the Procurator may not lease nor make any contract for, except in the presence and with the consent of the Rector, Prioress, and Assistants, and will be bound to entrust the money to the person who will be designated to receive the money. The latter will issue a receipt for the money to the Procurator, by virtue of which he will remain legally released.

Two devout poor women will be chosen to care for those patients in pressing need and deprived of any other help. They will be paid from the common funds of the association and admitted to membership in it, and will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor.

The patients will be admitted to the care of the association, which will be composed of devout, virtuous women, either widows, wives, or unmarried women, but the latter will be admitted only with permission from their husbands or parents. In order to avoid confusion, their number will be limited to whatever number the Rector of the association thinks suitable.

They will be called Servants of the Poor. One of them will be elected Prioress or Directress by a plurality of votes for two years only, and will not be allowed to continue beyond that under any pretext whatsoever. She will have two members of the Company as her advisers, who will be elected as she was and will be named her Assistants. One of them will be responsible for the furnishings of the association, and the other for its funds, of which she will give an annual account to the Company on the appointed day, in the presence of the Rector of the association, the Judge, the *Procureur Fiscal*, and Syndic of the town, who will give entire credit to the amounts she lists as expenses in order to avoid being obliged to keep the accounting order observed in other businesses, under the responsibility of the Bailiff, *Procureur Fiscal*, or Syndic of the town, who should be present for the accounts--or of one of them. And the Lady and sick poor of the town will pray for your health and prosperity.

F. M. DE SILLY

We have given permission for the establishment of the Association of the Charity in the town of Joigny, in accord with the regulations given above, and to have a collection taken up on Sundays and holy days in the three churches of the town by those persons delegated by the association, on condition of observing the regulations that may be made in our dioceses for confraternities.

Drawn up September 6, 1618.

JEAN, *Archbishop of Sens*

In the name of the Archbishop

DE BROULLY

### ACT OF ESTABLISHMENT

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, I, Jean Maurice,<sup>2</sup> priest and Pastor of Villecien, certify to all whom it may concern that today, September 9, 1618, the Comtesse de Joigny, accompanied by the most devout and virtuous Ladies of the town, assembled in the Saint-Antoine chapel in Joigny, presented to me the permission given at her request by the Most Reverend Archbishop of Sens, on the sixth of the present month and year, to establish in the town the Association of the Charity instituted in aid of the sick poor of the area, and exhorted, by virtue of that permission, to take over the direction and leadership of the association, according to and in conformity with the articles and regulations made concerning it and drawn up by authority of the Archbishop, whose permission is given at the bottom of them. I willingly granted this, both by the desire of the welfare of poor persons as to satisfy her devotion and charity.

At the same time, by virtue of the approval, I proceeded to the establishment of the Association of the Charity, having first explained in what it consists and its aim, and had the above-mentioned articles, regulations, and approval read publicly, in the presence of the Lady, her son the Comte, the Bailiff, and the *Procureur Fiscal* of the county of Joigny, and several inhabitants of the town. Then I declared that those who wished to belong to the association and had the consent of their parents or husbands necessary for this should give their names in order to be enrolled in it. The following presented themselves:

Françoise-Marguerite de Silly. . . .<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, the election of officers followed, at which the Countess was elected Prioress; Mme. Régnier, First Assistant; and Mme. Bourgeois, Second Assistant.

Drawn up in Joigny, September 9, 1618.

MAURICE

JACQUINET<sup>4</sup>

J. GIROUST<sup>5</sup>

Today, Sunday, September 16, 1618, Madeleine Guesnot and Marie Fouchet, widow of the late Jacques Paumier, presented themselves to be Nurses of the Sick Poor.

MARIE FOUCHET

MAURICE, *Rector of the Association of the Charity*

**128. - COMBINED CHARITY (JOIGNY)**  
(Now Doc. 132a.)

**129. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (MONTMIRAIL-I)**  
(October 1, 1618)

The Association of the Charity has been instituted to . . . to see that those who are coming to the end of their days may leave this world in a good state . . . to honor Our Lord Jesus in the person of those who are poor, who are His members; and lastly. . . .

One of them will be elected by a plurality of votes . . . on the appointed day, in the presence of the Pastor or another priest, who will be the Rector of the association, and of the Judge, the *Procureur Fiscal*, and the Syndic of the town. . . .

If some devout soul should donate an estate . . . he will be bound to entrust the money to the person commissioned to receive it, who will issue a receipt for the money to the Procurator, by virtue of which he will remain legally released.

Some devout poor women will be chosen . . . will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor, and will also notify the Servants of the Poor when it is necessary for them to meet.

Patients will be admitted to the care of the association by the Prioress. . . .

Each Servant will take her day to prepare the food of the sick poor, take it to them in their homes--or at the hospital if the poor persons judged in need of assistance are there--and serve them for an entire day, in the order in which the blessed bread is distributed.<sup>1</sup> In case they should be legitimately prevented from doing so, the Prioress will be notified so she can provide another Lady of the association for this.

And because the association may be established in places where there is no common purse nor any way to follow the aforesaid order, such as in villages, in that case each Servant on her day may feed the sick poor at her own expense, observing, however, the manner of feeding and serving them in due time or as closely as possible.

Each patient will have as much bread at dinner as he can eat . . . or ground up; and on days of abstinence two eggs, with a pat of butter, or some fresh fish; those who cannot eat solid meat will have. . . .

The association will furnish shrouds for the poor deceased who have none, will go as a group to the grave, and take care to visit the poor prisoners, to give them alms and to see that they have a change of shirt every Saturday.

And so that the Servants of the Sick Poor may profit . . . where they will hear one Mass in the

morning, and in the afternoon the Litany of Our Lord or that of the Blessed Virgin and a brief exhortation, making sure, however, that this be outside the hours when the Divine Service is celebrated in the parishes.

They will be advised to give great honor and reverence interiorly to Our Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother, this being one of the principal points that this vocation demands, and say for this purpose five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. They will act humbly and charitably with the sick . . . go as a group, each carrying a lighted candle, when the Blessed Sacrament is administered, as well as to the burial of the Servants and Nurses of the Poor. . . .

Upon awakening in the morning they will offer their hearts to God . . . every evening, each one will make a private examination of conscience, and receive Communion at least on the principal feasts for Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

The Bishop of Soissons<sup>2</sup>

Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, humbly petitions, stating that, having witnessed the good resulting from the establishment of the Association of the Charity, instituted in aid of the sick poor in several areas of this kingdom, she strongly desires that the association be established in her town of Montmirail and other villages.

In consideration of this, Monsieur, may it please you in your kindness to permit the establishment of the association in the town and other places belonging to the Lady and dependent on your diocese, in line with the regulations written above, and, for those purposes, to entrust the establishment to her chaplain, Maître Vincent de Paul, priest and Bachelor of Theology. The Lady and the sick poor will pray to God for your prosperity and health.

Having read the above, and for the reasons contained in it, along with several other good, pious considerations, we, Jérôme, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Bishop of Soissons, have permitted and by these present letters do permit the establishment of the Charity, in line with the regulations written above, both in the town of Montmirail and in other places belonging to the Comtesse de Joigny that are in our diocese. We also permit the members of the association to take up a collection on Sundays and holy days in the parishes of Montmirail and other places dependent on the Countess, on condition of observing the regulations made in our diocese for confraternities established therein.

Drawn up in Soissons, October 1, 1618.

JÉRÔME, *Bi[shop] of Soissons*

By order of His Excellency the Bishop of Soissons.

COURTONNE

## ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONFRATERNITY

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Be it known to all whom it may concern that on this day, November 11, 1618, in Saint-Étienne Church in Montmirail, with the people assembled, I, Vincent de Paul, priest and chaplain of Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, etc., and Lady of Montmirail, by virtue of the permission of His Excellency and Reverend Father in God Jérôme, by the grace of God Bishop of Soissons, given to the Lady to have the Association of the Charity established in the town and in other villages of hers dependent on the Soissons diocese, have proceeded to the establishment of the Association of the Charity, with the consent of Jean Delaistre, Prior of Montmirail, absent because of illness, and in the presence of Christophe Bourdelet, his Assistant, having first explained to the people in what the association consists, and having had its regulations and the permission of the Bishop of Soissons read aloud, all of which transcribed above.

When this was done, in the chapel formerly called Saint-Nicolas and now chosen by the Prior to be used for the association, I invited the women who wanted to join the association to come forward and be enrolled. The following presented themselves: in the first place, the Countess, who together with the women named below, wished to belong to the association; then Mlle. Barbe le Juge, wife of Lieutenant Bonseré; Mlle. Chambelin. . . .<sup>3</sup> I then proceeded to the election of officers of the association, in accord with the regulations, by a plurality of votes. Those named were: Prioress, the Lieutenant's wife; First Assistant, Mlle. Chambelin; and Second Assistant, Mme. de la Saulssaye. With the consent of all the Ladies I gave them the priest Nicolas Pullen as Rector of the association.

All this took place in Montmirail, on the day and in the year given above, in presence of the undersigned.

FRANÇOISE-MARGUERITE DE SILLY		
DELAISTRE	V. DEPAUL	B. LE JUGE
JEANNE DE . . .		MARIE DES ESSARTS
MARIE VARLE		FRANÇOISE DARTHOIS
CLAUDE VINOT		JULIENNE BROIZOT
		ANNE LHERMITTE

## ELECTIONS AND RECEPTION

On November 13, when the Ladies who were Servants of the Poor had gathered, Mlle. Chambelin, elected First Assistant, asked the Company to relieve her of that office because of important affairs that had arisen for her; she wished, however, to continue to be a Servant of the Poor. Whereupon the Servants unanimously relieved her of the office but retained her as an adviser. The Countess then volunteered to be First Assistant, for which the Servants thanked her and accepted the offer. Because she is obliged to go to Paris and will have to spend a long time there, the Lady will find someone else to replace her, who will be bound to give an account of whatever is entrusted to her.

Drawn up in Montmirail on the day and in the year mentioned above.

V. DEPAUL  
FRANÇOISE-MARGUERITE DE SILLY

The Servants of the Poor agreed that the officers will be changed every two years on the day after All Saints' Day and that the Treasurer will give her report on that same day each year.

Drawn up in Montmirail on the day and in the year mentioned above.

V. DEPAUL                      B. LE JUGE

Also, immediately afterward, with the consent of the Servants of the Poor, the Lady asked Mme. Fournier, one of the Servants, to take over the duties of First Assistant in her place, as she would do. Mme. Fournier agreed to this and for that purpose was given responsibility for the money of the present administration, as is stated in the register of the association entrusted to Mme. Fournier.

Drawn up in Montmirail on the day and in the year mentioned above.

V. DEPAUL

Since that time, on December 7 Marie Lefébure, widow of the late Charles Hubrot, was admitted as a Servant of the Poor.

V. DEPAUL

On the first Sunday of the present month of December 1619, in the chapel used by the Charity, after the Litany had been chanted, Madeleine Grizard, widow of Marin Guillemin, having sought and requested admission, was received by the unanimous consent and judgment of the officers and Servants of the Poor assembled there, and she promised to abide by its regulations, which she heard read.

PULLEN

The copy transcribed above was verified word for word against the original, which is written on parchment, blank and free of any handwriting and signatures, by us the undersigned, Pierre Gorlidot and Robert Perrot, residents of Montmirail and hereditary notaries in the bailiwick and provost court of Chanvry. In making this verification, we found the copy to be the same and similar to the original. The priest M. Nicolas Pullen, Rector, named in the original, to whom it has been returned, asked us for an official acknowledgment, which we have given and granted him in this form to serve him and to be valid in time and place as thought proper, and he has signed it today, February 10, 1620.

PERROT                      GORLIDOT    PULLEN<sup>4</sup>

At the election of officers which took place on July 26, 1627, Mme. Étienne Labbé was

elected Prioress; Mme. Bonseré, Treasurer; and Madeleine Germon, Linen Keeper. All these officers will carry out these duties for two years, and no longer.

M. BONSERÉ  
E. LABBÉ

M. GERMON  
MAURY

### **130. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (MONTMIRAIL - II)**

*JESUS, MARIA*

*Office of Rector of the Association of the Charity*

It is the duty of the Rector of the Association of the Charity to attend to the welfare and progress of the association.

When the Servants of the Poor meet at 8 a.m. on the third Sunday of the month, the Rector will celebrate Mass and distribute Communion to those who wish, in the chapel of the association, properly decorated and adorned with flowers, which each in turn will furnish. At 1 p.m. he will preach a brief exhortation to them or will give instructions that this be done by some spiritual person. It should aim particularly at impressing on their hearts the spirit of true and solid devotion. After this exhortation, he will have the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin chanted, then will confer briefly and in few words with the officers, in the same chapel, about what there is to be done for the good of the association.

The Rector will act prudently with the Servants of the Poor, striving when he meets them to fire up the lukewarm and spur on the fervent, being careful above all that envy and rivalry--a very dangerous spiritual plague--do not creep in among them, and encouraging them as best he can to have a mutual affection for one another, as Our Lord Jesus loved His spouse the holy Church.

He will admit the sick poor into the care of the association on the judgment of the Prioress and the Assistant, or of one of them, without admitting any who have the means of providing for themselves. He will also discharge, on the advice of the officers, those whose health God will have mercifully restored, having previously exhorted them to lead a better life for the rest of their days.

He will see to it that every spiritual and corporal necessity is charitably administered to the sick poor, in conformity with the institute of the association. In addition, he will visit them every two days, if it is convenient for him.

On the third Sunday of the month, he will, together with the Prioress and the Assistant, empty the collection boxes in the church and the boxes in the guest houses, and will keep a register of what is found in them. The Treasurer or the First Assistant will keep another, as well as of what is collected in the parish on Sunday and holy days. Every month he will settle accounts with the butcher, the baker, and the innkeeper, in the presence of the Prioress and the Assistant.

If anyone bequeaths some moveable goods to the association, he will have them collected and placed in the hands of the Supervisor of Furnishings; if real estate, he will have a Procurator

elected to administer it as prescribed by the aforesaid general regulations of the association. And, in general, he will see that all the articles contained in the general regulations are followed point for point. In doing so for the love of Jesus and of His Holy Mother, he should hope for a very great reward on Judgment Day, as one who will have done everything for which God will have him give an account.

*JESUS, MARIA*

*Office of Prioress*

It will be the duty of the Prioress to attend to spiritual and temporal progress on the advice of the Rector and of the two Assistants.

She will often reflect that the office of Prioress obliges her to show the way of perfection to others by her good example. She will strive above all to preserve the spirit of union and charity among themselves, and to nip in the bud the little quarrels, rivalries, and jealousies that only too often creep into the most holy Companies.

She will receive into the care of the association patients who are truly poor and, on the advice of the Rector and the two Assistants--or one of them--will discharge those whose health has improved. As soon as she admits a poor patient, she will notify the person on duty that day so that she can have his clothing laundered, see that he goes to confession and Communion, and bring him the small items given to each patient.

She will have a collection taken up in the parish on Sundays and holy days, give instructions that each Servant take her day in the order indicated, and visit the patients every three days to see if they need anything, so it can be provided on the advice of the above-mentioned persons.

If one of the Servants is ill, she will immediately continue the order with whoever follows her; if she goes to the country or cannot take her turn on her assigned day, she will be responsible for asking one of her neighbors to fill in for her and to come and tell them her name. She will write out the requests that she will give to the Treasurer for purchases for the patients of either small items or food amounting to more than five sous. She will notify the Assistant who will keep the money for supplies of sugar, preserves, prunes, barley, chicken, and other small items needed by the patients. She will see to it that three or four times a day some broth, fresh eggs, bread soup, and hulled barley are given to those who are fragile, weak, and have no appetite for eating solid meat. She will ask the physician, druggist, and surgeon to see the patients who need them. She will have the dead buried at the expense of the association.

She will visit and have others visit the Servants of the Poor with the same charity as if they were her own [sisters]; she will give orders that all the Servants of the Poor, each carrying a candle, go in a body to the funeral of those who die, and will have one Mass celebrated for each of the deceased the day after their burial--or two days, at the latest. In general, she will do her utmost to see that the regulations of the association are observed for the love of Our Lord Jesus, in whose goodness she should hope to hear as a reward on Judgment Day those merciful and very gentle words: *ACome, inherit the kingdom my Father has prepared for you, because I was ill and you visited me and attended to all my needs.*@<sup>1</sup>

*JESUS, MARIA*

### *Office of First Assistant or Treasurer*

It will be the duty of the First Assistant or Treasurer to act as an adviser to the Prioress, replace her in her absence, and accept, keep, and use the money of those who are poor in line with the instructions given her by the Prioress, except for expenses under five sous, which she can take care of herself, according to the needs that arise.

She will keep a ledger of receipts and another of disbursements, in which she will write what she receives and uses so that she can give an annual accounting, as stated in the regulations of the association.

She will keep the documents and deeds of the association in a strongbox she will have for that purpose. There will be two keys for it; one will be kept by her and the other by the Prioress.

She will procure provisions for the sick in accord with the advice of the Prioress, and keep them to be used as needed, such as preserves, barley, prunes, a few chickens in order to have fresh eggs, and other small necessities for the patients. She will be present with her book of receipts for the opening of the collection boxes and other boxes in order to receive and take responsibility for the money in them. In general, she will comply with all that is stated in the regulations of the association, for which she should hope that our good Jesus will acknowledge her on Judgment Day as one of those who visited and assisted Him when He was ill, and that, consequently, He will give her the kingdom prepared by the eternal Father for those who have practiced the works of mercy.

*JESUS, MARIA*

### *Office of Second Assistant*

It is the duty of the Second Assistant to act as adviser to the Prioress and to carry out all her functions and those of the First Assistant in their absence. She will keep the furnishings and utensils of the association in order to be able to supply them when and how she is instructed to do so by the Prioress. She will see that the linen is laundered and mended, and notify the Prior to purchase some when needed. She will receive and inventory the furnishings and hand them over when she leaves office, and will have a strongbox in her house for the list of furnishings. If a shroud is needed for the deceased, she will supply one, or will request one as an alms for the love of God, who on Judgment Day will see that she is rewarded for her work.

*JESUS, MARIA*

### *What each Servant of the Poor should do personally*

They should aim especially at acquiring the true spirit of charity and mercy. In order to attain this, they will comply exactly and continuously with the regulations of their association, going to confession and Communion at least on the feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, His Most Holy Mother. And if one of them, motivated by holy fervor, practices this same devotion on the days they are to meet as a body in the chapel designated for it, she may hope even more for the gift of those holy, precious virtues from the liberal hand of the One who never denies what is humbly asked of Him.

They will often reflect that, in order to be good Servants of the Poor, they must help them spiritually and corporally, with tender compassion regarding their misfortune, and that it was with this in mind that they had the happiness of being admitted into the association. They will pray for their Rector, love and honor their Prioress, and respect the two Assistants, believing that those persons have been chosen by God to direct His work.

The third Sunday of the month is their meeting day. They will hold a lighted candle during the Litany that will be said in their chapel, doing likewise while accompanying the Blessed Sacrament when it is being brought to some Servant of the Sick Poor, and also when going to the funeral of Servants who have died.

On the morning of the day they are to serve the sick poor, they will ask God to grant them the grace to conduct themselves during this action with gentleness, humility, and true charity, and above all to be able to be beneficial to the souls of the sick poor. Then, after preparing their dinner, they will take them, at nine o'clock, some soup and meat in a pot, some bread in a clean napkin, and some wine in a bottle. They will do the same for supper around four o'clock in the afternoon.

When they enter the patient's room, they will greet him in a friendly way; then, drawing near to the bed with a cheerful expression, they will encourage him to eat, raising the head of the bed, arranging the cover, setting up the little tray, napkin, plate, and spoon, rinsing out the glass, pouring some soup on the bread, putting the meat on a small plate, saying grace with him and feeding him the soup. They will cut up the meat and help him to eat it, while saying some little light-hearted, consoling word in an effort to cheer him up. They will also pour him something to drink, inviting him once again to eat. Lastly, when he has finished eating and the dishes have been washed, the napkin folded, and the tray removed, they will say grace with the patient, and leave him right away in order to go serve someone else.

### **131. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (FOLLEVILLE, PAILLART, AND SÉRÉVILLERS)**

[September-October 1620]

*Regulations for the Association of the Charity of women, founded to assist the sick poor,<sup>1</sup> and, first of all, the aim of the association*

The Association of the Charity has been founded to feed all the sick poor of the place where it will be established, to see that those who seem to be tending toward death may leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover may take the resolution never more to offend God, to honor Our Lord Jesus in the person of the poor, and lastly, to carry out His commandment that we love one another as He has loved us.

*Patron of the association*

Its patron is Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Charity personified.

*Persons of whom it should be composed*

It will be composed of a priest-Rector, known for his ability and uprightness, and of devout, virtuous women--be they widows, wives, or unmarried--who will be called Servants of the Poor.

Those who are married will be accepted only with permission of their husbands, and the unmarried, with that of their parents. To avoid confusion, they will be limited to a fixed number in proportion to the place of the establishment; a devout, charitable layman will be elected as Procurator.

#### *Admission of patients*

Patients will be admitted to the care of the association by the Prioress, on the advice of the Rector and the Assistants. They will have their clothes washed and go to confession the same day they are admitted to the care of the association, and will receive Communion the next day.

#### *Food for the patients*

Each patient will have as much bread as he can eat for dinner; those who drink wine will have a half a setier, soup, and four ounces of veal or boiled mutton; the same for supper, except that the meat will be roasted or ground; on days of abstinence, they will have two eggs with a portion of butter, or some fresh fish. Those who cannot eat solid meat will have bouillon and fresh eggs, bread soup, and hulled barley, as the Prioress will direct.

#### *Order the Servants of the Poor will follow in serving the patients*

The Servants of the Poor will each, on their day, prepare the food of the sick and take it to their home--or to the hospital if the poor persons who are judged in need of being assisted are there--and will serve them for an entire day, in the order in which the blessed bread is distributed. They will do so in such a way that the person who was of service that day will notify in the evening the one who is supposed to [follow],<sup>2</sup> bring her the measure of bread, wine, and meat, and tell her the name, place, number, and condition of the patients in order to prepare what they need so that they can eat dinner at ten in the morning and supper at four in the afternoon.

#### *What to do in places where the order given above cannot be observed*

And because it is useful to establish the association in some places where there will be neither a common purse nor the means of following the prescribed order, as in poor villages and neighborhoods, in that case each Servant of the Poor can provide food for the sick poor at her own expense on her day, observing nevertheless, as far as possible, the manner of serving and feeding them, as indicated above.

#### *Burial of poor persons who have died*

And in order that the association may practice entirely the works of mercy, it will furnish shrouds for the deceased poor persons who will not have any and will accompany them as a group to the grave.

#### *Charity toward the sick*

They will act in a humble and charitable manner toward the sick, sometimes saying a few pious, devout words to console and encourage them.

*How the expenses of this work will be defrayed*

God in His Divine Providence has until now provided sufficiently for the expense incurred in this work, both by the collections the Servants of the Poor take up in turn in the churches--daily in some places, and on Sunday and holy days only in others--as well as what is donated in the boxes placed in the inns, where the landladies do the charity of asking their guests for something for the sick poor of the area.

*Visits to prisoners*

They will take care to visit poor prisoners to give them some alms, console them, and see that they have a change of shirt every Sunday.

*Offices: first, the Rector*

The Rector will be in charge of the association, together with the Prioress and the two Assistants. In addition, the Rector will have the Procurator of the confraternity serve as a witness when he collects the votes that will be cast for the election of the Prioress, as well as for other times he will want to handle business with the Sisters of the confraternity.

*Prioress*

One of the Servants of the Poor will be elected Prioress or Directress by a plurality of votes, for two years only with no possibility of continuing, under any pretext whatsoever, and, together with the Rector and Assistants, will be responsible for the association.

*First Assistant or Treasurer*

To serve as Councillors to the Prioress, two Assistants will also be elected; the first will keep the money and will give an account of it to the Company on the day after All Saints' Day, in the presence of the Rector, the Judge, the *Procureur Fiscal*, and the local Syndic, who will give entire credence to the amounts recorded by them as expenses; they may not open the collection boxes and the boxes placed in the inns or other places for the relief of the sick persons [unless one of those gentlemen is present].

*Second Assistant or Supervisor of Furnishings*

The Second Assistant will look after the furnishings of the association, will have the linen washed and mended when necessary, and, when leaving office, will give an account of what has been entrusted to her.

*Procurator of the association*

If any devout person donates an estate or annuity to the association, the Rector, Prioress, or Assistants will appoint as Procurator some capable person who they know is reliable. He will have charge of taking in the arrears of the annuities and of administering the income of the estate, provided, however, that he does not lease or draw up any contract unless it is in the presence of the Rector, the Prioress, and the Assistants. He will turn over the money he has on hand to the First Assistant, who will issue a receipt for it, by virtue of which he will remain validly released.

#### *Nurses of the Sick Poor*

Two devout poor women will be chosen to watch over patients in pressing need and deprived of any other help. They will be paid from the common funds of the association and admitted as members; they will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor. They will also be of service to the Servants of the Poor by notifying them whenever they have to meet.

*Mass, Communion, litany, and exhortations that should take place once a month in the chapel of the association*

And so that it may be of benefit to the Servants of the Poor and that they may be preserved more and more in the spirit of charity, they will meet on the first or third Sunday of the month in the chapel designated for the association, where they will hear Mass in the morning. Those who are inclined to go to confession and Communion, as they are all encouraged to do, will do so; after dinner they will be present for the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin, following which a short exhortation will be given them. All of this will take place outside the times when the Divine Service is celebrated in the parishes.

#### *Love for Our Lord Jesus, Patron of the association, and for His Holy Mother*

They are encouraged to have great interior honor and reverence for Our Lord and His Holy Mother, this being one of the principal points required by the association, and to say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys daily for this purpose.

#### *Mutual love of the Servants of the Poor*

The Servants of the Poor will have great charity for one another, will visit and console one another in their trials, give instructions that the Last Sacraments be administered to them in due time and place, see that prayers--both in common and privately--are offered that each of them may leave this world in a good state. They will also be present in a group, each holding a candle, when the Blessed Sacrament is administered, as well as for the burial of the Rector, the Procurator, the Servants, and the Nurses of the Poor, for whom they will have one Mass celebrated and, at their convenience, will say devoutly three rosaries for them.

#### *Daily spiritual practices*

Upon awakening they will offer their hearts to God, invoking the Holy Name of Jesus and that of His Holy Mother; when they get out of bed, they will say their prayers; if possible, they will assist at Mass daily; they will always act humbly and strive throughout the day to perform their actions in union with those Our Lord practiced when He was on earth. Every day they will make individually the examination of conscience. All the above, however, does not oblige under pain of mortal or venial sin.

*Ceremonies observed until now on the day the Charity is established*

When the Pastor of the place where this association is to be established has the number of women he judges suitable, from among the most devout and, if possible, from among the leading citizens in order to give greater importance to the undertaking,<sup>3</sup> having had all of them go to confession and receive Communion together on the day of this establishment, then, after Vespers on the same day, wearing his surplice, he goes to the chapel designated for this, where all the women are present, each carrying a lighted candle. He chants the *Veni, Creator* and the Litany of Jesus, gives them a brief exhortation on this subject, explains to those present the aim of the work and the spiritual benefits that those who act in a worthy manner in it will receive, and has the regulations that are to be observed read to them. Next, he goes to those wishing to be received into this holy association, takes their names, and then proceeds to the election of officers, taking the votes of each individual, who whispers them to him, and announces the ones elected by a plurality of votes. At the end, he chants the *Salve Regina* to thank God for this through His Holy Mother. The following day he meets with the officers to draw up the order in which the Servants of the Poor will have to take their turn to serve the patients and to take up the collection.

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

We, François, by divine mercy Bishop of Amiens,<sup>4</sup> make it known that, after having read and diligently examined all of the above, have approved and do approve the Association of the Charity, whose regulations are transcribed in the present notebook, and have permitted Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, to have the association established by Messire Vincent de Paul, her chaplain, in her villages of Folleville, Sérévillers, and Paillart, in our Amiens diocese.

Drawn up in Amiens under our seal and signed by our regular Secretary, September 20, 1620.

Signed by His Excellency.

PICARD

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

I, Vincent de Paul, Royal Chaplain of the Galleys of France and chaplain of the Comtesse de Joigny, attest to all whom it may concern that, by the authority of His Excellency François, by divine mercy Bishop of Amiens, and by virtue of the approval he has given of the regulations for the Association of the Charity transcribed above, and by the permission he has granted to the Lady to have the association established by me in her villages in the Amiens diocese, namely, Folleville, Paillart, and Sérévillers, I proceeded to the aforementioned establishment after Vespers today, Sunday, October 11, 1620, also the feast of Saint Francis. The people were assembled in the church of Paillart in the chapel designated for the association--the one on the right hand side on entering the church, and formerly called Notre-Dame-de-Pitié chapel. After having given an exhortation aimed at explaining in what the association consists and the great fruit that will come from it, I exhorted those who wished to belong to it to come forward and give their names. The following persons presented themselves and asked to be admitted into the association: Madame Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, Françoise Bourlier, Marie Collée, Claude Lendormie, Antoinette Collée, Marie Mazessat, Antoinette Desquenoy, Louise Tavernier, Françoise Bacourt, Louise Meurisse, Toussanine Guillemin, Bénigne Coullaré, Jeanne Le Bret, Marie Truffar, Toussanine Coullaré, Marguerite Desmarest, and Claude Godefroy.

All requested me to receive them into the association, which I did. Having proceeded to the election of officers, they elected by a plurality of votes: Prioress, Françoise Bourlier, wife of Eustache Collée; First Assistant, Marie Collée; Second Assistant, Toussanine Guillemin; and Procurator of the association, Antoine Menoiste.

Drawn up in Paillart, in the presence of Messire Roland Vuarin, the local Pastor and Rector of the association, and of the majority of the people, on the day and in the year given above.

**132. - CHARITY OF MEN (FOLLEVILLE, PAILLART, AND SÉRÉVILLERS)**  
(October 23, 1620)

*Regulations for the men who will be received into the Association of the Charity, and, in the first place, the aim of their reception*

The men will be received into the Association of the Charity established by authority of His Excellency the Bishop of Amiens in the villages of Folleville, Paillart, and Sérévillers to assist the able-bodied poor of either sex who are living in those places, and for the purpose of practicing and having others practice the exercises of piety mentioned below. The association is accustomed to practice these to honor Our Lord Jesus its patron and His Holy Mother and to fulfill their great desire that we love one another as they have loved us.

*How to meet the needs of the able-bodied poor*

The children will be placed in a trade as soon as they are old enough. Each week the disabled and the elderly who are unable to work will be given what is necessary for their subsistence. As for those who earn only part of what they need, the association will provide the rest.

They will keep some sheep to be given to the Associates, who will have the charity to feed

them for the benefit of the association--some more, some less, according to their possibilities. The young of these sheep will be sold annually by the Visitor around the feast of Saint John, according to the order given him by the Rectors of the association. The money accruing from this will be given to the Treasurer, in the presence of the Commander and the Rector. The sheep will be marked with the mark of the association and renewed every five years.

### *Offices in general*

The members, who will be called Servants of the Poor, will elect twelve men from their number, who will be named Assistants of the Charity. For the greater continuity of this association, they will take a firm resolution in the manner given below, which they will renew annually, to observe the present regulations and to foster the preservation and growth of the association. Every two years, on the day after Pentecost, these twelve will choose three men from their number, one to be the Commander, another the Treasurer, and the other the Visitor. Together with the Rector of the association, who is a priest, they will have full responsibility for what concerns only the able-bodied poor persons. In the event of the death of one of the Assistants, the members as a body will name another.

### *Commander*

The Commander will preside at the meeting together with the Rector. Jointly they will see that the present regulations, along with all the resolutions that will be taken at the meeting, are observed and carried out with fidelity, charity, and diligence.

### *Treasurer*

The Treasurer will represent the Commander and act on his authority in his absence; he will receive and keep the money in a strongbox with two keys, of which the Commander will have one and he the other, but he will be authorized to take only what is necessary to distribute to the able-bodied poor in a month, and will be allowed to open the strongbox only in the presence of the Commander or of the Rector. He will use the money according to the instructions of the Directors and will give an annual account of it on the day he is told to do so, in the presence of the Directors and the Assistants, and the Judge and *Procureur Fiscal* of the place. In addition, he will record, in a register he will keep for this purpose, the resolutions taken at the meetings.

### *Visitor*

The Visitor will give notice of any bashful poor persons, widows, orphans, prisoners, and other persons who are in distress, so that someone will go to visit and console them, and he will give a report of this at the meetings so as to help them as he will be instructed. In cases of urgent need, however, he will discuss matters with the Rector or Commander, and will follow the orders given him. He will likewise see that all the poor persons attend the catechism lessons the Rector will give, or have someone give, every other Sunday and see that those who are old enough receive Communion.

## *Meetings*

As a rule, the Directors will meet after Vespers on the first Sunday of the month, and more often, if it is advisable. They will consider the temporal and spiritual needs of the association, which will be resolved by a plurality of votes, collected by the Rector and, in his absence, by the Commander. It will be unlawful for anyone whomsoever, once he has cast his vote, to reply to someone who contradicts him and is of the contrary opinion. In the case where the Directors are divided in their opinions, the other nine Assistants, or those of them--at least five in number--who can be there, will settle the difference of opinion by a plurality of votes, which will be collected by the oldest man among them.

*Mass, Communion, litany, exhortation, and reading of the present regulations, which should take place on the first Sunday of the month*

So that the Servants of the Poor may benefit and be strengthened more and more in the spirit of charity, they will meet on the first Sunday of the month in the chapel of the Charity, where they will hear Mass in the morning, and those who wish to go to confession and Communion, as all are encouraged to do, will do so. After dinner, they will participate in the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin, following which a short exhortation will be given them or a reading of the regulations. When that has been done, the Directors will discuss the business of the association.

*Love for Our Lord Jesus, Patron of the association, and for His Holy Mother*

Since one of the principal requirements of this association is to honor Our Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother, the Servants of the Poor will be encouraged to have great interior honor and reverence for them and to say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys daily for this purpose.

*Mutual charity the Servants of the Poor will have for one another*

The Servants of the Poor will have great charity for one another, visit and console one another in their trials, give instructions that the Last Sacraments be administered to them in due time and place, and have prayers said in common and privately that each of them may leave this world in a good state. They will be present as a group both for the administration of the Last Sacraments and the burial of the men and women Servants of the Poor, for whose souls they will have one Mass celebrated. At their convenience, each member individually will say the rosary for their intention, and it is to be noted that this observance, like all the others that are part of the present regulations, is voluntary and does not oblige under pain of either mortal or venial sin.

*Zeal the Servants of the Poor will have for preserving the women's association as well as their own*

Because the men's association and that of the women is one same association, having the same patron, purpose, and spiritual exercises, and only the ministries are divided--the care of the able-bodied being assigned to the men and that of the sick to the women--and because Our Lord draws no less glory from the ministry of women than from that of men, and the care of the sick

even seems preferable to that of the healthy, the male Servants of the Poor will therefore show as much concern for the preservation and growth of the women's association as for their own. To this effect, they will give the Treasurer, who keeps the money for the women, one-fourth of the annual income--and more, if need be, if the income from the collections taken up by the women does not suffice. This can be ascertained through the Rector, since he is the Superior of both associations. And so that the Directors might know the state of affairs of the women's association, they will be present for the rendering of their accounts on the day after All Saints' Day.

*Formula to be used for the firm resolution of the Servants of the Poor*

To make this association more enduring, the Assistants, as has been said, will make and pronounce the following firm resolution in the presence of the Rector, after Vespers on Pentecost or on the next day, in the chapel of the Charity, saying it in the following manner: AI . . . Servant of the Poor of the Association of the Charity, elected as one of its Assistants, take the firm resolution, in the presence of the Rector of the association, to observe its regulations and to do my utmost to foster its preservation and growth, with the help of God, which I ask of Him for this purpose.

AMade in . . . , on . . . @

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

We, François, by divine mercy Bishop of Amiens, on the explanation given us that the Association of the Charity established by our authority in the villages of Folleville, Paillart, and Sérévillers in our Amiens diocese, is composed only of [women]<sup>1</sup> and to help only the sick poor, and that several devout, charitable men wished to be received in and become members of the association in order to take care of the sick poor, and to have the opportunity to practice the other good works of the association, have approved and do approve the zeal of the gentlemen and the regulations given above that have been drawn up for them, and we have permitted and do permit that they be received into the association by its Rector, on condition that they will commit themselves to observe the regulations. In addition, we exhort the Pastors, Rectors of the association, and the others concerned, to support and give full assistance to the execution of the present letter, since this is a work extremely important for the common good of the faithful.

Drawn up in Amiens, October 23, 1620.

### **132a. - COMBINED CHARITY OF JOIGNY**

(May 1621)

*Regulations for the Confraternity or Association of the Charity, and, in the first place, the aim for which it will be established*

The Association of the Charity shall be established to honor Our Lord Jesus its patron and His Holy Mother, to provide for the needs of able-bodied and disabled poor persons, to have them taught the catechism and to receive the sacraments, to feed and give medicines to the sick poor, to help those who are nearing death to die well and those who will recover to resolve never more to offend God, and lastly, to practice the exercises of piety specified below.

### *Membership*

It will be composed of men and wives and unmarried women, but the latter will be admitted only with the consent of their husbands or parents. The men will take care of the able-bodied and helpless, and the women only of the sick.

### *Ministry of the men and, in the first place, the manner of providing for the able-bodied*

The Directors of the association will place the children who are poor in a trade, as soon as they are old enough. They will make a weekly distribution, to the disabled poor and the elderly who cannot work, of what they need to live on; for those who earn only part of what they need, the association will provide for the rest.

### *How the expenses of this work will be defrayed*

The expenses of this work will be met from five hundred livres *tournois* that the Comte de Joigny will donate annually, from eighty *bichets*<sup>1</sup> of wheat that the Prior of Joigny will also donate every year, and from a certain amount of money set aside from the revenue of the Hôtel-Dieu of the town.

### *Officers in general*

The men, who will be called Associates, will elect thirty men from among their number, who will be called Servants of the Poor and will be the pillars supporting the body of this association. These men will elect a priest, who will be called Rector or Spiritual Father of the association, and he will remain in this ministry of Rector as long as they judge suitable. They will likewise hold an election every two years on the day after Pentecost for three of their number, one of whom will be the Prior and the other two the Assistants. They will have full responsibility for what concerns only the able-bodied poor persons; when one of the thirty Servants of the Poor dies, the Associates as a body will name another. In addition, there will be an Associate Servant, who will be elected every two years by the Directors, the Servants of the Poor, and the Associates, whenever it is advisable.

### *Rector*

The Rector will be the Superior of the ministries of both the men and the women, will do his utmost to promote the exact observance of these regulations and the preservation and growth of the association, will preside over the meetings, and will collect the votes.

### *Prior*

The Prior will also do his utmost, together with the Rector, to see that the present regulations are observed and that the decisions taken at the meetings are carried out with fidelity, charity, and diligence; he will preside over the meetings and will collect the votes in the absence of the Rector.

### *First Assistant*

The First Assistant will be called the Treasurer, and will represent the Prior and act on his authority in his absence. He will take in and keep the money in a strongbox with two keys, of which the Prior will have one and he the other. He will have under his control only as much money as will be needed for one month's distribution to the able-bodied poor persons and will open the strongbox only in the presence of the Rector and the Prior. He will use the money according to the instructions of the Directors and will give an annual account of it on the day after Pentecost, in the presence of the Directors, the Servants of the Poor, the Judge, and the *Procureur Fiscal*, who will be present if they think it advisable. He may not, however, ask for nor expect any reward, fee, or salary for this. The Treasurer will also record, in a register he will keep for this purpose, the resolutions taken at the meetings.

### *Second Assistant*

The Second Assistant, who will be called Visitor of the Poor, will make inquiries about the bashful poor, widows, orphans, and other persons in distress so he can go to visit and console them, and will make a report at the meetings in order to assist them as he will be instructed, except in cases of pressing need, when he will simply discuss this with the Rector or Prior and follow the order given him. He will likewise see that all the poor persons come to the catechism lessons that the Rector will give or have someone give every other Sunday, and see that those who are old enough go to Communion. Furthermore, he will keep the accessories for the chapel of the Charity and will decorate it on the third Sunday of the month and solemn feast days.

### *Associate Servant*

To convoke the Directors, Servants of the Poor, and Associates when the Rector, Prior, or one of the Assistants, each in turn, so directs, the Directors will appoint an Associate to be an Associate Servant of the association, who will likewise be in office for two years only. Should it happen that he has to be sent to the country, or has to spend more than two hours' time for the association, the Directors will pay him from its funds, if he is poor and so wishes.

*Women's supervision of the sick poor and, in the first place, admission of the latter.*

The sick poor will be admitted to the care of the association by the Prioress on the advice of the Rector and Assistants, have their clothes washed, go to confession the same day they have been admitted to the care of the association, and receive Communion the next day.

### *Food for the patients*

Each patient will have as much bread as he can reasonably eat for dinner; those who drink wine will have half a setier each meal, some soup, four ounces of veal or boiled mutton, and the same for supper, except that the meat will be roasted or ground. On days of abstinence, he will have two eggs with a portion of butter, or some fresh fish. Those who cannot eat solid meat will have broth, fresh eggs, bread soup, and hulled barley, according to the orders the doctor will give the Prioress, if need be.

### *Order the Servants of the Poor will follow in serving the sick*

Each Servant of the Poor will prepare the patients' food on her day, take it to their homes, and serve them for an entire day in the order in which the blessed bread is distributed. That evening the Lady who serves them will notify the one who is to come after her, bringing her the quantity or requirements of bread, wine, and meat, and telling her the names, location, number, and condition of the patients so as to prepare what is needed in order for them to be able to eat dinner at ten in the morning and supper at four in the afternoon.

### *Burial of poor persons who have died*

And in order that the association may practice entirely the works of mercy, it will furnish shrouds for the deceased poor persons who do not have any, and, as a group, will accompany them to the grave.

### *How the expenses of the sick will be defrayed*

Until now, God in His Divine Providence has provided sufficiently for the expenses of this work, both from the collections the Servants of the Poor take up in turn in the churches--in some places every day and in others on Sundays and holy days--as also from what is donated in the boxes placed in the inns, where the landladies ask their guests for something for the sick poor of the area.

### *Officers in general*

All the women who wish to belong to this association will be received into it and will be named Associates; but to avoid confusion, they will elect from among themselves a certain number proportionate to the place where it will be established, such as twelve in a place where there are fifty homes and so forth, as is in keeping with it. They will be like the pillars who support the association and will be called Servants of the Poor because they are the ones who will actually be serving the poor according to the order given above, and not the others, who will be content with practicing the other good works included in these regulations. And the Servants of the Poor will choose three women from their number, who will be in charge for only two years, namely, a Prioress and two Assistants. These will be fully responsible for what concerns the sick, together with the Rector and a Procurator, whom they will elect and who will be one of the thirty Servants of the Poor of the association. In the event of the death of one of these

Servants of the Poor, the Associates as a body will appoint another.

### *Prioress*

The Prioress will do her utmost to see that the present . . .<sup>2</sup> every two years the day after Pentecost to elect new Directors, and the Directors every year, also on the day after Pentecost, to hear the accounts of the First Assistant, and after Vespers on the first Sunday of the month to handle ordinary business, and more often, if there is a need. The Associates will also meet as a body whenever a Servant of the Poor has to be elected; the Servants of the Poor will do so every two years on the day after All Saints' Day to create new officers. The three Officers will meet annually on the same day to hear the accounts of the Treasurer, and after Vespers on the first Sunday of the month shortly after the men so that the Rector, who should be present at the men's meeting, may also be present for the women's meeting to discuss briefly the ordinary business affairs that will be proposed. They will settle matters by a plurality of votes, collected by the Rector; but once someone has given her opinion, she may not reply to those who have a contrary opinion.

### *Election of Officers*

When the Servants of the Poor have heard the accounts of the Treasurer in the chapel of the Charity after Vespers on the day after Pentecost, they will chant the *Veni, Creator Spiritus*, and then choose a secretary by voice vote; she will be the one elected by the Company to help the Rector for the election. Once this has been done, the Rector will receive the oath of the Servants of the Poor that they will elect as officers those whom they know in conscience to be the most devout and capable; then they will give the [Rector] three pieces of paper, one of which will have the name of the man for whom they are casting their vote for Prior, another with their vote for Treasurer, and the other for Visitor of the Poor. The Rector will give these to the Servant, who will place them on a table or on the altar, where the Rector and the Secretary will read the ballots in the presence of the group, before whom they will certify and declare aloud those who have the greatest number of votes for each office. When this has been done, the new officers [will take] the places of the old ones, then the *Salve Regina* will be chanted to thank Our Lord through His Holy Mother for the choice He has made of the persons elected and to ask Him for the grace for them to be able to lead the association and to be ever more attached to His glory, for the salvation of the Associates. It is to be noted that the same will be done for the election of a new Rector and new officers for the women.

### *Fidelity of the officers in admitting only the truly poor and truly sick to share in the alms of the association*

Because the association has been established only for persons who are truly poor and truly sick, the male officers will give the alms of the association only to those men and women whom they judge in conscience to be truly poor. The women officers will do the same only for those whom they judge in conscience to be truly poor and sick. And so that favoritism, which is the ruin of good works, does not slip into this one, when the men and women officers begin their term of office they will promise in the presence of the Rector not to use the alms of the

association, neither directly nor indirectly, for any of their relatives, in-laws, personal friends, or persons recommended to them. And, if another member of the Company proposes one of the aforementioned on his own, they will refrain from doing so, saying that they cannot give their opinion on that point, and leave it to the judgment of the others.

*Mass, Communion, litany, or the reading of the present regulations that should take place on the third Sunday of the month.*

And so that the Associates may benefit and be strengthened more and more in the spirit of charity, they will meet every first or third Sunday of the month in the chapel designated for the association, where they will hear Mass in the morning, and those who are inclined to go to confession and Communion, as all will be encouraged to do, will do so. After dinner they will participate in the Litany of Our Lord or of the Blessed Virgin, and some brief exhortation will then be given them or a reading from the present regulations; all this, however, outside of the times when the Divine Service is celebrated in the parish.

*Love for Our Lord*

Since one of the principal points of this association is to honor Our Lord and His holy Mother, the men and women Associates will be strongly encouraged to show them great honor and reverence and to say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys every day for this purpose.

*Mutual charity they should have for one another*

The men and women Associates will have great charity, visit and console one another in their trials, give instructions that the Last Sacraments be administered in due time and place, and have prayers offered in common and privately that each Associate may leave this world in a good state. They will also be present as a group for the administration of the Last Sacraments and at the burial of the men and women Officers, Associates, and Nurses of the Sick Poor, for whose souls they will have one Mass celebrated, and each will say devoutly and in private, at her convenience, one rosary for them. It is to be noted that this observance, like all the others that are part of the present regulations, is voluntary and does not oblige under pain of mortal or venial sin.

*Zeal the Servants of the Poor will have for the preservation of the women's association as well as that of the men.*

Because both the men's and the women's associations are only one and the same association, having the same patron and purpose and even the same spiritual practice; and since only the ministry is divided, with the care of the able-bodied assigned to the men and that of the sick to the women; and because Our Lord receives as much glory from the women's ministry as from that of the men, and it even seems that the care of the sick is preferable to that of the healthy; for these reasons the Servants of the Poor will show as much concern for the preservation and growth of the women's association as for their own. For that purpose, they will entrust to the First Assistant, who keeps the women's money, one-fourth of the annual revenue--and more, if

need be, if the income from the collections taken up by the women does not suffice. This can be determined through the Rector, since he is Superior of both associations. And so that the Directors may know the state of affairs of the women's association, they will be present for the presentation of their accounts.

*Formula for the firm resolution of the Men and Women Servants of the Poor*

To make this association more enduring, its Rector will pronounce aloud the following firm resolution after the Communion Mass or at the end of Vespers on Pentecost in the chapel of the Charity, and the Servants of the Poor will do the same after him. The Rector will say: *Al . . .* Servant of the Poor of the Association of the Charity, intend to observe its regulations and to do my utmost to promote its preservation and growth, with the help of God, which I humbly ask of Him for this purpose. @

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

To His Excellency the Archbishop of Sens, or to his Vicar-General.

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Comte de Joigny and General of the Galleys of France, humbly petitions, stating that about three years ago you kindly allowed to be established in the town of Joigny the Association of the Charity, composed of women and instituted for the relief of the sick poor. Great benefits have accrued and accrue daily from it; now, knowing the benefit arising from the men's association established in certain places in this kingdom for the welfare of able-bodied poor persons, he desires by the same means that it might please you to permit the establishment of the association of men in the town of Joigny and the villages dependent on it and to unite the association of men to that of the women in the manner stated in the regulations written above.

In consideration of this, may it please you in your kindness to unite the men's association to that of the women in accord with the regulations, and to allow it to be established in Joigny and the villages dependent on it, and, for this purpose, to allow our chaplain, M. Vincent de Paul, to make the establishment. And you will be performing a work pleasing to God and will greatly oblige us.

Drawn up in Joigny, May 4, 1621.

P.-E.DE GONDY

We, Pierre de Marcq, priest and Doctor of Theology, Canon of the metropolitan Church of Sens, Prior of Oisey, Officialis and Vicar-General in spiritual and temporal matters of His Excellency the Most Reverend Archbishop of Sens, Primate of the Gauls and of Germania, in view of the request of the Comte de Joigny written above, and after having carefully considered the regulations of the aforementioned Confraternity or Association of the Charity, have approved and do approve, by the authority of the Archbishop, the establishment of the association in the town of Joigny and the villages dependent on it. To avoid a multiplicity of confraternities and associations in the same place, and taking into account that the women's association established

in Joigny by the authority of the Archbishop has the same patron, who is Our Lord Jesus, the same purpose, and the same practices as that of the men, and that only the ministry is divided, with the care of able-bodied poor persons entrusted to the men and that of the disabled poor to the women, we have united and do unite the confraternity of men to that of the women in Joigny, authorizing the priest M. Vincent de Paul, Bachelor of Theology and chaplain of the Comte, to make the establishment of the confraternity or association in Joigny and the villages dependent on it, and the union of the men's association to that of the women in the same town.

All this is on condition that, when the Archbishop or his Vicar-General, generally residing and ministering in Sens, is in Joigny or the villages and wants to be informed of the spiritual and temporal administration of the association, its Directors will be bound to reply to them and show them the accounts. This will be done without cost, and the Bishop or his Vicar-General will also be informed of all differences of opinion that will arise regarding both spiritual and temporal affairs of the association.

And because charity toward the neighbor is a work pleasing to God and on Judgment Day we will be judged on that, and because the intention of the association is, in fact, to practice in a special manner this commandment of charity toward the neighbor, for this reason we exhort the faithful Christians of Joigny and the other places dependent on it to enroll in the association and to practice the works it includes.

In testimony whereof we have signed these present letters and have had them signed by M. Gabriel Sarsement, acting Registrar in this case.

Sens, May 8, 1621.

We have also had them sealed with the crest and seal of the Archbishop.

P. DE MARCQ

By order of the Vicar-General.

SARSEMENT

### ACT OF ESTABLISHMENT

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Be it known to all whom it may concern that today, May 30, 1621, feast of Pentecost, in the chapel of Saint-Antoine Hospital in this town of Joigny, in the presence of the noble and powerful Lord Messire Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, Chevalier of the Two Orders of the King, Councillor in his State and Private Councils, Comte de Joigny, and General of the Galleys of France; of the priest Messire François Courtiller, Pastor of Saint-Thibault; of the priest Messire Antoine Louvet, Pastor of Saint-André; of the priest M. Guillaume Leboeuf, Pastor of Saint-Jean; of Maître Julien Giroust, Bailliff and Judge in Ordinary for Joigny; of Louis de Guidoly,<sup>3</sup> *Sieur* d'Ouessey, Lieutenant and Captain of Joigny and local head of the Forestry Commission of the Count, of Maître Savinien de la Mare, Lieutenant of Joigny, of Messire Jean Jacquinet, lawyer and *Procureur Fiscal* of Joigny; of M. Cholet, M. Laurent, and M. Symard, Magistrates of Joigny; and of several others named and signed below; we, Vincent de Paul, priest and Bachelor of Theology, by virtue of the

permission issued by the Officialis of Sens on May 8, 1621, given here below, signed Pierre de Marcq, Officialis; and Sarsement, acting Secretary; and sealed with the seal of the Archbishop of Sens, whereby he allows and instructs us to establish in Joigny the men's Confraternity and Association of the Charity for the relief of able-bodied poor persons of the town, to unite the men's association to that of the women, already established in Joigny and in Saint-Antoine chapel, we, by the aforesaid authority, have established and do establish the said Confraternity or Association of the Charity in Joigny and in the chapel, and have united and do unite it to the women's association, in accord with the regulations given above. When this was done, we explained to the Assistants what is involved in the ministry of Associates in the association, had the regulations read, and encouraged those wishing to become members to come forward and be enrolled.

Whereupon the undersigned persons whose names are given below presented themselves. All declared that they wished to belong to the association and asked that we enroll them in it, which we did. First, the Comte de Joigny; then the priest Messire Antoine Louvet, Pastor of Saint-André in Joigny; the priest Messire Jean Maurice, chaplain of Saint-Antoine in Joigny; the priest Messire Edme Meslin; Maître Julien Giroust, Bailiff and Procurator of Joigny; Louis de Guidoly, *Sieur d'Ouessey*, Lieutenant and Captain, local head of the Forestry Commission of the county of Joigny; Maître Jean Jacquinet, lawyer and *Procureur Fiscal* General of the county; Maître Savinien de la Mare, Lieutenant in Joigny; M. Cholet, M. Symard, and M. Desjours, principal county magistrates of Joigny. . . .<sup>4</sup>

And proceeding to the election of the Servants of the Poor, the following were named: in the first place, the priest Maître Antoine Louvet, Pastor of Saint-André in Joigny; the priest Messire Edme Meslin; Maître Julien Giroust, Bailliff and Provost of Joigny; Louis de Guidoly d'Ouessey, Lieutenant and Captain of Joigny and local head of the Forestry Commission of the county of Joigny; Maître Jean Jacquinet, lawyer and *Procureur Fiscal Général* of the county; M. Laurent Desjours; M. Symard; M. Branché; M. Nardeux; M. Biot, lawyer; M. Delon, lawyer; M. . . . ; M. Leboeuf, Auditor; M. Marchant; M. Roucelin; M. Penot, Registrar; M. Gaultier; M. Thulon; M. Murot, Procurator; M. Jean Leboeuf, substitute; Ferraud, Attorney; M. Guillaume Camard; M. Chereau, . . . ; M. Vaddé; M. Grassin; and M. Marot.

Proceeding immediately to the election of the officers and Directors of the Charity, the votes of the Servants of the Poor were collected, and the following were elected: in the first place, as Rector of the association, the priest Messire Jean Maurice, chaplain of Saint-Antoine Hospital; Prior, M. Julien Giroust, Councillor in the Parlement and Bailiff and Judge in Ordinary of Joigny; First Assistant, M. Biot, lawyer in Joigny; and Second Assistant, the priest Messire Antoine Louvet, Pastor of Saint-André in Joigny. These officers and Directors named as Associate Servant Jean Chappelle, weaver in Joigny.

Drawn up on the day and in the year given above.

V. DEPAUL

The same day and time, the aforementioned men decided that, in the event that not all the Servants of the Poor are present for the election of new officers, at least twelve [Associates] will suffice to hold the election, just as if it [the Company] were acting as a body.

V. DEPAUL

### **133. - REPORT OF ABBÉ LAPLATTE ON THE COMBINED CHARITY OF MÂCON** (September 1621)

The following year, 1623,<sup>1</sup> was noteworthy because of a second establishment, much more useful than the preceding one, since its aim was to provide relief for all the poor people in the town, healthy and sick, beggars as well as the bashful poor. It was M. Vincent de Paul, Pastor of Châtillon-les-Dombes, who began that good work there. Despite the attention A. Gaspard Dinet might have given to renewing the face of the diocese during his nineteen years as Bishop, it was impossible for him to bring that important work to completion; there were still many abuses that had to be rectified after his death. One of the greatest was the helpless situation of the poor people of the town. They were living in such utter ignorance of the truths of religion and sunk in such criminal habits that one could not see them without being astonished.

While M. Vincent, whose virtues have justly placed him in the catalogue of the saints, was passing through Mâcon, he himself witnessed this sad spectacle. His charity was moved by it, and his zeal caused him to seek the means to remedy it. Since it was his custom to ask the poor persons he was helping a few questions on the elements of religion, he was surprised to find elderly persons sixty years and older who did not even know Jesus Christ and His mysteries. The price of these poor souls who were being lost made such a vivid impression on his heart that he resolved at that very moment to do something about it, regardless of the cost.

His charity was ingenious; he soon found some means that he felt could be used to carry out his project. Presuming, however, that many obstacles would be put in the way of this good work, he armed himself with firmness. What he had foreseen, happened. When he had shared his plans with some persons in the town, some considered it impossible to carry them out; others treated him as a rash, proud man, who was trying to meddle in what was no concern of his. Still others, held back by human respect, told him that it would be a good work, but they did not see how to go about putting it into effect. Far from becoming discouraged by so many obstacles, the saintly Vincent de Paul recognized that being contradicted was characteristic of the works of God, but that patience and determination would make him victorious.

In fact, he knew so well how to handle those persons governing the town that they finally approved his plan and went along with its execution. So, a group of charitable persons was formed, who took responsibility for helping in an orderly and tactful way all the poor persons in the town, beggars and bashful poor, able-bodied and sick. To cover the cost of this good work, the rich committed themselves in writing to donate annually wheat, wine, meat, wood, and linen, according to their possibilities.

This organization of charitable persons agreed to meet every Wednesday in Saint-Nizier to take there all they had collected and to report the persons in their district who had fallen ill or were in need so they could be assisted the following week and to remove from the list of poor persons those whose situation had improved or who, because they behaved badly during the week, merited being deprived of alms the following Sunday.

The leading women of the town and a large number of the bourgeoisie considered it an honor to belong to this devout assembly, to visit the sick in their neighborhood twice a week, to furnish them with what they needed for their recovery, and, lastly, to provide for their burial if God

called them to Himself. The capital needed for these various acts of charity was drawn from the fund for which the rich gave their alms every month.

Bishop Louis Dinet,<sup>2</sup> Messieurs Chambon, Dean of the Cathedral, de Rhébé, Provost of Saint-Pierre, and Hugues Foillard, Lieutenant General, energized and supported this burgeoning good work by their care and solicitous attention. They even formed a board, composed of ten Rectors, namely, two priests, one of whom presided in the absence of the Bishop, two Bailiffs, two officers of the *élection*,<sup>3</sup> a lawyer, a Procurator, and two merchants, one of whom was the *Receveur*. Its guidelines were adopted on September 26, 1623.<sup>4</sup>

Following is the order M. Vincent established with regard to those who were poor:

(1) He had a list drawn up of all the poor persons living in the town, which came to about 300.

(2) He required that they come together every Sunday in Saint-Nizier, where they would hear Mass and the instruction, go to confession monthly, and receive Communion when they were found capable of doing so.

(3) After the service, all the poor persons who had attended would receive bread and money corresponding to their need and the number of children for whom they were responsible; in winter some wood was added to this.

(4) All those who were found begging in the streets and at the churches during the week, or about whom the Ladies had made justifiable complaints, would receive nothing the following Sunday.

(5) Poor passers-by would be put up for one night and sent off the next day with two sous.

(6) The bashful poor identified by the Ladies or other upright persons were to be assisted discreetly and provided in their illnesses with adequate food and remedies to expedite their recovery, if possible.

(7) Lastly, since the assembly did not want to encourage laziness among the able-bodied poor or their families, they were to be given only what was necessary to supplement the modest salaries from their work.

When this good work began, there were almost no funds for its operation, but M. Vincent spoke very strongly and touchingly on the need and advantages of almsgiving and how easily it could be done, either by cutting back on luxuries, meals, furnishings, clothing, and recreation or, if a person had no money, by donating grain, furniture, old clothes, or linen. He did such a fine job explaining the good order that could result from this in Mâcon if people were willing to take his advice, that everyone was eager to emulate his enthusiasm. Grain, bread, vegetables, linen, wood, household utensils, clothing, beds, etc., were brought to the place assigned to deposit the alms, and people were soon ready to support this nascent good work. M. Vincent, says his biographer, seeing his efforts result in an undreamed of success, was the first to give his alms, and then went on his way.

Fr. Desmoulins, an Oratorian priest who was then Superior of the Mâcon Seminary established by M. Gaspard Dinet, saw for himself all that took place at the time of this establishment and wrote it down so simply and truthfully that, in order to confirm what I have reported here about this holy establishment, I thought I should copy the account he left of it.

If the reader thinks I have gone on too long about this, I must confess that I am surpassing the normal limits, but I ask him to excuse me for wanting to do so. For such a long time I have desired to see this holy assembly reestablished in Mâcon that I gladly seize opportunities to make known the means of achieving it, since it suffices to follow the plan left us by M. Vincent,

simply making a few changes with regard to the times in which we are living and the circumstances in which we find ourselves so as not to irritate certain people.

ANo one,@ said Fr. Desmoulins, Ainformed me of the state of the poor people in Mâcon; I recognized it myself; for, when this charitable organization was begun, since it was ordered that, on the first of each month, all the poor persons who were to receive alms should go to confession, the other confessors along with me found elderly persons, sixty years of age and older, who told us frankly that they had never been to confession; and when someone spoke to them of God, the Trinity, or the Incarnation, it was a language they did not understand.<sup>5</sup> However, through this devout Confraternity of Charity that M. Vincent established, these disorders were remedied, and in a short time the physical and spiritual needs of this throng of poor persons were taken care of. More than three hundred of them were very reasonably housed, fed, clothed, and kept warm. People were no longer badgered either at church or in the streets by those able-bodied beggars who were doing nothing all day long except to pursue their livelihood, with no respect for the churches, no regard for persons who merit it, and no consideration for those who were unwilling to give in to their demands.@

The town registers inform us of several other circumstances concerning this establishment, allowing us to see even more clearly the good direction and benefit resulting from it. They state, then, that to bring some relief to the two hundred poor families who were in Mâcon, not counting the beggars, a fund had been established consisting of: (1) what the clergy and well-to-do citizens promised to give annually in money, wheat, wine, wood, and clothing; (2) certain fines that were applied to that good work; (3) import duties from all town officials; (4) the collections taken up every Sunday by the young women of the town.

These four sources of revenue together created a considerable fund, since the registers add that, every Sunday after the Mass said in Saint-Nizier, twelve hundred livres of bread were distributed there, as well as eighteen to twenty silver francs, twelve or fifteen francs to the Ladies for the bashful poor, not counting the linen, wood, and coal that came to a considerable amount, one hundred or one hundred twenty francs in wages to the pharmacists for medicines, twenty francs to the surgeon, four francs a month to two women who looked after the sick, and twenty francs to the beadles, who prevented beggars who were strangers from staying in the town.

From these details one can imagine the good this establishment did in the town; however, the wars that took place twelve years later, and the plague in 1629 and 1630, made the inhabitants unable to furnish sufficient funds to continue the almsgiving to the same extent. They left their property to heirs who did not imitate the charity of those who had gone before them. From 1639-40 on this decrease was quite obvious. To make up for it, the town magistrates asked Louis XIII to allow a five-franc tax to be levied on each cask of wine for the benefit of the poor, who were beginning to suffer a great deal. The reply of the Court is unknown, but, since French history informs us that the poor people in the provinces suffered terribly from 1640 to 1659 because of the civil wars brought on by the minority of Louis XIV, it is presumed that Mâcon endured the same fate.

I did not find any other informative report on this organization of Charity until 1680, when two reputable citizens were looking for a way to provide bread for some former artisans, now elderly, who had worked for the town for thirty or forty years but were in pressing need because of the pittance they were receiving from the limited work they were able to do. They felt that the best way to succeed in this pious endeavor was to bring them all together in the same building so they could assist them more easily.

Consequently, in 1680, M. Étienne Mathoud, President of the *élection*, who was the first to think of this worthy plan, bought several adjacent houses on rue Bourgneuf, costing him one hundred thousand livres. He had communicating doors installed to facilitate service and began to take in several disabled elderly persons. This beautiful example of charity inspired several other reputable persons to imitate him. The second was Joseph Bernard, called AThe Handsome, @ who also donated one hundred thousand livres to continue the good work.

That was the origin in our town of the Charity Hospital that serves as a shelter for a large number of distressed or neglected persons.

### 134. - THE CHARITY OF MÂCON AS RECORDED IN THE TOWN HALL REGISTERS (September 1621)

On September 16, 1621, the following persons met in the town hall of Mâcon: M. Foillard, the Lieutenant General, Provost, and Royal Judge of the town; M. Chandon, Dean of the Cathedral of Mâcon; M. Demeaulx, Lieutenant for Criminal Affairs; M. Chandon, former Lieutenant for Criminal Affairs; Messire Benoît Buchet, The King's Procurator in the bailiwick; Messire Nicolas Moisson, King's Counsel; Maître Pierre Desagie; the Honorable Claude Hugand; the Honorable Jean Desvignes; the Honorable Antoine de la Fonteyne and Maître Nicolas Bayard, Town Magistrates; Maître Pierre Bruys, Procurator Syndic; M. Antonin de Moras and M. Antonin Fevron, Chevaliers and co-chaplains of Saint-Pierre Church; M. Antoine de Pise, President of the *élection* and Captain of the town; M. François de Rymon, Lieutenant in the *élection*; M. Alexandre Arcelin, Provost of the Merchants of France in the Mâcon area and tax judge in the *élection*; M. Salomon Chesnard, royal *Receveur* and Lieutenant to the first Captain of the town; M. Pierre Desboys, Counsel in the bailiwick; Maîtres Philibert Mathoud and Jean Bourchanin, Procurators in the bailiwick; and several other honorable townspeople and merchants: Valentin Sirauldin, Henri Olivier, Philibert Préau, Jean Molard, Étienne Perceval, Nicolas Aubel, Hugues Syon, Paul Grangier, Thibaut Correlier, Laurent Boivin, Henri Doudin, Simon Rossat, Claude de Veylle, Jean Renard, Jean Cochouol, Nicolas Soldat, and Antoine Trambly.

M. Moisson declared that the reason for this meeting was exceptional in character, since it was concerned more with piety than with policy.

The first point is to provide for the poor persons of this town, as God commands; a charitable work that can be done by the means mentioned, obviating the importunate solicitations of those poor persons at the churches and at the doors of people's homes, where they receive alms liberally. That is the reason why most of the poor persons, even the able-bodied, are unwilling to do anything. A few years ago people wanted to remedy this with a hospice where they would be enclosed; when a visitation was made, only half of the poor persons there were willing to admit that they were poor, for fear lest they be kept locked up. Nevertheless, when people realized that the measure was unsuitable, especially because of the misconduct of the enclosed poor in towns where these hospices were established, they did not follow suit in Mâcon.

There is at this time a very pious, devout priest, chaplain of the General of the Galleys, who has shared the methods whereby assistance and food have been provided for the poor persons in

Trévoux and other neighboring towns. The first one is to take an accurate census to determine the number of poor persons, able-bodied as well as disabled, who are in this town.

The second point is that M. de Trémon, the magistrate in charge of this town, has made it known that Carmelite nuns want to be established in the town, and all they need is the consent of the inhabitants, with no expense to the people. The assembly is asked to consider these matters.

The Lieutenant General said that both proposals are quite laudable and should be adopted because they are charitable, pious, and commendable, and that, if possible--since it is easy to do--this Charity should be established. It will obviate the importunate solicitations of the poor, assuring that, if everyone voluntarily donates something, it will be much less than what they usually give at their own doors and at church to the poor persons, who must be instructed, made to fear with an awe founded on love, which is to catechize them and have them receive Communion in order to have them obey willingly, with no need for a building because they cannot be detained in an enclosed hospice. However, capable persons must be carefully chosen to take care of this and to collect the donations and alms to be distributed to them as judged best. To carry this out, an extensive, accurate investigation of the poor must be done to determine the number of the able-bodied as well as the disabled. This is necessary in order to provide for them, show them the kind of behavior and way of living that is desired for their good and salvation, see that a fund of voluntary alms is set up for a granary and storeroom, and have the young children learn some trades in order to give them the means of earning their own living. The clergy will be asked to contribute to this, together with every group in the town in general and personally. Collectors and poor boxes will have to be assigned for the churches, shops, and inns, along with the assurance that some pious, devout Ladies will devote themselves to visit and serve the sick poor. All these things, however, will be voluntary. In addition, one or two persons from each group in the town should take turns as Directors and Administrators for one year.

The Dean of Saint-Vincent stated that it is an immense consolation to see an increase and continuation of the piety and devotion that the late Bishop of Mâcon first desired to establish, and a sure sign of God's special care for us, considering particularly that poor persons are so praiseworthy in the Gospel. Even though this may seem difficult, it must be believed that God will make everything easy, since not only is it a question of the material food of those who are poor but also of the spiritual. They will contribute very willingly to this, even from their church revenues intended for almsgiving.

M. Chandon, the former Lieutenant for Criminal Affairs, said that everyone not only accepts but embraces wholeheartedly and zealously what has been proposed; and since it is a question of charity and the service of God being put into action, nothing will be impossible.

Messieurs Fevron and de Moras were asked to explain to the Provost and Canons of Saint-Pierre Church the project of this very commendable Charity, and they promised to do so.

The King's Procurator said that the undertaking is so charitable and pious that he now thinks that this group is not as large as he would desire. Everyone is in accord with this and willingly contributes to the almsgiving, joined to the instruction the poor will receive about praying and serving God as well as for the trades in which they will be employed.

He also thinks the Carmelite nuns should be welcomed.

President de Pise stated that both proposals are so holy and laudable that they should be adopted, and he will willingly contribute to the Charity.

M. Sirauldin said that this is an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so the proposals should be adopted and work begun for the poor.

All the other aforementioned persons present were of the same opinion.

After the resolution to continue such a holy, praiseworthy Charity, it was also decided unanimously that the Carmelite nuns will be welcome in the town of Mâcon. The clergy are asked, beginning now, to appoint one member of each of their Chapters who, together with those chosen after this, will bring to ten the number of Directors and Administrators of the Charity, namely, the two who will be named by the representatives of the church, in addition to the Dean, if he so wishes; the King's Procurator; Messieurs Desagie and de la Fonteyne, Town Magistrates; M. Arcelin, Provost; M. Desboys, lawyer; M. Chesnard, *Receveur*; M. Mathoud, Procurator; and M. Sirauldin, townsman.

Six of these men may deliberate upon an issue in the absence of the others. The work will begin with a general census, to be taken to ascertain the number of able-bodied and disabled poor persons. The gentlemen will meet at noon every Sunday and will ask the Administrators of the hospital to help them. All the poor persons will go to Saint-Nizier Church to hear Holy Mass, the exhortation, and the catechism lesson on the days they will be instructed to do so.

PERRIER

On Friday, September 17, 1621, there met in the town hall of Mâcon, the Lieutenant General; Chandon, the Dean; M. Moisson, the King's Counsel; M. Arcelin, the Provost; M. Desboys, lawyer; M. Salomon Chesnard, royal *Receveur*; M. Pierre Desagie; the Honorable Antoine de la Fonteyne; Messire Philibert Mathoud, Procurator; and the Honorable Valentin Sirauldin.

It was proposed that, to inaugurate the establishment of Christian charity, in conformity with the consent and resolutions of yesterday, money needed to be found--at least two hundred écus--to provide for the poor persons of this town, while awaiting the alms and donations of respectable people.

Having considered that point, it was resolved that all the income, pensions, and foundations designated for *l'Aumône*<sup>1</sup> should be collected and pooled in order to accomplish this, and that the general census would begin immediately to ascertain the number of poor persons. The Bishop of Mâcon will be notified and asked to authorize and bless the work.

The gentlemen went immediately to see the Bishop of Mâcon. When they explained to him what had taken place, he said that he praises God for such a holy plan and, beginning now, authorizes all that has been and will be done, asking all the gentlemen to kindly continue such a good work, to which he himself desires to contribute.

PERRIER

**135. - REPORT ON THE COMBINED CHARITY OF MÂCON  
FROM THE REGISTER OF THE CAPITULAR DELIBERATIONS  
(September 17, 1621)**

On Friday, September 17, 1621, at the Chapter meeting in the Chapter hall of the Mâcon church, at the sound of the clock, met in session in the usual manner the venerable and distinguished gentlemen Messires Nicolas Chandon, Dean; François de Pise, Cantor; Noël Denaups of Mâcon; Daniel Laurent of Rousset; Gratien Bernard of Verissey; and Jean de Nobles of Vaux-Renard, Archdeacons; François de Mouthaudry, Pierre Jouchet, Jean Pommier, Philibert Allegré, Aimé Demeaulx, Antoine Bergier, Philibert Morel, Louis Denaups, and Jean Dinet,

Capitular Canons; assisted by Messire François Broyer, Procurator General of these gentlemen.

The Dean explained that yesterday he was called to the town hall, where this proposal was made to him by a priest, claiming to be the chaplain of the General of the Galleys, to provide food and sustenance for the poor people who are begging both throughout the town and at the churches. The proposal was made to remedy the abuse of many persons who are begging without necessity. The priests at Saint-Pierre were notified to go to the meeting in the place where it was held; since, however, none of those gentlemen was in town, M. Fevron and M. Deucoras were asked to attend so they could report to the gentlemen the substance of the meeting. It was decided there to appoint one or two members of the said Company to assist the Lieutenants General of Civil and Criminal Affairs, together with the aldermen and commissioners delegated to take inventory of the number of poor persons in the town. Then they were to find a way to feed those who cannot work because of illness or old age, and to require those who can work to do so. They also decided to name certain persons to instruct the young people and some priests to say Mass for them on the Sundays and holy days of the year. To cover the maintenance, each will give whatever he wishes in alms, and a box or container will be placed in all the churches to collect what each person chooses to donate.

After this explanation, the members appointed the Dean to find out about the institution, on condition that he make no promises nor give any revenue from their alms until they are first fully informed about it. The Dean accepted, declaring that he would grant nothing without apprising the gentlemen of everything they will ask them, and that he accepted that responsibility for this year only.

## **136. - REGULATIONS FOR A COMBINED CHARITY**

### *JESUS, MARIA*

#### *Regulations of the Company of the Charity*

The Company of the Charity shall be established in the town of . . . to assist, corporally and spiritually, the poor persons of the town and the villages dependent on it: spiritually by seeing that they are instructed in doctrine and Christian piety; corporally, by seeing that those who are able to work learn a trade and earn their own living, and by giving others the means of subsistence. It also aims to assist the sick poor of the town, according to the order of the Association of the Charity established in M. . . .<sup>1</sup> By this means, it will be united to the company, but in such a way that, to avoid confusion, the ministry will be divided: the men will have the care of healthy persons, and the women will have the care of the sick and everything related to this.

The officers of the Company committed to this may not take any decisions regarding what depends on the association, since the Rector and the officers of the association are, and will be, responsible for this, as it has been until now, in line with the regulations written below. The union will have one and the same patron and the same spiritual exercises for the first Sunday of the month, according to the regulations of the association written below. In this it will carry out the command God gives us in the fifteenth [chapter] of Deuteronomy, namely, to act in such a

way that we do not have among us any poor persons who are begging, and to fulfill His desire that we love one another and procure the spiritual and corporal salvation of one another, as His Son Jesus has loved us and constantly procures for us.

#### *Patron*

The patron of this Company will be Our Lord Jesus, who is Charity personified.

#### *Membership*

It will be composed of men and women known for their virtue and integrity, who will be called Servants of the Poor. The women will be received only with the consent of their husbands or parents and, to avoid confusion, both men and women will be limited to a certain number.

#### *Offices, and first, that of Commander*

First, a Commander will be elected, who will preside at the meetings together with the Pastor. Together they will see that the present regulations and the directives given at the meetings are observed and carried out with fidelity, charity, and diligence.

#### *Assistants or Advisers*

Two members of the Company will be elected to act as advisers of the Pastor who is the Prior and the Commander. One of them will represent the Commander and take over his responsibilities in his absence.

#### *Treasurer*

The Company will also elect a Treasurer, who will receive and keep the money of the Company, using it according to its directions. He will also give an annual account of it; in addition, he will record the resolutions of the Company in a register he will keep for this purpose.

#### *Visitor*

Lastly, a Visitor will be elected, whose duty will be to inquire about the bashful poor, widows, orphans, poor civil and criminal prisoners, and all other persons in distress in order to visit and console them, and to help them as the case will require and the assembly directs. He will also take care to see that all the poor persons attend catechism sessions twice a week and go to confession and Communion on the first Sunday of the month.

#### *Election of Officers*

The officers will be elected by the Company by a plurality of votes and will be in office for two years only.

### *Duty of the Servants of the Poor*

The Servants of the Poor will each take their day in order and will visit the workshop set up to assist those who are poor. They will see that the poor persons do their duty and that everything goes according to the regulations, informing the Prior and Commander of what is needed so that they may arrange matters. They will take up the collection on Sundays and feast days, each in turn, and perform the spiritual exercises mentioned below.

#### *How to meet the needs of persons who are poor and to help them earn their own living*

All the poor . . . are either little children from four to seven or eight years of age, or youths between eight and fifteen to twenty years old, or who are older but disabled, or elderly persons who can earn only part of their living or are unable to do anything. The little children, the disabled, and those who are aged and infirm will be given weekly what they need to get by; to those who will earn part of their own living the Company will give the other part. The youths will be placed in some modest trade, such as that of a weaver, which costs only three or four écus per apprentice; or a workshop will be set up for some simple work such as making worsted stockings, as described below:

#### *Workshop*

All the youths will be brought together in some suitable rented house, where they will be helped to live and work under the direction of a priest and the leadership of a master workman, in accord with the present regulations.

#### *Office of the priest in charge of the workshop*

It will be the duty of the priest to teach the apprentices and all the other poor persons doctrine and Christian piety. This will be done in the church after Vespers on feast days; and on Tuesdays and Fridays, in the workshop at 1 o'clock; he will spend about half an hour at this. On Sundays and feast days, he will lead the apprentices in line, two by two, to Mass and Vespers; on Saturdays and the eves of great feasts, he will do so for Vespers only, taking them home in the same manner. He will have the apprentices, as well as the other poor persons living on alms, go to confession and Communion on the first Sunday of every month and on solemn feast days. He will be present at dinner and supper with the apprentices and will not be allowed to go to the country or to take any poor person into the workshop without the consent of the officers of the Charity.

#### *Duty of the master workman of the workshop*

It will be the duty of the master workman to teach his trade to the children whom the officers of the Charity will place at the workshop in line with the instructions given here, and he will not be allowed to accept or dismiss any apprentice for any reason whatsoever, without the orders of the officers of the Charity, who have full responsibility for the workshop.

### *Apprentices of the workshop*

The poor apprentices, together with their parents, will give their word on oath to teach their trade, free of charge, to the poor children of the town who will come after them, whenever the officers of the Charity direct them to do so, and the apprentices whom they will teach will be fed by the Company.

### *Daily schedule of the workshop*

The said poor persons will rise at 4 a.m., be dressed by 4:30 a.m., pray until 5:00 a.m., and work until the bell rings for the first Mass, which they will hear, going in line, two by two, and returning in the same way. They will have breakfast at 8:00 a.m.; at noon, they will eat lunch in silence, with reading, stop for a snack at 3:30 p.m., eat supper at 7:00 p.m., then have recreation until 7:45 p.m., say their prayers, and examine their consciences; after which they will go to bed at 8:00 p.m.

### *Practice of the first Sunday of the month*

So that the men and women Servants of the Poor may acquire more and more the true spirit of charity, on the first Sunday of the month they will go to the chapel of the Charity to hear Holy Mass, which will be celebrated for the Company immediately after Lauds. They will go to confession and receive Communion if their affairs allow; after Vespers they will participate in the Litany of Jesus or of the Blessed Virgin, a lighted candle in hand, and listen to the exhortation that will be given. Then the officers will meet to discuss the spiritual and temporal needs of the poor and the needs of the workshop, each giving a report of what he did by virtue of his office, and all will decide, by a plurality of votes, on some means of remedying them. The votes will be collected by the priest who is Prior or, in his absence, by the Commander; and no one, after having cast his vote, will be allowed to dispute with others who were of the contrary opinion.

### *Daily practices and mutual charity of the men and women Servants of the Poor*

They will say five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys daily to honor Our Lord Jesus and His Holy Mother and to obtain their blessings on the work. Moreover, to foster mutual love and to preserve the spirit of Jesus among themselves, they will visit one another when they are sick, comforting those in distress, and will be present for the administration of the last sacraments and the burial. One Mass will be said for every Servant of the Poor immediately after their death. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

### *Means of defraying this expense*

The means of defraying this expense is based partly on the annual revenue of the hospital, partly on the collections that the Servants of the Poor, each in turn, take up in the churches on Sundays and feast days, and partly on the boxes placed in inns, where the landladies do the charity of asking something of those who go there. Be that as it may, God in His goodness has

provided so well for this until now that nothing has been lacking for the support of the work. It is fitting, therefore, that He be thanked and praised forever, since, by this means, His desire that we take care of the poor is fulfilled; the rich receive a million blessings in this world and eternal life in the next; the poor are instructed in the fear of God, taught how to earn their own living, and helped in their need; and lastly, the towns are freed of many depraved idlers and profit from the sale of the work done by the poor.

**137. - REGULATIONS FOR THE COMBINED CHARITY OF COURBOIN**  
(June 19, 1622)

*Purpose for which it will be instituted*

The Association of the Charity will be instituted . . . have them taught the catechism every Sunday and receive the sacraments on the first Sunday of every month, feed and provide medical care for the sick poor, help those to die well. . . .

*Membership*

It will be composed of men, wives, and unmarried women, of which the last mentioned. . . .

*Ministry of the men and, first, how to provide for able-bodied persons*

The Directors of the association will place poor children. . . .

*How the expenses of able-bodied poor persons will be defrayed*

In some places, the expenses of the able-bodied will be defrayed by the collections which the Servants of the Poor, each in turn, take up in the churches on Sundays and feast days; in others, by part of the income of hospitals and what each inhabitant gives charitably every week; in still others, by purchasing a few sheep, which those who already have some, have the charity to feed--some one, some two, some more, some less, each according to his or her ability--and from the sale of their wool, with the proceeds going to the association. Several may share in feeding one person, depending on whether there are more or fewer Associates and poor persons, in such a way that they may give each poor person who cannot work one and a half livres of bread a day, along with a piece of cheese or some butter. Those who earn part of their living are given six to eight livres of bread a week. In return, those poor persons are required to assist at the early Mass daily, attend the catechism lesson and learn it, and go to confession and Communion on the first Sunday of every month, as stated in the first article.

*Officers*

To govern the men's association the Company will elect three Associates by a plurality of votes. Together with a priest who will be the Rector of the association, they will have full

responsibility for it. One of them will be appointed Prior, another Treasurer, and another Visitor of the Poor, and will be in office for two years only.

*Rector*

The Rector will be the Superior of the men's ministry and of that of. . . .

*Prior*

The Prior will do all in his power, together with the Rector. . . .

*Treasurer*

The Treasurer will represent the Prior in his absence and act on his authority . . . in the presence of the Directors and Associates, and of the Judge and *Procureur Fiscal* who will be present, if they think it advisable. He may not, however, ask for or expect any salary for this. The Treasurer will also record in a register he will keep for this purpose the resolutions taken at the meetings.

*Visitor of the Poor*

The Visitor of the Poor will make inquiries about the bashful poor, widows, orphans, and other persons in distress in order to go to visit them. . . .

*Associate Servant*

The Directors will appoint one of the Associates to be an Associate Servant of the Charity, and he will call together the Directors and the Associates whenever the Rector or Prior, or one of the officers, each in order, instructs him to do so. He will likewise be in office for two years only. Should he have to be sent to the country or to spend more than two hours time for the association. . . .

*Women's supervision of the sick poor and, in the first place, admission of the latter*

The sick poor will be admitted to the care of the association by the Prioress and on the advice of the Rector and other officers. They will have their clothes washed and go to confession the same day they are admitted to the care of the association, and will receive Communion on the following day.

*Meals for the patients*

Each patient will have as much bread as he or she can reasonably eat for dinner. . . .

*Order the Ladies of Charity will follow in serving the patients*

Each Lady of Charity will take her day to prepare the food for the patients, which they will take to their home and serve them. . . .

*Burial of poor persons who die*

So that the association may practice fully the works of mercy. . . .

*How the expenses of the sick poor will be defrayed*

God, in His Divine Providence, has until now made sufficient provision for defraying the expenses of this work, both by the collections the Ladies of Charity, each in turn, take up in the churches, daily in some places and on Sundays and feast days in others. . . .

*Officers in general*

To oversee the women's Charity, there will be three officers: the Prioress, the Treasurer, and the Supervisor of Furnishings. Together with the Rector and a Procurator, they will have full responsibility for the work of the sick poor and what depends on it. They will be in office for two years only and will be elected in the same way as the men.

*Prioress<sup>1</sup>*

The Prioress will do her utmost to see that the present regulations are observed by the Ladies of Charity and that the resolutions taken at the meetings are implemented promptly and charitably. In a word, she will govern this family of Our Lord as a respectable woman governs her household.

*Treasurer or First Assistant*

The Treasurer will represent the Prioress in her absence and will take over her responsibilities. She will receive and keep the money in a strongbox having two keys, of which the Prioress will have one and she the other, but she will be authorized to have control of only enough money to feed the sick poor for a month, and will not be allowed to open the strongbox except in the presence of the Prioress. She will use the money according to the instructions of the Rector, Prioress, and Supervisor of Furnishings. She will give an annual account of it in the presence of the Rector, the Director of the men's association, the Procurator, the Prioress, the Second Assistant, and the Judge and the *Procureur Fiscal*, in the manner mentioned above. They will give full credence to the amounts recorded by her as expenditures, on condition that she not open the collection boxes and the boxes placed in the inns unless one of the aforesaid gentlemen is present. The report of the accounts will be given in the chapel of the Charity after Vespers on the day after the feast of All Saints. Lest those who should be present excuse themselves from this meeting because they were not informed of it, the Rector will announce it from the pulpit the day before. The same will be done for the report of accounts for the men's group, on the day after Pentecost.

*Supervisor of Furnishings or Second Assistant*

Like the Treasurer, the Supervisor of Furnishings will serve as adviser to the Superioress; she will look after the furnishings of the association, have the linen washed and mended when necessary, and, when she leaves office, give an account of what has been entrusted to her.

*Procurator of the women's Charity*

The women officers will elect a Procurator, also every two years, on the day after the feast of All Saints. It will be his duty to assist the Rector at all the meetings he will have with the officers and to keep the immovable goods of the women's association. He may not, however, farm or draw up any contracts unless the Rector and officers are present and give their consent. The money will be entrusted to the Treasurer as soon as he receives it, and she will give him a receipt for it, by means of which he will be legally released from his obligation.

*Nurses of the Sick Poor*

The Ladies of Charity will choose two devout poor women to nurse patients who are destitute and deprived of any other assistance. These nurses will be paid from the common funds of the association and admitted into it. They will be called Nurses of the Sick Poor and will also be of service by informing the Ladies of Charity whenever they should meet.

*Matters common to men and women Servants of the Poor. Election of officers*

The male officers will complete their two-year term on the day after Pentecost, and will present new ones to the association assembled in a body after Vespers of the day. The latter will give their approval of them, if they think suitable, by a plurality of votes, and others will be appointed and established. The women officers will do likewise on the day after All Saints' Day.

*Fidelity of the men and women officers in allowing only the truly poor and the truly sick to share in the alms of the association*

Because the Charity has been instituted only for persons who are truly poor and truly sick, the officers will allow to share in the alms of the association only those whom they will, in conscience, judge to be truly poor and sick. And so that favoritism, which is the downfall of good works, may not slip into this one, when the officers take up their responsibility they will promise not to use their influence, either directly or indirectly, to have anyone admitted to receive the alms of the association. . . .

*Mass, Communion, litany, exhortations, and the reading of the present regulations that should take place every first or third Sunday of the month*

So that the members of the Charity may profit from and be strengthened more and more in the spirit of charity, they will come together every first or third Sunday of the month in the chapel designated for the Charity. They will hear Mass there in the morning, and those who wish to go to confession and receive Communion--as all are encouraged to do--will do so. After dinner. . . .

### *Love of Our Lord*

Since one of the principal aims of this association is to honor Our Lord and His Holy Mother, the members of the Charity will be encouraged to show them great honor. . . .

#### *Mutual charity they should have for one another*

The men and women Associates will have great charity for one another, visit and console one another in their trials, give instructions that the last sacraments be administered to them in due time and place, and have prayers said in common and privately that the soul of no Associate will leave this world except in a good state. They will be present in a body for the administration of the last sacraments and the burial of the Associates and Nurses of the Sick Poor, for whose souls they will have celebrated. . . .

#### *Zeal the Associates will have for preserving the women's association as well as their own*

And because the men's association and that of the women is one same association, having the same purpose and spiritual exercises, and only the ministries are divided--the care of the able-bodied being assigned to the men and that of the infirm to the women--and because Our Lord draws no less. . . .

#### *Formula to be used for the firm resolution of the Servants of the Poor*

To make this association more enduring, its Rector . . . and all the men and women Associates will repeat aloud after the Rector: AI . . . , Associate of the Association of the Charity, intend to observe its regulations and to do my utmost to foster the preservation and growth of the association, with the help of God, which I humbly ask of Him for this purpose. @

### **APPROVAL OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

To the Bishop of Soissons or his Vicar-General

Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, humbly petitions, stating that, knowing from experience the great good arising from the Association of the Charity established in several of her towns and villages, she would like to have it established in her villages that are dependent on your diocese and on the barony of Montmirail.

In consideration of this, Excellency, may it please you to permit the establishment of the Charity in these villages according to the regulations given above, and to entrust her chaplain, M. Vincent de Paul, priest and Bachelor of Theology, with making the establishment, and you will be doing a work pleasing to God. You will also greatly oblige the Lady and do great good for the poor.

Drawn up in Montmirail, May 6, 1622.

## FRANÇOISE-MARGUERITE DE SILLY

We, Charles de Macqueville, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Bishop of Soissons, having read the previously written statutes and ordinances of the Association of the Charity, together with the request that has also been made in writing, have permitted and by these present letters do permit the Lady to have the Association of the Charity established in all the villages belonging to her in our diocese. For this purpose we entrust her chaplain, M. Vincent de Paul, priest and Bachelor of Theology, with making the establishment, and we grant forty days indulgence to all those who enter the association.

Given in Soissons, May 13, 1622.

CHARLES, *Bi[shop] of Soissons*

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONFRATERNITY

Today, June 19, 1622, in the parish church of Courboin, in the presence of Brother Pierre Dieu, Pastor in Courboin and professed religious of Saint-Jean-des-Vignes; and of Lady Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, Comtesse de Joigny, Baronne de Montmirail, and Lady of the place, Courboin; and of the majority of the inhabitants of Courboin, assembled in the church at the hour for Vespers, I, Vincent de Paul, priest, Bachelor of Theology, and chaplain of the Lady, delegated by His Excellency the Bishop of Soissons to make the establishment of the Association of the Charity in Courboin and other villages dependent on the Soissons diocese and belonging to the Lady, in accord with what is stated in the permission of the Bishop, transcribed above, of which the original has been given to the officers of the Charity of Chamblon, attest to all those whom it may concern that, by virtue of that permission, I have established and do establish the Association of the Charity in the church of Courboin, in the chapel formerly known as Notre-Dame, which is the one closest to the main altar of the church, and this chapel shall henceforth be called the Jesus chapel or the chapel of the Charity.

After relating in what the association consists and explaining the articles of its regulations given above, I urged those wishing to become members to come forward and be enrolled. Whereupon the undersigned presented themselves and requested me to enroll them in the association, which I did: first, J.-P. Dieu the Pastor of Courboin, then Françoise-Marguerite de Silly, V. Lorain, Jacques Clément, P. Brission, Jean Lilleson, N. Gutinot, Nicolas Naudé, J. Hiernaut, Ch. Pourié, Cl. Mariquot, J. Guillou, L. Brission, N. Naudé, G. Tizon, E. Dubois, Sarrasin, Denis Dubois, J. Brission, P. de la Noue, and J. Le Jeune.

In addition to the above who signed, others were enrolled in the association, whose names are written on the other side; it should be understood for these that the wives are members of the Charity as well as their husbands.

Proceeding to the election of officers for the men, the following were elected: Pierre Naudé, Prior; Gilbert Merlin, Treasurer; Jacques Clément, Visitor of the Poor; and Claude Conte, Associate Servant. For the women officers: Jeanne Dubois, wife of Pierre Sarrasin, Prioress; Jeanne Roses, wife of Augustin Dubois, Treasurer; Marguerite Naudé, wife of Jean Aymon, Second Assistant; and Pierre Brission, Procurator of the sick.

Drawn up in Courboin the above day and year

V. DEPAUL, *priest*

### **138. - REGULATIONS FOR THE COMBINED CHARITY OF MONTREUIL**

(April 11, 1627)

We, Vincent de Paul, priest, Licentiate in Canon Law, and Principal of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, contiguous to the Porte Saint-Victor, by virtue of the authority given us by His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Jean-François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, to erect and establish the Confraternity of Charity in places in his diocese that we will judge appropriate, have, by the aforesaid authority and with the consent of the inhabitants of the parish in Montreuil, along the Bois de Vincennes, erected and established and do erect and establish it in Montreuil. And, to avoid the proliferation of confraternities, we have, with the consent of the members of the Confraternity of Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, united and incorporated and do unite and incorporate the Confraternity of Charity to that of Saint-Nom-de-Jésus established in Montreuil, since the members have promised, and do promise, to perform the following holy exercises, which are customary in the Confraternity of Charity, namely:

To assist, spiritually and corporally, all the sick poor of the parish in Montreuil: spiritually, by helping to die well those who seem close to death and by having those who will recover resolve never to offend God again; and corporally, by giving them everything necessary by way of food and medicine, after they have been to confession and received Communion.

For this purpose, the members will each take their day to serve the sick poor, in the order in which the blessed bread is distributed. They will prepare their dinner and supper, which they will take to their homes. For each meal, they will give the patient as much bread as he or she can eat and a half-pint of wine, Paris measure; for dinner, on days when meat can be eaten, five ounces of mutton or veal and the same for supper; on days of abstinence, two eggs and a little butter in the morning, along with some soup; and the same in the evening. The sick poor will be admitted to the care of the confraternity and dismissed by the Pastor and those in charge of it.

To cover the expense of food for the patients, the members will each, in turn, take up a collection on Sundays and feast days in the church in Montreuil, and that same day will give the collection money to the Treasurer, who will be one of the officers of the Confraternity of Saint-Nom-de-Jésus, in the presence of the other, who will check the collections.

The money of the confraternity will be kept in a strongbox with three keys, of which each officer will keep one, so that none of them may withdraw the money without the other. For current expenses, the Treasurer, who will be one of the officers, will keep on hand four écus and no more, and will be obliged to give an accounting in the presence of the members of the parish on the day stipulated in the regulations of the Confraternity of Saint-Nom-de-Jésus. And so that each member may know more clearly what he is obliged to do, the present regulations will be read aloud in the church by the Pastor or someone else he will choose, after Vespers every first Sunday of the month for a year; after that, it will be done after Vespers on the feast day of the confraternity. None of this, however, obliges under pain of mortal or venial sin.

Drawn up in Montreuil, April 11, 1627, in the presence of the undersigned.

VINCENT DEPAUL

FRANÇ[OIS], *Archbi[shop] of Paris*

**139. - REGULATIONS FOR THE CHARITY OF WOMEN  
(SAINT-SAUVEUR PARISH, PARIS)**

(1629)

Organization of the confraternity instituted at Saint-Sauveur Church by the Pastor of the place for visits to the sick poor of the parish.

Before the Ladies go to visit the sick poor, the doctor, who is M. Lévesque, a physician of the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, goes to see them and prescribes what is necessary for them, medicine as well as bloodletting. The orders are brought to the Superioress for her to sign and to admit the patients into the confraternity if she sees, after careful investigation, that they meet the requirements, namely:

That they have been living in the parish for at least three months and their illness is not chronic because certain ones sometimes last seven or eight months and longer. This would mean that, because of the length of the illness, many other patients could not be taken care of.

The physician sends the Superioress in writing a certificate indicating that the Ladies can go there without any danger. Or, if he has not yet been able to make a diagnosis because there are some latent illnesses, he may give another note to have food sent to them, as he judges necessary.

All of this is so that the Ladies are not placed in any danger and the confraternity may always remain.

The priest who does this charity must see the patients every day because sick persons have many setbacks.

Three Ladies are elected to take charge of the confraternity, namely, the Superioress, the Treasurer, and the Supervisor of Furnishings of the confraternity. They [are] elected by the votes of several persons gathered together for the institution of the confraternity, each one of whom is given her responsibility.

The Superioress is responsible for visiting the patients she may go to see on the doctor's orders. She and a companion should visit them twice a week, but they should never go alone nor before meals.

The Treasurer keeps the money, for which a collection is taken up [for] the sick poor of the area every Sunday by the church. The wives and not the unmarried women take up this collection.

The Ladies in charge may do nothing without consulting one another.

The Supervisor of Furnishings will look after the mattresses, sheets, blankets, shirts, and anything else needed for the sick because it is very necessary that there be someone to take care of the furnishings.

Before a Confraternity of Charity is erected, people could have said: AWe have no furnishings for the poor;@ however, once the group is formed, after the election all the Ladies enrolled in it

are asked what they would like to donate. One will say, AI am giving two or three sheets,@ and others, A some shirts,@ and so on. At the same time someone writes all this down for fear that it may be forgotten, and that is how supplies for the sick poor are built up.

The Lady who keeps the furnishings takes the trouble, for the love of God, to be careful in lending them to patients and of getting them back, so that nothing gets lost.

The Ladies of this confraternity should have the charity to visit one another when they are ill or in distress and to be present when they die. They should also have a Mass offered for one another when one dies and should receive Communion for the intention of the deceased.

**140. - REGULATIONS FOR THE CHARITY  
(SAINT-SAUVEUR PARISH, PARIS) - CONCLUSION  
(1629)**

. . . . Therefore, it is necessary to contact the druggist for enemas and medicines, and the surgeon for bloodletting, cauterizing, and applying leeches.

When the Treasurer pays for them each month, she should get the receipts signed by the doctor and the Superioress.

For the butcher, the baker, and the innkeeper, a set price should be determined for the entire year for one livre of veal and mutton, a dozen loaves of bread, and a pint of wine.

With regard to the rule of visiting poor persons, both for the confraternity that has been instituted and for the Ladies enrolled in it, they will go in obedience to their Superioress.

Some have the visits made in the order in which the blessed bread is distributed. This visit should be made twice a day, bringing the sick dinner and supper at the expense of the confraternity, and they themselves should feed them without expecting anyone else to do it.

The first day of this Institute, the three Superiors will begin to prepare the stew. Two Ladies will make the visits together; one will make the stew one day, and another the next, and will continue one after the other.

They will give each soldier [*sic*] two or three servings of broth, ten ounces of meat--veal or mutton--and a loaf of bread. This will depend on the attention of those who will visit them because it is hard to say how much, for there are some patients to whom nothing should be given because they are unable to eat. Eggs are given to those who cannot eat meat.

Half a setier of wine should be given to each patient for the day, provided the doctor judges this advisable.

Care should be taken to give them the proper amount of bread, wine, and meat and to find good food.

On days of abstinence, those who are abstaining are given soup with some greens in it, three eggs with a small portion of butter, and two apples.

As for visits to the sick poor, they are very worthwhile for their salvation and for our own, for during these visits, we can instruct parents and their children, inquire after them--which is helpful for their conversion--and encourage them to go to confession and Communion once a month, to live in peace in their families, and to instruct them as Christians.

The Superioress is to observe when the patients are able to do without the visit, and tell them two or three days beforehand that they will be saying good-bye to them and that they should

praise God for restoring them to health, not to spend any time living in sin, and set matters aright by a good confession.

**141. - REGULATIONS FOR THE CHARITY OF WOMEN  
(SAINT-NICOLAS-DU-CHARDONNET PARISH, PARIS)**

(1630)

The Company of women of the Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet Charity will be established in Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet parish, united to the Confraternity of the Most Blessed Sacrament, to honor Our Lord Jesus Christ its patron and His Holy Mother, in order to assist persons in the parish who are poor: spiritually, by obtaining that those who seem to be close to death leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover resolve not to offend God again; and corporally, by giving them food and medicines.

The Company will be composed of a limited number of wives and unmarried women. By a plurality of votes collected by the Pastor, they will elect three of their members, one of whom will be the Superioress, another the Treasurer, and the other the Supervisor of Furnishings. These three women will have full responsibility for the Company, together with the Pastor and a devout parishioner appointed by him. The officers will have an eighteen-month term, some leaving office the day after the feast of Saint John and others the day following New Year's Day. On those days a new election will be held, beginning with the Supervisor of Furnishings, then the Treasurer, and lastly the Superioress. They may, however, continue for another eighteen months, for one more term only, if it is deemed expedient.

The Superioress will see that the present regulations are observed and that each member of the Company performs her ministry well. She will also accept into the care of the Company the sick poor, being sure that they go to confession and Communion promptly and, as far as possible, that they are assisted by a priest at the hour of death. She will discharge the others, on the advice of the other officers, after receiving that of the doctor.

The Treasurer will act as adviser to the Superioress. She will keep the money in a strongbox with two separate locks, to which the Superioress will have one key and she the other. She may, however, keep ten écus on hand for current expenses, and will record all donations and expenditures in écus, of which she will give an account the day after she leaves office, in the presence of the Pastor, the parishioner appointed by him, and the other two officers.

The Supervisor of Furnishings will also act as adviser to the Superioress. She will maintain the furnishings, have the linen washed and mended, take care that they are given to and returned from the patients, and do whatever else is needed to arrange the bedrooms of the sick poor properly when the Blessed Sacrament is brought to them, at which the Ladies of the Company may be present, if they are informed of this and can do so conveniently. The Supervisor of Furnishings will also give an account the day after she leaves office.

The Ladies of Charity will consider themselves blessed for having been chosen by God as Servants of the Poor, who represent Him so efficaciously. And, in order to become capable of serving them worthily, they will do their utmost to learn how to live as good Christians, which will be easy for them by being present as often as they can--both they and their families--at sermons, catechism, and Mass in their parishes. They will receive Communion at least on the

first Sunday of the month; before going to bed and as soon as they have risen, they will kneel down to adore God. In every way they can, they will show honor to the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar, going as often as possible to the Mass celebrated in the parish. They will always show respect for churches, where they should behave with the decorum of a Christian.

The Ladies of the Company will take their turns, two by two, to serve the sick poor. They will also take up the collection in turn at church on solemn feast days and will attend low Mass on the first Thursday of the month--or the second one, when a feast day falls on the first one. This Mass will be offered from the alms of the Ladies of Charity for the poor persons who die each month and to give them renewed strength and courage to serve the sick, being ever more strongly united by the merits of the Holy Sacrifice; if convenient, they will also receive Communion on this day. They will cherish one another as sisters whom Our Lord has united by the bond of His holy love and will visit and console one another in their trials and illnesses. They will do their utmost to prepare someone to replace them before their death; as far as possible, they will go in a body to the funeral of those who die. A certain number of them will also attend the funerals of the sick poor whom they will have served when they were ill, and see that the poor who die are always brought to the church and some prayer chanted over their remains before the burial. They will have one Mass celebrated at their own expense for each Lady of the Company after her death, going to confession and receiving Communion for her on the day she dies, or as soon as they can. They will do the same for the Pastor<sup>1</sup> and the person appointed by him, when they die.

They will take care to have a physician or surgeon visit the sick poor before admitting them to the care of the Charity, who will warn them whenever there is danger of contagion.

And because Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet parish is full of all kinds of poor people, after supplying the provisions of the sick and paying the doctor, druggist, and nurse, if there is still money left over amounting to more than eleven hundred livres, the surplus will be distributed to other poor persons, always giving preference to any sickly bashful poor before those who can earn their own living.

The Ladies who are officers of the Charity will choose a woman to nurse the sick poor in case of need, to carry the soup pot, give enemas, and notify the Company of meetings, when necessary. These meetings will be held at least every three months.

Each poor person will be given as much bread as he or she can eat and five ounces of veal or mutton at each meal, along with some soup; except that, for supper, they will be attentive to what the sick poor may like to eat, provided it is not harmful to their health. When the doctor orders them to have some wine, they will be given a further half-setier a day. And, when the patients can no longer tolerate solid meat, they will be given more broth and four eggs for the day, and as much on days of abstinence, and some butter soup with a little egg yolk added to it.

Lastly, the Ladies of Charity will be very solicitous for and desirous of the salvation of the souls of the poor persons, assisting them both by their prayers and by brief instructions. If possible, they will do what they can to see that God is honored in the families of the parish and try to find a schoolteacher there for the future, who will teach the poor thoroughly.

They will take the name of Servants of the Poor.

They will hold the election of officers by a plurality of votes and, after the officers are elected, ask the Pastor for a parishioner to act as adviser to them when needed.

They will decide when the Ladies of Charity will visit the sick and whether it might not be advisable that this be at an earlier time rather than later, provided they do not enter houses where there has been plague since Easter but leave the regular meals at the door.

They will ask the Pastor to name a physician and will determine, with the officers, what will be given to him and to the surgeon as well.

They will notify the Ladies when there is no linen for the poor persons, not requesting any, however, but referring them to the Supervisor of Furnishings, to whom they can give whatever they wish, regardless of how little. If some Ladies want to donate something for burying the dead, they should specify this in giving it.

They will not name the persons who donate something to the association, so as not to hurt the others.

They will strongly recommend that, when each visits on her day, she gives no money and puts nothing extra in the pot other than the ordinary fare. It is, however, permissible for them to donate something to cover the needs they observe, if they wish to do so, but this should be done on another day.

## **142. - CHARITY OF WOMEN (ARGENTEUIL)** (1634)

To His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris or to his Vicar-General.

Messire Pierre Blaise, priest, Bachelor of Canon Law, and Pastor in Argenteuil, humbly states that, having learned of the great benefits accruing to the establishment of the Charity of the Sick Poor in the places where it is instituted, he would like to have it set up in the Argenteuil parish, according to the regulations given below. In consideration of this, Excellency, may it please you to permit the establishment of the confraternity in Argenteuil, to approve the regulations, and to authorize Maître Vincent de Paul, Superior of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, to form the establishment; and the petitioner and his parishioners will pray to God for your long and happy life.

### *Purpose for which the confraternity will be instituted*

The Confraternity of Charity will be erected in the parish church of Argenteuil to honor Our Lord Jesus its patron and His Holy Mother, and to assist the sick poor of Argenteuil spiritually and corporally: spiritually, by obtaining that those who seem to be close to death leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover make the resolution never to offend God in the future; corporally, by giving them the food they need; and, lastly, to fulfill Our Lord's ardent desire that we love one another.

### *Patron*

The patron of the confraternity will be Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### *Membership*

It will be composed of a certain number of respectable, pious wives and unmarried women.

The former will be admitted only with the consent of their husbands, and the latter with that of their parents. They will be called Servants of the Poor and will have a respectable townsman as their Procurator.

### *Officers*

The Servants of the Poor will elect three of their members to be in charge of the confraternity, on the advice of the Pastor and the Procurator. One of the Directresses or officers will be the Prioress; another, First Assistant; and the other, Second Assistant.

### *Superioress*

The Superioress will do her utmost to see that all the elements of the present regulations are observed, that each Servant of the Poor performs her ministry, and that the poor are well assisted. She will also do what she can to increase the revenue of the confraternity, will keep one of the keys to the strongbox where the money is kept, and will refer the sick poor to the care of the confraternity, after they have been to confession and Communion.

### *First Assistant*

The First Assistant will act as adviser to the Prioress, will keep the money for current expenses and one of the keys of the strongbox, in which surplus funds will be kept, and will give an account of them annually on the feast of Saint Louis.<sup>1</sup>

### *Second Assistant*

The Second Assistant will also act as adviser to the Prioress, maintain the furnishings of the Charity, and see that the linen is washed.

### *Duty of each Servant of the Poor*

They will regard the sick poor as their own children, of whom God has made them their mothers. They will serve them in the manner given below, each having her day, and they will take up the collection in turn at the church on Sunday and will attend the Mass of the confraternity, which they will have celebrated on the first Sunday of the month at the expense of the confraternity. They will also participate in the litany that will be chanted after Vespers on Sundays. Those who are able to do so conveniently will go to confession on the first Sunday of the month; they will say three rosaries at the time of the death of each Servant of the Poor, one rosary for each poor person who dies and whom they have helped, and one Our Father and one Hail Mary, morning and evening, for the spiritual and temporal preservation of the confraternity and its benefactors.

### *How the Servants of the Poor will proceed in serving the patients*

Each will take her turn to serve the sick poor, as has been stated, in such a way that the Lady

whose day it is will go to the butcher for the meat, to the baker for the bread, and to the innkeeper for the wine, with the list of prices agreed upon, on which it will be noted what she will buy. She will prepare the dinner, take it to the patients, have them eat at nine in the morning, and do the same for supper at about five in the evening. When she has finished her day, she will notify the one who comes after her that it is her turn to serve the patients the next day, give her the lists, and tell her the number and condition of the patients.

#### *Manner of feeding the patients*

Each patient will receive four or five ounces of mutton or veal for each meal, as much bread as he or she can reasonably eat, and a half-setier of wine, Paris measure. On days of abstinence, two eggs will be given for each meal in the place of meat.

#### *Mutual charity among themselves*

They will cherish one another as sisters who profess to honor Our Lord in the same spirit by the virtue He practiced the most perfectly and which He loved and recommended the most, namely, charity. To this effect, they will visit and help one another, in sickness and in health, and pray for one another, especially in times of illness or death, as has been stated. In a word, they will do their utmost so that they may leave this world in a good state, and will have two Masses offered for those who die. None of this, however, obliges under pain of either mortal or venial sin.

#### *Election of Officers and accounting by the Treasurer*

The election of the officers and of their Prioress will be held by the Servants of the Poor, by a plurality of votes, every two years on the day following the feast of Saint Louis. A report of the accounts will be given on the same day in the presence of the Pastor and of each member in the chapel of the Charity. At the same time, the Treasurer will be obliged to hand over to the one who succeeds her the remaining funds she has. The Second Assistant will likewise be obliged at the same time to give over the furnishings to the one who succeeds her.

We, Jean-François de Gondi, Archbishop of Paris, Councillor of the King in his Council of State, Prince and Grand Master of his chapel, after having examined the request and the regulations of the aforesaid Confraternity of Charity, have approved and do approve its regulations, and have permitted M. Vincent de Paul or some other priest of the above-mentioned Mission to establish the Confraternity of Charity in the parish of Argenteuil, on condition that the exercises that are to be performed on the first Sunday of the month take place outside the time it is customary to have the Divine Service in the parish. Furthermore, we have granted forty days indulgence, for the first Sunday of the month, to those who enter the confraternity.

Drawn up in Paris, March 17, 1634.

D. E. GÉRARD, *Vicar-General*

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CONFRATERNITY**

We, Vincent de Paul, priest, Superior of the Priests of the Congregation of the Mission, attest to all those whom it may concern that, by virtue of the aforesaid permission of His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, whereby we have been commissioned for the establishment of the Confraternity of Charity in the church in Argenteuil, we, by the aforementioned authority, when the people had assembled, after explaining to them in what this Confraternity consists and accepting the names of those listed and signed below, who declared that they wished to become members of the Confraternity, established and do establish it in the said Argenteuil. This having been done, we proceeded to the election of officers and of a Procurator and named the following officers by a plurality of votes: Lady Louise Imard, wife of M. Jean Dubois the cloth merchant, Superior; Anne Féron, wife of Macé the butcher, Treasurer; Marguerite Labilon, widow of Antoine David, Supervisor of Furnishings; and Macé the butcher, Procurator.

Drawn up in Argenteuil on the feast of Saint Bartholomew, August 24, 1634.

VINCENT DEPAUL

## **PART IV**

### **DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY**

#### **143. - REGULATIONS FOR THE SISTERS OF THE ANGERS HOSPITAL<sup>1</sup> (1641)<sup>2</sup>**

The Daughters of Charity of the Sick Poor are going to Angers to honor Our Lord, Father of the Poor, and His Holy Mother, in order to assist, corporally and spiritually, the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu of the town: corporally, by serving them and giving them food and medicine; spiritually, by instructing the patients in things necessary for salvation and seeing that they make a general confession of their entire past life so that, by this means, those who will die may leave this world in a good state, and those who will recover may take the resolution never more to offend God.

The first thing Our Lord asks of them is to love Him supremely and to perform all their actions for love of Him. The second is to cherish one another as sisters whom He has bound together by the bond of His love, and to love the sick poor as their lords, since Our Lord is in them and they are in Our Lord.

They will be infinitely grateful for the grace of having been rescued from the dregs of

unmarried women and widows and called by God to a divine state in which Kings and Queens have sought and found their sanctification.

For the love of Christ, who has given us the example, they will strive to hold in contempt what the world esteems, and esteem what the world despises. For that purpose, each Sister will seek out what is contemptible, mortify herself in all things, and prefer menial and abject employments to honorable ones. They will stand firm against every temptation to the contrary that will come to them.

They will renounce earthly attachment to their relatives and native regions, changing it into a spiritual one, according to the counsel of Our Lord, who tells us that we cannot be His disciples if we do not hate father and mother,<sup>3</sup> and that no prophet is without honor except in his native place.<sup>4</sup>

They will be faithful to the observance of their Regulations, to the way of life proper to their Little Company, and to the acquisition of solid virtue, especially to having a pure intention to please God in all things, preferring to die rather than to displease Him. To this effect, they will work incessantly at renouncing their own will.

Poverty will be observed exactly among them as a means to preserve them in their vocation, with God's help. For that purpose, each Sister will always choose for herself whatever is poorest. They will keep neither money nor anything else individually or with some other person. They will manage the property of poor persons as the property of God;<sup>5</sup> they will neither receive nor give any presents, and will be content with the food, clothing, and lodging given them. In a word, they will remember that they were born poor, that they must live as poor persons for the love of the Poorest of the poor, Jesus Christ Our Lord, and that, as such, they must be extremely humble and respectful toward everyone and keep their eyes lowered when speaking to people.

They will use every conceivable precaution to preserve their chastity and will keep watch over their interior and exterior senses. They will not speak to men when they are alone, not even to priests or to the male religious of the house. They will always observe poverty in their dress and head covering.

They will obey their Superiors in this city of Paris in matters of discipline and conduct in internal affairs and will obey the Administrators for external matters concerning hospital regulations for the service of poor persons. They will obey their local Superior for the implementation of the regulations and for everything in general that she will instruct them to do. Their obedience will be prompt, cheerful, total, constant, persevering in everything, and with submission of their own will and judgment, always considering that what they are instructed to do is best. In addition, none of them will speak, write, or receive any letters without the permission of the local Superior, unless it is something from their Father Superior.

They will be content to have their Superior informed of all their failings by those who observe them; every evening they will mention the faults they have committed during the day, doing so honestly, humbly, and simply, and accepting the penance their Superior will give them for this.

They will go to confession and Communion every Sunday and assist at Mass daily. They will pray for half an hour in the morning and the same in the evening; before eating, they will make a brief examination of conscience on the virtue they have proposed to themselves to acquire, and a general examination in the evening. Each day they will read one chapter of the assigned spiritual reading, in addition to reading at table.

They will rise at four o'clock sharp in the morning and offer themselves to God on awakening, adoring and thanking Him for the grace He has granted them of passing the night well, and

asking His forgiveness if they have offended Him. They will offer Him their thoughts, words, and works of the day, asking Him for the grace to spend the day in His love. For this purpose they will say: *Blessed be the Holy and undivided Trinity, now and forever, world without end. Amen.*

At half past four, they will go to their little oratory and make mental prayer until five. Next they will say the Litany of Jesus and two decades of their rosary, then go to finish dressing and make their beds.

At six o'clock they will go to the ward of the sick, empty the chamber pots, make the beds of the patients, clean the toilets, and administer the medicines. Before going there, they will take a little bread and a finger of wine when they first enter the hospital. On Communion days, they will sniff a little vinegar or rub some of it on their hands.

At seven o'clock they will serve the sickest patients some broth or a fresh egg for breakfast, and a little butter or stewed apples for the others.

After that, they will assist at Holy Mass, if they have not done so at five o'clock, and will be very careful to see that broth is served at the appointed times to the patients who have been purged.

The Sisters who need to eat something will do so after that, then they will return to the patients, instruct in the things necessary to salvation those who are uneducated, encourage them to make a general confession of their whole past life and to go afterward to confession and Communion every Sunday as long as they are ill and are able to do so, and to receive the last sacraments in good time. They will console those who are seriously ill and have them make acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, and conformity to the good pleasure of God. They will dispose those who are near death to leave this world in a good state, and those who will recover, never to offend God again, or, if they do, to go to confession as soon as possible.

They will take great care to see that the sick poor have what is necessary: meals at the scheduled times, something to drink when they need it, and occasionally a few little sweets.

At ten o'clock they will go to the infirmary to prepare and serve the meal to the patients. The Superior will say aloud grace before meals, urging the patients to raise their hearts to God at that time. If it is the responsibility of the Sisters, they will see that they are given some veal and mutton for dinner, along with a little beef stew, and for supper some roasted and boiled meat for those who need it, if the order already established does not indicate otherwise.

For those who should not eat solid meat, however, they will alternate broth and eggs every three hours so that they will be given broth four times and three eggs daily.

When the poor persons have finished their meal, the Sisters will make their brief examination of conscience and, at exactly eleven o'clock, will eat the portion given them for lunch, taking their turn reading at table. Then, after grace has been said, they will pray a decade of the rosary to offer to God what they have to do after dinner, asking Him for the grace to do it in His love.

Following this, two of them will go to relieve the Sister who remained with the patients, who will then go for her dinner at the second table with the reader. The other two will try to entertain the patients.

After the reader and the nurse of the sick have eaten, said grace after meals, and cleared the table, they will go to the church or oratory to pray a decade of the rosary for the same intention as above; the other two Sisters will go to wash the dishes and do the work assigned to them by the Superior.

If the Hôtel-Dieu of Angers has no Company of Ladies of Charity to serve refreshments to the

sick poor, the Sisters will go to the infirmary at exactly two o'clock to give them a few little sweets for their snack, such as stewed pears and apples, and, if the Administrators agree, some sugar toast and jam.

The Sisters who are not on duty with the patients will return to their work or, if they have nothing urgent to take care of, will stay in the infirmary to instruct the poor persons, prepare the newly-arrived for a general confession, have them make interior acts of faith, hope, love, contrition, and conformity to the good pleasure of God, and console them, as in the morning.

At four o'clock, they will give the enemas, change the soiled sheets, empty the chamber pots, and straighten up the beds of the patients a little, without getting them up.

At exactly five o'clock, all the Sisters will go to the infirmary to serve supper to the patients as at dinner; afterward, the Sisters will go to pray for half an hour, at the end of which they will make the particular examination of conscience, followed by supper. Then they will say grace after meals and do as they did for dinner.

After grace, around half past six, the Sisters will go to the infirmary, relieve the nurse, send her to supper with the reader, and do everything as after dinner; meanwhile, before seven o'clock the others will put to bed those patients who are ambulatory, giving instructions that some wine and a few sweets be provided for the most seriously ill.

At half past seven, all the Sisters will go to the infirmary to make the general examination of conscience; those patients who are able will do the same. One of the Sisters will read aloud in the middle of the infirmary the points for mental prayer; then they will say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and the Superior will give holy water to all the patients and to the Sisters.

At eight o'clock, the Sisters will depart, leaving one Sister in the infirmary to watch over and assist the sickest and to help those near death to die well. She will finish her rosary as soon as the patients are asleep and will spend the night keeping watch, reading, and sometimes dozing, as long as they are resting. The others will go to their duties to prepare what will be needed the next morning and will go to bed at nine o'clock sharp, after having made the act of adoration.

At half past three, the Sister on night duty will make her prayer; at four o'clock, she will conclude it, go to wake the others, and get something to eat. Then she will go to bed until nine o'clock, when she will rise to assist at Holy Mass. The Superior will send someone to replace her, who will make her prayer there in the same manner and at the same time as the others, unless her presence is required with one of the patients. In that case she will know that the service she is rendering to the patients is a continual prayer before God.

And, so that it may please God to grant them the grace of accomplishing all these things, they will frequently ask it of Him, will go to confession and Communion for this intention, and will walk in the presence of God. They will take as their patrons and intercessors before God the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, Saint Louis, Saint Genevieve, Saint Margaret the Queen, and Saint John the Evangelist, patron of the hospital. They will be faithful to performing their daily actions well and will live in great kindness, gentleness, and cordiality with one another and those who are poor. They will strive to be very humble toward one another and most respectful and obedient to the Administrators. They will avoid talking with people, especially with the male religious of the house, to whom they will never speak unless there are two of them together, and, even then, briefly and about necessary matters, never about their own affairs, even under the pretext of charity, nor about their own little problems and difficulties, which they will mention to no one except the Superior. They will write often to their spiritual Superiors in Paris concerning their interior state and will follow their advice, obeying them exactly. Every Friday they will read

the present Regulations at table.

In conclusion, they will reflect on the happiness of their situation, namely, that they are serving Our Lord in the person of His poor people; that He recognizes as done to Himself the service they render to the sick poor; that, on Judgment Day, they will go forth with their heads held high because, in doing what they do, they are accomplishing God's law to the full; and lastly, that, as long as they remain in a state of charity, they will always be in God and God in them.

### **143a. - CONTRACT WITH SAINT-JEAN HOSPITAL IN ANGERS**

February 1, 1640

Provisions granted to the establishment of the Daughters of the Congregation of Charity and Servants of the Poor of hospitals and parish confraternities to serve the sick poor in Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste Hospital in Angers.

(1) The Sisters will always be dependent on the Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission of the archdiocese of Paris for spiritual matters only, and no one may enquire into them. The Chief Administrators give them entire liberty to live according to their Rule, which obliges them to leave everything when the service of poor persons requires it, since this is their primary and definitive obligation.

(2) For what concerns temporal matters, the service of the sick poor, and the government of the hospital, the Sisters will be entirely under the authority of and dependent on the Administrators, who will give them whatever orders they wish with regard to the above, and they will obey them exactly.

(3) The Sisters alone will be responsible for the poor persons, and no one may associate any wives or unmarried women with them, so that, through the union and relationship existing among themselves, those who are poor may be served better.

(4) They will be fed and furnished with all their clothing--of which no one may change the color or form--at the expense of the hospital, and will be supplied with medicine and food if they fall ill. They will be considered members of the household and not paid workers.

(5) They will not be obliged to stay up at night with patients outside the ward of the hospital, unless it is with women who are within the enclosure of the hospital, such as the maternity ward.

They will give an account of their service and administration only to the Administrators, who will support them, considering that, if they are not authorized by them with regard to the officers and domestic help and with persons who are poor, they could not do the good God wants them to do and would always be subject to complaints. They [the Administrators] will, however, notify them of their failings, which they will correct, with the grace of God.

(6) When any of the Sisters die, the Administrators, mindful that they have devoted themselves to the service of God and persons who are poor, will kindly allow the other Sisters who serve there to give them a proper burial in their ordinary manner, leaving the body in their little infirmary until it is taken away to be placed in the church, followed immediately by the Sisters. Each will carry a candle and will chant High Mass there, after which the body of the deceased will be interred. If the body cannot be kept, it will be taken to the church, as mentioned above, where the Office for the Dead will be said. The next day one High Mass and two Low Masses will be offered, through the charitable attention of the Administrators, that God may be pleased

to grant pardon and mercy to the deceased.

(7) When the Father Superior in Paris thinks it appropriate, he may withdraw up to three Sisters, sending others in their place at the expense of their Community in Paris. Likewise, the Administrators may send away a similar number, receiving others in their place at the expense of the hospital, after having previously notified the Father Superior so that he will have time to send others to replace them.

There follow the terms of the Regulations regarding the spiritual practice of the Sisters.<sup>1</sup>

The Articles and Regulations given above were signed and confirmed by our Chief Administrator of Saint-Jean Hospital and Mlle Louise de Marillac--widow of the late noble man Antoine Le Gras, who was secretary in his lifetime of the Queen Mother--Directress of the Sisters, Servants of the Sick Poor, under M. Vincent, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission and of the Sisters, according to the report<sup>2</sup> of the Lieutenant General and of the Seneschal of Anjou, to be attached to it and to have recourse to it, if need be.

Drawn up on the said day, February 1, 1640, and signed: Louise de Marillac, Solimon, Gardeau, Doublard,<sup>3</sup> Martin, Cécile-Agnès Angiboust, Marguerite François.<sup>4</sup>

### **143b. - ACT OF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AT SAINT-JEAN HOSPITAL IN ANGERS**

(March 18, 1641)

We, Louis Boislève, Counselor of the King, Lieutenant General of the Seneschalsy of Anjou and Presidial See of Angers, had it explained to us by the Procurator of the King that, in the former establishment of Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste Hospital of this town, some Sisters, Servants of the Sick Poor, were placed with the patients and entrusted with guiding and assisting them, and were seen to do so with an unusual spirit of humility, gentleness, and charity. This good order continued for many years, then became relaxed with the passage of time, as noted in the documents and registers of the house, having a succession of a number of paid servants and salaried workers that people were obliged to tolerate with only the remotest semblance of that primary obligation. And the limitations of the others did not end there, but there were, on the contrary, many failings; in a word, disorder in the welfare and service of poor persons, which was, furthermore, acknowledged as being a great burden and expense to them.

For this reason, the Mayor and Magistrates of this town, the Chief Administrators of the hospital, the late Madame Goussault the President's wife,<sup>1</sup> and other persons of quality, exceptional piety, and virtue complained to us in his [the Procurator's] presence, and with him proposed an establishment in this town, similar to the one in Paris, of the Sisters of the Congregation of Charity, serving poor persons in hospitals and already placed and inserted in several in this kingdom. They would endeavor to do the same in this hospital and, as it were, to restore and continue with greater firmness the former original institution that was maintained here so religiously and to which the one proposed is so closely related and so much in conformity. In accepting this, we were most willing to contribute to the same end by our orders and authority and to work together.

The result was that, by the favor and intervention of some and the concern and trouble taken by others, negotiations were undertaken with the Superior General of the Congregation of the

Priests of the Mission and the Seminary of the Sisters, and an agreement was reached with him or with persons representing him concerning each and every one of the responsibilities and conditions required and reasonable for their establishment, and his permission was then obtained for the choice and leadership of some of the best instructed and dedicated among them.

Mlle Le Gras their Mother Directress, with the consent of the Superior General, had the charity to bring some of them to this town a few days ago.

She asked that we kindly go to Saint-Jean House and Hospital to admit and welcome them there, as Sisters serving there for the guidance and assistance of persons who are poor.

These instructions having been given, we, along with the Magistrates of this town, in the absence of President Lanier the Mayor, went to the hospital with Maître Jacques Phelipeau, clerk of our Registrar. There, Pierre Solimon, Julien Gardeau, Symphorien Brouard, Pierre Doublard, merchants and Chief Administrators of the place, appeared before us together with Mlle Le Gras, who presented to us Sisters Élisabeth Martin from Argenteuil, near Paris; Cécile-Agnès Angiboust from Serville, near Chartres; Marie-Marthe Trumeau from Poissy; Marguerite François from Saint-Nicolas in Lorraine; Barbe Toussaint from Suresnes, near Paris; Clémence Ferré from la Champignière, near Nancy; Madeleine Mongert from Sucy-en-Brie; and Geneviève Caillou from Saint-Germain-en-Laye.<sup>2</sup> After the responsibilities and conditions had been read to them in line with the provisions that had been drawn up and confirmed in their name, together with the regulations regarding their duty and practice, Mademoiselle accepted for them and, in so far as might be needed, agreed to them.

In the presence of the King's Procurator and with his consent, we welcomed and established the Sisters of the Congregation of Charity serving those who are poor in the hospitals and confraternities of the parishes, as Sister servants for the guidance and treatment of the sick poor under the Chief Administrators of the hospital, with the other responsibilities and conditions agreed upon with them, contained in the provisions that will be attached to these present letters with the Regulations. The Mayor and Magistrates asked us to issue the Act for them, which we granted, and which is given above, and we order our present report to be recorded in the Registry of this office so recourse may be had to it.

Drawn up in Angers by us, the above-mentioned Lieutenant General, Wednesday, February 1, 1640.

Signed: Boislève, Jouet, Louise de Marillac, Gauche, Solimon, Gardeau, Doublard, and Brouard.

The above report was registered in the Civil Registry of this office in order to have recourse to it when needed, at the request of Julien Gardeau the merchant, former Administrator of Saint-Jean Hospital, for whom the document has been issued to serve for that purpose.

Drawn up in Angers before us, Louis Boislève, Councillor of the King, Lieutenant General in the said office, under the signature of our Registrar, March 18, 1641, and signed:

RENOU [with paraph].

**144. - DECLARATION CONCERNING THE DEPOSIT OF A SUM OF MONEY**  
(August 25, 1644)

We, Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, make known and declare to all whom it may concern, present and to come, that:

Several years ago Divine Providence allowed several of our Prelates in this kingdom, notably His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Jean-François de Gondi, first Archbishop of Paris, to cast their eyes on us, unworthy though we be, to erect in their dioceses the Confraternity of Charity, composed of wives and unmarried women, for the corporal and spiritual assistance of the sick poor. Some time ago, our Holy Father Pope Urban VIII, of happy memory, gave us a general authorization to establish it in all places where it should please our Bishops, as is evident in the Bull of confirmation of our Congregation. When experience showed us that the ones established in the towns could not survive because the Ladies who belonged to them, given their social rank, could not do the work themselves in all the menial, painful services that have to be rendered to the patients, according to the regulations of the Confraternity, that same Providence directed to us a few good young country women, whom we received for that purpose and placed together under the guidance of Mlle Le Gras, whose piety and zeal are known to all. They went to work immediately after, as they are now doing, in most of the parishes in Paris and other places in this kingdom. All this was done with the consent of our Prelates, each in his own diocese, and especially of His Excellency the Archbishop of Paris.

A certain very pious, charitable person who, through humility, did not wish to be named, has learned from experience and often considered all the benefits God in His goodness is bestowing through these poor Sisters, and the blessings God gives to their work, which consists in the spiritual and corporal relief not only of the sick poor, but also of convicts condemned to the galleys, while they are detained in Paris, and even of little foundlings, whom the Sisters have been raising for several years, as well as some poor little girls whom they are teaching, free of charge.

And, in addition, moved by the piety, charity, modesty, simplicity, purity, and close union that those poor Sisters have always shown since their establishment, which began fourteen or fifteen years ago;

And considering that those good Sisters could not survive by remaining always in a borrowed, rented house;

Her piety caused her to donate what was needed to purchase one for them that would be theirs permanently, and, on her own accord, she gave us for this purchase the sum of nine thousand livres, on condition, however, that, in the event God might not be pleased to have this Little Company of Sisters subsist in their present state and practices, she was giving the sum to our Congregation of the Mission, which would accept and collect the money with the intention of using it for the aforementioned purpose. This has not yet been possible to do because no advantageous opportunity has been found. In addition, fearing to be surprised by death without having acquitted ourselves of this obligation, and even without having provided the sum in favor of the young women, for the purposes and conditions mentioned above, we judged it most expedient to place the amount in the hands of a pious, charitable person who could apply it better than we to the aforesaid purposes. We felt also that we could not entrust this work of mercy to anyone better able to carry this out than the high and powerful lady the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, who has special ties of affection to the Sisters;

For these and other reasons that moved us, and in virtue of the authority granted us for the Confraternities, we resolved and confirmed that the Duchess should be most humbly requested, for love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of the Poor, to accept this charitable mission. We have

handed over to her the sum of nine thousand livres to be used for the above-mentioned purposes and conditions. And, although no one has obliged us to pay the interest on that sum for the four years we have had it, nevertheless, considering that this money is specifically designated for persons who are poor and not desiring in any way to profit from what belongs to them, we have paid the Sisters about 52% interest having given them for this purpose the sum of two thousand livres for the four years, partly in cash, partly by canceling the rent for our building they lease from us, as appears on the receipt Mlle Le Gras gave us for this, in the name of and as being in charge of the Sisters. And to better authorize and affirm the above and to prevent anything that might hinder its effect, we likewise resolved and confirmed that there be three copies of the present act, signed and sealed like this one, one of which would remain with the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, another with Mlle Le Gras, and the third one with us.<sup>1</sup>

Besides all that, we have carefully recommended and by this document recommend to all our Missionaries, present and to come, that they see that the wishes of the said person, who desires to remain unknown, be fully carried out and, at the same time, that they do their utmost to strengthen and maintain the Company of the Sisters, as far as and in the manner that it may please His Excellency the Archbishop and each of our Prelates in the dioceses where the Sisters are, or will be, established.

In testimony whereof we have signed the present Act in our own hand, had it countersigned by our regular secretary, and had the seal of our Congregation affixed to it.

Drawn up in our house of Saint-Lazare in Paris, August 25, 1644.

VINCENT DEPAUL

A. PORTAIL

#### **145. - REGULATIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY** (1645)

The Confraternity of unmarried women and widows, Servants of the Poor of the Charity, will be instituted to honor the charity of Our Lord its patron toward the sick poor of the places where they are established or sent, serving them corporally and spiritually according to the order that will be given them by the Ladies who are officers of the Charity in the parishes where they are: corporally, by preparing and bringing to them their food and medicine; spiritually, by seeing that those who are near death may leave this world in a good state and that those who will recover may take the resolution to live better in the future.

The Confraternity will be composed of widows and unmarried women. Every three years they will elect four of their number, by a plurality of votes, to be their officers, of which the first will be the Superioress or Directess; and they may have another term of office. At the election, which will take place every three years, a priest, delegated by the Archbishop of Paris for the direction of the unmarried women and widows, will preside.<sup>1</sup>

The Superioress will have the entire direction of the Confraternity, together with the priest; she will be like the soul who animates this body, will see that the present Regulations are observed, will receive into the Confraternity those whom she finds suitable, and will form them in all that

concerns their duties, but especially in the practice of the Christian virtues proper to their salvation, teaching them more by her example than by her words. She will send them out, recall them, detain them, and have them do everything that is in line with the purpose of the Confraternity, not only in the parish where the Confraternity will be established, but also in all the places she thinks it advisable to send them. All this will be done with the advice of the priest and the blessing of the Pastors.

The second officer will be Assistant to the Superioress and will represent her in her absence. The others will obey her as they would the Superioress, when the latter is absent.

The third one will act as Treasurer, will collect the money and keep it in a strongbox with two different locks, of which the Superioress will keep one key, and she the other. She may, however, keep on hand the sum of one hundred livres for current expenses.

The fourth will manage the storeroom and provide for the common needs of the Company. The officers will give an annual account of their expenditures to the Superioress and the priest.

They will act as Councillors to the Superioress.

The widows and the unmarried women of the Confraternity will be subject to and obey the Superioress and all those who will be delegated by her. They will consider that they are obeying God in their persons, and will implement willingly and punctually the orders the Superioress gives them, whether in the parishes where they are established or wherever else they will be sent.

They will also be obedient, in what concerns their conduct, to the priest who will be delegated to direct the Confraternity.

Those who desire to be received into the Confraternity will present themselves to the Superioress. When she has tested their vocation and conferred with the Director, she receives them and forms them for a time in their duties. Afterward, as she judges them capable, she will put them to work in the holy occupations we have mentioned.

Following is the daily schedule for those who live in the house:

They rise at four o'clock and, after dressing and making their beds, they pray for half an hour together. After this, some go to assist at Mass in their parishes and the others work at their designated occupations, as stated above. Then, after the first group has returned, these go to Mass.

At half past eleven, they make a particular examination of conscience on the virtue they propose to acquire, following which they have dinner together, with reading at table. Next, they have one hour of recreation in a moderately cheerful manner while working together, some at sewing and spinning, others at other things, until two o'clock.

From two to three o'clock those who work together will keep silence, while one of them reads aloud from some spiritual book.

At six o'clock, they make a second examination of conscience on the same virtue, then have something to eat and take their recreation while working together as before. At eight o'clock, they make their general examination and read the topic for their prayer of the next morning. After this, if they think they may have given some reason to sadden another, they ask forgiveness, then go to bed.

As far as their duty permits, the Sisters who work in parishes, either in the town or in the country, observe the same things and the same hours. Both groups go to confession and Communion every Sunday and on feast days in the parish, and every year they make a little retreat and an annual confession at the house where the Superioress lives.

They all dress in the same way, in the style of countrywomen.

When they are sent to any parishes, they will go to ask the blessing of the Pastors, which they will receive kneeling. While they are in their parishes, they will show them all manner of honor and submission.

They will also obey the Ladies who are officers of the Charity as well as the physicians in whatever involves the needs of the sick poor.

Their main concern will be to serve the sick poor, and they will do their utmost to fit into the aforementioned daily schedule, particularly for the times of rising and going to bed, prayer, the general and particular examinations of conscience, spiritual reading, confession, Communion, and silence, especially before morning prayer and after evening prayer.

As far as possible, they will also take care to observe uniformity with regard to food, clothing, their manner of walking and speaking, the service of those who are poor, and especially in the way they arrange their headdress and are dressed, as has been stated.

If they save any money, they will put it in the common purse, which will be used to provide them with their clothing and other necessities, when the time comes for this.

And to give greater honor to Our Lord their patron, they will have a straightforward intention to please Him in all their actions and will strive to conform their lives to His, especially in His poverty, humility, gentleness, simplicity, and moderation.

And to avoid many inconveniences, they will accept nothing from anyone, or give anything to anyone whomsoever, without informing the Superior.

They will make no visits, except to the sick, and will not allow anyone, particularly men, to visit them at their house, without the consent of the same Superior.

When they go through the streets, they will walk in a modest manner with their eyes lowered, not stopping to speak to anyone, especially men, without great necessity. Even then, they must keep the conversation brief and conclude the matter promptly.

They will not leave the house without the permission of the local Superior or someone else delegated by her. On their return they will present themselves to her and give an account of where they went.

They will send no letters nor open those written to them, without the permission of the same Superior.

They will not waste time speaking at the door with persons outside the Community, nor will they do so in the house, without the same permission.

They will be careful to go at least once a month to the house of the Superioress to share with her the details of all their duties, and will go there every time they are requested, making provision ahead of time for the needs of the patients.

They will be mindful that they are called Daughters of Charity; that is, Sisters who make profession of loving God and the neighbor; consequently, besides the sovereign love they should have for God, they should excel in love of the neighbor, especially of their companions. Accordingly, they will avoid all coldness and aversion in their regard, as well as exclusive friendships and attachments for any of them, since these two malicious extremes cause the division and ruin of a Company, especially when they are apparent outside.

To keep always a lowly opinion of themselves, they will consider, furthermore, that people call them Servants of the Poor, which is, according to the world, one of the most insignificant of conditions. They will promptly reject the slightest thought of vainglory that might pass through their minds because of having heard some good about what they are doing, convinced that all the honor for this is due to God, since God alone is its author.

Since their work is, for the most part, very arduous, and the poor persons whom they serve are a little difficult, to the point that they are sometimes reproached even when they have done their best in their regard, they will strive to do their utmost to have a good store of patience, asking Our Lord every day to give it to them in abundance and to grant them a share of the patience He practiced toward those who calumniated, slapped, whipped, and crucified Him.

They will be very faithful and exact in observing the present Regulations, together with the praiseworthy customs and manner of living they have maintained until now, particularly those that concern their own perfection.

Nevertheless, they will remember that, whenever necessity or obedience calls them to the service of persons who are poor and to other duties, these must always be preferred to their devotional practices, and will reflect that, in so doing, they are leaving God for God.

### **145a. - RECOMMENDATIONS GIVEN TO THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY IN ANGERS<sup>1</sup>**

(June 1-15, 1646)

(1) They will often consider that God has called and united them to honor Our Lord Jesus Christ in the person of those who are poor, by the corporal and spiritual service they render them, and that the true means of performing this ministry well, and consequently of contributing to their own salvation, is the observance of their Rules.

(2) Whenever their Rules are read, they will be careful not only to listen closely to them, but also to understand them well, reflecting at the same time on the faults they have committed against them and on the means of correcting them. In addition, after hearing them read every first Sunday of the month, they will take them as the subject of their prayer.

(3) They will strive in all their actions, particularly when they have to serve the sick, to have a pure intention of pleasing God, being very careful not to seek in them their own satisfaction or the admiration of the world.

(4) They will not be attached to places, duties, or persons--not even to their relatives or confessor--but will always be ready to leave everything willingly whenever they are instructed to do so.

(5) They will do their utmost to live in great union with their Sisters and never to exasperate one another, nor murmur or complain about one another, but rather bear with each other's imperfections, carefully rejecting all those thoughts of aversion one might have for the other, and exclusive friendships as well.

(6) If, through weakness, one Sister has saddened another, she will ask her forgiveness immediately, if this can be done conveniently, and the other, also kneeling, will accept this humiliation readily and humbly.

(7) They will act in such a way that gentleness and cordiality always appear in their words and expressions, not only among themselves, but also with persons outside the Community, striving, nonetheless, never to forget the respect they should have for one another, especially for the Sister Servant.

(8) They will be very careful not to argue with one another, and each will prefer to follow her Sister's opinion rather than her own in everything that is not sin.

(9) They will take great care not to disclose their temptations, discontent, and other interior difficulties to their Sisters, and even less to persons outside the Community, but only to their Sister Servant or to the Director. They should do this as soon as possible, endeavoring to have great confidence in opening their hearts to them. To acquire this confidence more easily they will go to the Sister Servant once a month to make their communication to her.

(10) They will be exact in notifying the Sister Servant promptly of any serious faults they notice in their Sisters, and will be pleased to have their own faults likewise told her so that she might remedy them in good time.

(11) If they are also aware of some disorder in the hospital, either with the patients, the help, or someone else, they will notify the Sister Servant so she can charitably inform the Administrators.

(12) And so that the Sister Servant may not be in a worse situation than the other Sisters, as soon as a Sister sees some serious, significant fault in her, she will do her the charity of reminding her humbly of it--not on her own, but through the Assistant, to whom she will state it quite simply and with God in view, being careful not to do this through emotion.

(13) They will not write nor have anyone write or send any letter without the permission of the Sister Servant, nor will they open the letters sent to them without the same permission. If, however, someone wants to write to the General of the Mission or to the Superioress of the Paris house, she may do so without the letter being read by the Sister Servant. The latter will also deliver, unopened, the letters sent to an individual Sister by the General or the Superioress in Paris.

(14) At all times they will observe holy modesty, especially in the wards and in the presence of persons outside the Community, being careful above all of flightiness, in particular of touching one another, even through playfulness or as a sign of friendship, unless charity requires it, such as when there is question of a warm embrace for the newly received, or for those coming from the country, or for someone who has not been seen for a long time, and similar occasions. Then it is permitted to kiss one another on the cheek, but never on the mouth.

(15) They will be more careful to keep silence than they have been in the past, especially in the morning before prayer, after evening prayers, and during the hour set aside to honor the death of Our Lord. If it is necessary to speak, they will do so in a low voice and in few words.

(16) They will act in such a way that their recreations are always tempered by moderation as well as by cheerfulness, interspersing pious, edifying talk with inoffensive topics; refraining, to this effect, from speaking of worldly affairs, current news, the leadership of Superiors and the Superioress, the faults of others, and even certain imperfections and discourteous behavior that could hurt Sisters if someone teased them, even though they should not take them the wrong way.

(17) Above all, they will be exact in obeying the Sister Servant, submitting to her not only their will but also their judgment, and, as far as possible, doing or omitting nothing without her permission, especially in what concerns corporal penances, confession, Communion, and certain extraordinary devotional practices. They will act in the same way with regard to their Director in spiritual matters and with regard to the Administrators in temporal matters concerning the hospital. All of this will be done in conformity with their Rules.

(18) They will also obey the Sister Assistant and go to her for permissions and needs when the Sister Servant is sick or absent.

(19) They will be careful to follow the daily schedule, being faithful to carrying out precisely, in the places indicated, all their little spiritual and corporal exercises, as far as this can be done,

especially prayer, the examinations of conscience, and spiritual reading. They will do so in such a way, however, that the service of persons who are poor is preferred above all other activities, and they will be industrious in rising and getting dressed so as to be among the first at prayer.

(20) They will strive above all things to make their confessions well, being careful not to make them through habit, scrupulosity, or attachment. To avoid all these inconveniences, they will try to adapt to the practice and method in use in the Company, which is that, in ordinary confessions, they accuse themselves only of three of their most serious sins or those of which they are most embarrassed and for which they are most sorry and wish to correct. And if it is advisable to say more about them, they may ask permission of the confessor for this. They always conclude by mentioning a sin of their past life of which they have already accused themselves, varying these as much as possible, so that the confessions will be different from one another.

(21) They will be mindful of the recommendation often made to them not to linger without permission with persons from the outside or with the patients, but especially with the domestic help. If, however, some upright person should ask them something, they will try to reply to them respectfully and cordially, but tell them briefly that they think they should speak to the Sister Servant. If it is also necessary to say a few words of consolation or instruction to women who are seriously ill, they will do so with God in view.

(22) They will strive to be very tolerant of their own shortcomings, being careful not to become discouraged by the faults into which they will fall, but, instead, humble themselves for them and take new resolutions to correct themselves, confident that God will give them the grace to do so.

(23) Every month they will read these recommendations or hear them read and will then make their prayer on them, as stated in the Rules; above all, they will strive to put them into practice.

Advice given by me on behalf of M. Vincent during the visitation of Angers, 1646.

PORTAIL

#### **146. - ERECTION OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AS A CONFRATERNITY**

(November 20, 1646)

Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See Archbishop of Corinth, Coadjutor and Vicar-General for spiritual and temporal affairs of His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, to all those who will read these present letters, greetings.

Our dearly beloved Paul Vincent [*sic*], Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, has explained to us that, authorized by the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Paris, he erected the Confraternity of Charity for the assistance and relief of the sick poor in the places in his diocese where it was judged necessary, and it has pleased God to bless this pious, praiseworthy undertaking in such a way that it is now established not only in several villages and towns but even in most of the large parishes in this city of Paris. Since the persons who compose this Confraternity cannot perform the lowliest tasks necessary for the

relief of the sick poor, our dearly beloved Paul Vincent, with the permission of the Archbishop, has deemed it wise to take some good unmarried women and widows from the country whom God has inspired to dedicate themselves to the service of the sick poor. For several years they have been performing all the lowliest tasks to the edification of the people and the consolation of the sick. This has induced some virtuous, charitable ladies to contribute something from their resources to bring the women together and, for this purpose, to provide them with a house so that, living together, they might be better instructed not only in what concerns virtue and piety, but also in the service and assistance they have to render to the sick poor. In this way they can more easily be sent to city parishes as well as to those in towns and villages where they will be requested and desired. We wish to foster such a good work, which we hope, by the grace and mercy of God, ought to succeed to His glory and the great relief of persons who are poor.

Considering that the best means to help them survive is to unite the unmarried women and widows into some form of Society and Confraternity distinct from that of the Charity, which was established in this diocese a long time ago by the Archbishop for these reasons, by authority of the Archbishop, we have erected and do erect by these present letters the conference of the unmarried women and widows in this diocese in the form of a separate Confraternity under the title of Servants of the Poor of the Charity. We will and ordain that those already admitted to it and those who will henceforth be received into it may freely do whatever can relieve and console the sick poor, on condition that the Confraternity will be, and will remain in perpetuity, under the authority of and dependent on the Archbishop and his successors and in the exact observance of the attached Statutes, which we have approved and do approve by these present letters.

Because God has blessed the care and the work of our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul in helping this pious plan to succeed, we have confided and entrusted to him the leadership and direction of the Society and Confraternity for as long as it pleases God to keep him in this life.

Drawn up in Paris under the seal of the Office of the Archbishop, November 20, 1646.

J.-F.-PAUL DE GONDY, *Coadjutor of Paris*

In the name of His Excellency

BAUDOUYN

The Confraternity of Charity of the Servants of the Sick Poor of the parishes was instituted to honor the charity of Our Lord its patron, by assisting corporally and spiritually the sick poor in parishes and hospitals, convicts, and foundlings: corporally, by giving them food and medicine; and spiritually, by seeing that the sick poor who are near death may leave this world in a good state, that those who will recover may take the resolution never to offend God, by His grace, and that the foundlings may be instructed in the things necessary for salvation.<sup>1</sup>

It is composed of unmarried women and widows. Every three years on the day after Pentecost they will elect, by a plurality of votes, a Superioress from among their number. This will take place in the presence of the priest whom the Archbishop will delegate to direct them.<sup>2</sup> She may continue in office for another three years only.

They will also elect three other officers every year on the same day, one of whom will be the Assistant; another, the Treasurer; and the other, the Bursar.

The Superioress will have the entire direction of the Confraternity, together with the aforesaid

priest.<sup>3</sup> She will be like the soul animating this body, will see that the present Regulations are observed, will receive into the Confraternity those whom she finds suitable, after conferring with the Director<sup>4</sup> and asking the advice of the other officers, and will form them in all that concerns their duties, but especially in the practice of the Christian virtues proper to their state. She will teach them more by her example than by her words, will send them out, recall them, detain back, and have them do everything that is in line with the purpose of the Confraternity, not only in the parish where the Confraternity will be established, but also in all the places to which she sends them. All this will be done with the advice of the said priest.

The second officer will be the Assistant of the Superioress, will act as her Councillor, and will represent her in her absence. Everyone will obey her as they would the Superioress, when the latter is absent.

The third one will act as Treasurer, will collect the money and keep it in a strongbox with two different locks, of which the Superioress will keep one key, and she the other. She may, however, keep on hand the sum of one hundred livres for current expenses, of which she will give a monthly account to the Superioress and an annual account to the Director, in the presence of all the officers. She will also represent the Superioress and the Assistant in their absence and will act as their Councillor.

The fourth will manage the storeroom and provide for the common needs of the Company, giving a weekly account to the Superioress. She will represent the latter and the other officers when they are absent and will likewise act as their Councillor.

The unmarried women and widows of the Confraternity will be subject to and obey the Superioress and, in her absence, the other officers whom she delegates. They will consider that they are obeying God in their persons and will implement willingly and punctually the present Regulations and praiseworthy customs of their Institute, whether in the parishes where they are established or wherever else they will be sent.

They will also be obedient, in what concerns their conduct, to the priest who will be named by the Archbishop to direct the Company.<sup>5</sup>

Those who desire to be received into the Confraternity will present themselves to the Superioress. When she has tested their vocation, conferred with the Director, and sought the advice of the other officers, she will accept them and form them for a time in their duties; afterward, as she judges them capable, she will have them work at the occupations we have mentioned.

When they are sent to any parishes, they will go to get the blessing of the Pastors, which they will receive kneeling. While they are in their parishes, they will show them all honor, respect, and obedience.<sup>6</sup>

They will also obey the Ladies who are officers of the Charity in the parishes and the physicians in all that involves the care of the sick poor.

Their main concern will be to serve the sick poor well, treating them with compassion and cordiality, endeavoring to edify and console them, and dispose them to patience, encouraging them to make a good general confession; above all, seeing that they receive all their sacraments.

Furthermore, when they are called to their other ministries, such as helping poor convicts, raising the foundlings, and teaching poor young women, they will devote themselves to them with special ardor and diligence, reflecting that in so doing they render service to Our Lord as a child, as a sick person, as a poor man, and as a prisoner.

They will cherish and respect one another as sisters whom Our Lord has bound together and

united by His love. They will attend the funerals of their Sisters who die and receive Holy Communion for their intention. One Mass will be sung for each of them.<sup>7</sup> If convenient, they will also attend the funerals of the poor persons whom they have served and pray for the salvation of their souls.

So that in serving persons who are poor they do not forget themselves and the charity they show them may be well ordered, and so that they can receive the rewards Our Lord promises them in this world and in the next, they will be especially careful to keep themselves always in the state of grace;<sup>8</sup> for this purpose, they will detest and avoid mortal sin more than the demon, and will take care<sup>9</sup> not to commit knowingly even a venial sin, especially with regard to<sup>10</sup> chastity, taking every possible precaution to preserve it intact.<sup>11</sup>

They will do their utmost to conform to the daily schedule that has been followed until now, particularly for the times of rising and going to bed, prayer, the general and particular examinations of conscience, spiritual reading, confession, Communion, and silence, especially before making their prayer in the morning and after evening prayers.<sup>12</sup>

As far as possible, they will also take care to observe uniformity with regard to food, clothing, speaking, the service of those who are poor, and particularly the way they arrange their headdress.

If they save any money, they will put it in the common purse, which will be used to provide them with their clothing and other necessities, when the time comes.

And to give greater honor to Our Lord their patron, they will have a straightforward intention to please Him in all their actions and will strive to conform their lives to His, especially in His poverty, humility, gentleness, simplicity, and moderation.

And to avoid many inconveniences, they will accept nothing from anyone, or give anything to anyone whomsoever, without informing the Superioress.

They will make no visits except to the sick, and will not allow anyone, particularly men, to visit them in their rooms.

When they go through the streets, they will walk in a modest manner with their eyes lowered, not stopping to speak to anyone, especially members of the opposite sex, without great necessity. Even then, they must keep the conversation brief and conclude promptly.

They will not leave the house without the permission of the local Superior or someone else delegated by her. On their return they will present themselves to her and give an account of where they went.

They will send no letters nor open those written to them, without the permission of the Superior.

They will not waste time speaking at the door with persons outside the Community, much less in the house, without permission.

They will be careful to go at least once a month to the principal house to share with the Superioress details of their ministries, and will go there every time they are requested, making provision ahead of time for the needs of the patients.

They will keep in mind that they are called Daughters of Charity; that is, Sisters who make profession of loving God and the neighbor; consequently, besides the sovereign love they should have for God, they should excel in love of the neighbor, especially of their companions. Accordingly, they will avoid all coldness and aversion toward them, as well as exclusive friendships and attachments for any of them, since these two malicious extremes cause division and ruin in a Company and among the individuals who waste their time fostering them. Should it

happen that they give cause for saddening one another, they will ask pardon of one another at the latest in the evening before going to bed.

To keep always a lowly opinion of themselves, they will consider, furthermore, that people call them Servants of the Poor, which is, according to the world, one of the most insignificant of conditions. They will promptly reject the slightest thought of vainglory that might pass through their minds because of having heard some good about what they are doing, being convinced that all the honor is due to God, since God alone is the author of it.

Since their work is very arduous for the most part, and the poor persons whom they serve a little difficult, to the point that they are sometimes reproached even when they have done their best in their regard, they will strive to do their utmost to have a good store of patience, asking Our Lord every day to give it to them in abundance and to grant them a share of the patience He practiced toward those who calumniated, slapped, whipped, and crucified Him.

They will be very faithful and exact in observing the present Regulations, together with the praiseworthy customs and manner of living they have maintained until now, particularly those that concern their own perfection.

Nevertheless, they will recall that, whenever necessity or obedience calls them to the service of persons who are poor and other duties, these must always be preferred to their devotional practices, and reflect that in so doing they are leaving God for God.

And so that it may please God to grant them the grace of accomplishing all these things, they will go to confession and Communion every Sunday and on the major feasts of the year in the parishes or hospitals where they are. Every year, as far as possible, they will make their retreat in their principal Community house.

J. F. PAUL DE GONDY, *Coadjutor of Paris*<sup>13</sup>

In the name of His Excellency.

BAUDOUYN

**146a. - DRAFT OF LETTERS PATENT  
FOR THE APPROVAL OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY  
(End of 1646)**

Louis, by the grace of God, King of France and of Navarre, to all present and to come, greetings.

Our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission, most humbly pointed out to us that, having been authorized by Our Most Holy Father Pope Urban VIII, of happy memory; by the Archbishop of Paris; and by several other Prelates of this kingdom to institute a Confraternity of Charity for the assistance of the sick poor in all the parishes of their dioceses in which it could conveniently be established; and having instituted it successfully in several villages, some charitable Ladies of our fine city of Paris were so touched by this that they used their influence to to have a similar establishment in their parishes, particularly in Saint-Germain-de-l'Auxerrois, Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, Saint-Leu, Saint-

Sauveur, Saint-Médéric, Saint-Étienne, Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Gervais, Saint-Barthélémy, Saint-Paul, and other places, where it is also operating successfully.

Since, however, these Ladies who compose this Confraternity are almost all members of high society, which does not allow them to perform the menial tasks necessary for the sick poor, they took on some good country women to whom God had given the desire to work in it. These were formed and prepared for the work by Mlle Louise de Marillac, widow of the late Antoine Le Gras, Secretary of the late Queen Mother of the King, our most honored Lord and father. For this purpose, she has taken them into her own home, where she has fed and maintained them by the charity of some good widows and other pious, devout persons, with the result that there are now in every parish two or three of these good Sisters, who work daily assisting and serving persons who are poor, sometimes even teaching poor girls, when they are able. They live at the expense of the Confraternity of Charity of the parish in which they minister, but so frugally that their greatest individual expense amounts only to one hundred livres a year and sometimes less. Three of these good Sisters work for the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, preparing the modest refreshments that are brought daily by the Ladies to those who are poor; ten or twelve of them are ordinarily engaged in raising the foundlings in our fine city of Paris; and two or three of them assist the poor convicts.

In addition to those Sisters, others are at hospitals in the towns of Angers, Nantes, Montreuil-sur-la-Mer, Saint-Denis-en-France, and in the towns of Richelieu, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, and other places in the rural areas, where they carry out the same activities for the assistance and treatment of the sick and the instruction of poor girls. And because many of those good Sisters are needed so that some may be sent to all these places and to many others where they are being requested, Mlle Le Gras forms the same number of them in her house and always has more than thirty whom she instructs in matters of piety, preparing them to teach little girls, visit the sick poor, bring them their food, and do generally everything that might be useful for the sick poor. She supports these Sisters with alms that have been given for them, with what they are able to earn by their manual labor when their regular duties leave them some free time, and also with the help of the widows and other pious persons who contribute whatever they can.

Since, however, it usually happens that works involving the service of God die out with those who initiated them unless there is some spiritual bond among the persons engaged in them, our beloved and loyal François de Gondi, Archbishop of Corinth, Councillor in our Councils, Coadjutor and Vicar-General of the Archbishop of Paris, by his letters of November 20, 1646, by authority of the Archbishop, erected the conference of unmarried women and widows in the form of a distinct Confraternity under the title of Servants of the Poor of the Charity. He ordered that those who had been admitted to it since then, and those who would be received into it in the future, might do freely anything that could relieve and console the sick poor, on condition that the Confraternity would be and would remain in perpetuity under the authority of and dependent on the Archbishop of Paris and his successors, in the exact observance of the Regulations, Statutes, and Constitutions that our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul had presented to the Archbishop of Paris, and according to which they had lived until then and had intended to live by for the rest of their lives. The Archbishop approved and authorized them by his letters, entrusting and confiding the guidance and direction of the Society and Confraternity to the dearly beloved Vincent de Paul for as long as it might please God to preserve his life. Therefore, there is nothing more to be desired for the perfection of such a holy establishment except that it please us to approve and authorize it willingly by our letters necessary for this.

For these reasons. . . .

**147. - PETITION OF THE QUEEN, ANNE OF AUSTRIA,<sup>1</sup> TO THE POPE<sup>2</sup>**  
(1647)

By the Bull of Establishment of the Congregation of the Mission, issued in the year 1632<sup>3</sup> by our Holy Father Pope Urban VIII, of happy memory, the said priests are empowered, under the authority of the local Ordinaries, to establish Confraternities of Charity for the relief of the sick poor in the country parishes where they give missions. Because they had such great success in most of the villages of the Paris diocese and others in the kingdom, some charitable ladies of this city of Paris were so touched by it that they used their influence with the Pastors to have a similar establishment in their parishes for the relief of the sick poor.

Since the ladies of the Confraternities are, for the most part, members of high society, which does not allow them to perform the menial tasks that have to be done in them, they accepted, with the permission of the Archbishop of Paris<sup>4</sup> and on the advice of the Superior General of the Congregation, a few widows and unmarried country women to whom God had given the thought of dedicating themselves to the service of the sick poor. For several years now, to the edification of the people and the consolation of the sick, all of them have been performing the lowliest tasks, prepared for this work by a good, virtuous widow in whose house they are maintained for a time and then sent into the parishes of the cities, towns, and villages that request them. They are called Servants of the Poor of the Charity and have been established under this title by the Archbishop of Paris, on condition that the Confraternity or Society remain in perpetuity under his authority and dependence.

Now, because that good work has extended into several dioceses of this kingdom, such as Angers, Nantes, Poitiers, Sens, Rouen, Beauvais, Reims, etc., and because the other Prelates are unwilling to accept them on this condition, and because that good work was begun and developed almost fourteen years ago by the General of the Congregation of the Mission, and by the establishment of the Confraternity or Society the Archbishop of Paris has now constituted him its Director for life, the Queen entreats His Holiness to name as perpetual Directors of the Confraternity or Society of Servants of the Poor of the Charity the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and his successors in the same office. In so doing, there is reason to hope that this good work will continue to flourish, the Church will be edified by it, and those who are poor better relieved.

**148. - ADVICE OF SAINT VINCENT TO THE SISTERS OF THE NANTES HOSPITAL**  
(April 1649)

We repeat the recommendation M. Lambert left with them to follow the advice he gave them.<sup>1</sup> They will endeavor to walk in the presence of God and from time to time will raise their hearts to His Divine Goodness and Justice, doing their utmost to accomplish His holy Will in all things, which consists in observing His Commandments, doing what the holy Church directs, and what

their Rules, the Fathers,<sup>2</sup> and their Superioress order them to do.

They will be exact in going to confession every Saturday and Communion every Sunday. They will ring a bell to notify the others of the arrival of the confessor and will be at the confessional, each according to her rank, without keeping him waiting.

They will honor and cherish one another as spouses of Jesus Christ, who has drawn them from the bosom of His love, and will support one another in their little infirmities. Therefore, they will take great care not to complain of or contradict one another, especially in the presence of persons who are not members of the Community.

They will welcome with patience, gentleness, and humility those who visit the patients, doing their utmost to please and edify them, and will observe silence outside the times of recreation. If a matter is urgent, they will speak briefly and in a low tone of voice, and they will be quiet in walking and in closing doors.

They will honor the modesty of Our Lord by their own, keeping their eyes lowered, and not stopping to speak to the domestic help, except in cases of necessity.

They will serve the sick poor with the greatest possible charity, promptness, and attention. Before discharging those who will recover, they will instruct them in things necessary for salvation, and will assist those who are near death to die well.

Upon their arrival, they will see that the sick poor are visited, and put to bed after they have washed their feet. They will keep them as neat and tidy as possible, emptying their basins and cleaning the area often.

And in order to do all these things better, they will read these recommendations every Friday.

#### **149. - APPROVAL OF THE COMPANY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY BY CARDINAL DE RETZ**

(January 18, 1655)

Jean-François-Paul de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, to all who will read these present letters, greetings.

Our very dearly beloved Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, has pointed out to us that one of the principal functions of the priests of the Congregation is to establish the Confraternity of Charity, instituted for the assistance of the sick poor, in places where they go to give missions and where this establishment is deemed helpful. This is clear from the erection of the Congregation made by Pope Urban VIII, of happy memory, and from the Rules of the Congregation, approved by the late Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondi, as delegate of the Holy See to approve the Rules. The Congregation established the Confraternity in the city and diocese of Paris and in several other places in this kingdom for the assistance of the sick poor of the area. The Confraternity is composed of wives, widows, and pious unmarried women, who take care of visiting and serving the sick poor, giving them food and medicine, and procuring their spiritual assistance in order to help those who are recovering to live well and those who are near death to die well. Experience has shown, however, that the society ladies of the Confraternity find it difficult to carry the necessary food to the sick poor, as well as to make their beds, give them remedies and, in general, perform other minor services for them.

To provide for this drawback, the Congregation of the Mission, on the advice of the Ladies of

Charity, encouraged some unmarried women and widows of lowly condition to join the Confraternity to perform the most menial tasks that have to be done for the sick poor. To that end, it has had them live together in a house destined for this purpose, under the direction of Mlle Louise de Marillac, widow of the late M. Le Gras, Secretary of the late Queen Mother, who instructs them in piety, forming them also to serve and nurse the sick poor, and to prepare and administer medicines. Then she sends them into the parishes of the city of Paris and in rural areas and to those hospitals that ask for them, recalling and changing them from one place to another according to needs. She engages them, under her direction, in several other good works, such as raising the foundlings of the city of Paris; assisting poor criminals condemned to the galleys, and the sick in prison; teaching poor girls, showing them how to pray, read, and write; in a word, in every good work in which they may be useful. All of this is done with the advice and under the direction of the petitioner, in conformity with the Regulations and Statutes we approved previously and which were drawn up for the good order and direction of the Confraternity by the petitioner, to whom we gave its direction for life on November 20, 1646.

The approval, which had been attached to the letters patent it pleased the King to grant for it and addressed to the Parlement of Paris to be registered there, was, unfortunately, lost by the secretary of the Attorney General Méliand;<sup>1</sup> then, the secretary died and no one could find the approval, attached to the letters patent, despite the search the petitioner had carried out among the papers of Méliand and his secretary, as well as in the office of the present Attorney General<sup>2</sup> and his Assistants. The petitioner was obliged to turn to us that it might please us to approve once again the Confraternity and its Statutes and Regulations given below<sup>3</sup> and to empower the petitioner and his successors as Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission to direct the Confraternity under our authority and jurisdiction and those of our successors, the Archbishops of Paris, as being a work pleasing to God and a good means by which we will meet the needs of the sick poor of our diocese. We will also be giving those good Ladies of Charity and those poor widows and unmarried women, Servants of the Poor, the means of doing a work for the glory of God and the edification of the people.

For these reasons, wishing to foster such a good work, which we hope is to succeed for the glory of God and the great relief of persons who are poor, as God has done until now through His mercy, and considering that the best means for helping them continue is to unite the unmarried women and widows into some form of Society and Confraternity, distinct from that of the Ladies, established in our diocese long ago by the late Archbishop our predecessor, we have once again erected and by these present letters do erect the conference of unmarried women and widows in our diocese into a special Confraternity or Society, under the title of *Servants of the Poor of the Charity*. We will and ordain that those women already admitted, and those who will be accepted hereafter, be able to do freely whatever will relieve and console the sick poor, on condition that the Confraternity or Society will be and will remain in perpetuity under our authority and dependence and those of our successors, the Archbishops of Paris, in the exact observance of the Statutes and Regulations specified hereinafter, which we have once again approved, and do approve, by these present letters.

And since God has blessed the efforts our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul has made for the success of this pious intention, we have entrusted and confided to him and by these present letters do entrust and confide to him for life the leadership and direction of the Society and Confraternity and, after him, to his successors as Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission.

In testimony whereof, we have signed these present letters, had them countersigned by our regular secretary, and had the seal of our crest affixed to them.

Drawn up in Rome, December 18, 1655.

CARDINAL DE RETZ, *Archbishop of Paris*

In the name of the Archbishop.

GAULTRAY

**149a. - COMMON RULES OF THE COMPANY OF SISTERS OF CHARITY<sup>1</sup>  
CALLED SERVANTS OF THE SICK POOR  
WHICH THEY MUST KEEP TO PERFORM THEIR DUTY WELL  
BY THE GRACE OF GOD**

**1. The purpose of the Community<sup>2</sup>**

They will often recall that the main purpose for which God has called and brought them together is to honor their patron Our Lord, serving Him corporally and spiritually in the poor persons, sometimes as a child, or someone in need, or a sick person, or a prisoner. And to be worthy of such a holy function and of such a perfect patron, they should strive to live a holy life and work earnestly at their own perfection. As a means to achieve this, they will do their utmost to observe carefully the present Regulations.

**2. To prefer their own salvation to all else and to spare nothing to maintain themselves in grace<sup>3</sup>**

The first thing they will endeavor to observe inviolably is to value the salvation of their souls more highly than all earthly things and to spare nothing to maintain themselves always in the state of grace. In order to do so, they will avoid mortal sin more than the demon and even death, and do all they can, with the help of God, never to commit deliberately any venial sin.

**3. Purity of intention**

They will perform all their actions, corporal as well as spiritual, in a spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity, in the same spirit and in union with those Our Lord Jesus Christ performed on earth, making their intention for this purpose at the beginning of each principal action, particularly when going to serve the sick. They will remember that these three virtues are like the three faculties of the soul, which should animate the body and each member of their Community and that, in a word, they constitute the spirit of their Company.

**4. Spirit of the Company<sup>4</sup>**

They will detest the maxims of the world and embrace those of Jesus Christ, among others those that recommend interior and exterior mortification, disregard for self and for the things of this world, choosing tasks that are menial and lowly rather than those that are honorable and pleasing, and always taking the last place and what others do not want. With all that they will be convinced that they are better off than they deserve because of their sins.

**5. Detachment and indifference<sup>5</sup>**

They will not be attached to any created thing, especially to places, duties, and persons, being careful not to become attached even to their relatives and confessors. They will always be prepared to leave everything when they are instructed to do so, reflecting that Our Lord says we

are not worthy of Him nor of following Him if we do not renounce ourselves and our disordered actions in every way whatsoever, and even leave father, mother, brothers, and sisters to follow Him when He calls us.

#### **6. Patience<sup>6</sup>**

They will endeavor to endure willingly and for the love of God inconveniences, contradictions, ridicule, calumnies, and other mortifications that may befall them, even for the good they have done, bearing in mind that all this is only a part of the Cross Our Lord wants them to carry after Him on earth so that one day they may merit to go to heaven with Him who, though innocent, suffered so much for us and even prayed for those who crucified Him.

#### **7. Poverty<sup>7</sup>**

They will honor the poverty of Our Lord, being satisfied with having their modest needs met in the customary simplicity, reflecting that they are servants of poor persons and therefore should live poorly. Consequently, none of them will have anything either in the house or outside for her private use, but each will put everything in common like the first Christians. They may not dispose of or give away Community property, nor even their own, nor receive or acquire any from anyone else without the consent of the Superioress in minor, ordinary matters; for extraordinary and important matters, the permission of the Superior is also required.

#### **8. Not to ask for nor to refuse anything<sup>8</sup>**

They will do their utmost to practice what is so strongly recommended by the saints and observed so carefully in well-regulated Communities, namely, neither to ask nor to refuse anything in temporal matters. If, however, someone really needs something, she may mention it quite simply and with indifference to the persons who should provide it and then rest satisfied whether it be granted her or not.

#### **9. To be glad that others use or deprive us of what is for our use<sup>9</sup>**

Just as they should not use without permission what is intended for the use of another Sister, neither should they complain if, by the same permission, someone else be given things they are using, but rather be glad to have the opportunity to practice holy poverty and mortification. Nevertheless, if it is necessary to speak of this, it will be only to their Superioress, or, in one of their distant houses, to the Sister Servant.

#### **10. Sound management of Community goods and the property of those who are poor<sup>10</sup>**

They will make it a matter of conscience not to manage well the money and other things they handle for the use of the Sisters, reflecting that this would be to sin against the virtue of poverty, which they promised to practice when they received the dress and name of Servants of the Poor. It will also prevent abuses that might slip into the use they make of that property, especially with regard to clothing, which could happen if each one had the liberty to buy fabric and linen to have clothes made to her liking. This would be the cause of great disorder in the Company and would put an end to holy uniformity, so necessary in Communities. Therefore, the Sisters in the parishes, in the villages as well as in the towns, will spend the money the Ladies or other persons give them for their food and support only in accord with the order the Superioress prescribes for them. They will not purchase any serge or linen for their clothing but will ask her for dresses already made, and she will supply them. As payment for the clothing they receive from her, they will be bound to bring or send her their surplus annually, after taking out money for their food. If they themselves have to purchase some little necessities, they will ask her permission beforehand. As for food, medicines, linen, money, and other things earmarked for poor persons, they will be careful not to take any of these for the use of the Sisters, except when they are ill,

remembering that this would be stealing the property of those who are poor.

**11. Not to invite anyone for a meal without permission<sup>11</sup>**

While they are in the house of the Superioress, they will be careful not to invite any person from the outside to eat there without permission. The Sisters in the parishes and in the other houses at a distance will act the same way with regard to the Sister Servant, who will not allow it unless there is great need, and not without a special or general permission from the same Superioress, and only for women, even if there were no other harm in it except that it would be giving away property that does not belong to them and is to be used only for their personal needs and those of poor persons.

**12. Service of the sick poor<sup>12</sup>**

Their chief concern will be to serve the sick poor, treating them with compassion, gentleness, cordiality, respect, and devotion, even those who are most troublesome and difficult, since it is not so much to them they are rendering service as to Jesus Christ. They will not forget to say a good word to them occasionally to dispose them to be patient, to make a good general confession, to prepare for a happy death or to lead a good life, and, above all, to teach them the things necessary for their salvation. They will also see that they receive all their sacraments in due time—even more than once if they have a relapse after convalescence. All this will be done in the manner and according to the order prescribed for them in the Particular Rules of their ministry with the sick.

**13. Ill-directed charity for persons who are poor**

Since ill-directed charity is extremely displeasing to God and harmful to the souls of those who practice it in that way, especially if done contrary to obedience, they will never take it upon themselves to give food or medicine to any patient against the will of those responsible for them or contrary to the order given them. Although they will not worry about the complaints discontented poor persons are accustomed to make, they will try nevertheless to comfort them, and do their best to satisfy them, showing compassion for their sufferings and regret at not being able to help them as they wish. They will also do their utmost to encourage the Ladies of Charity and others to do them as much good as possible.

**14. To be very attentive to the sick Sisters**

They will be very attentive to the sick Sisters, especially when they are outside the house of the Superioress, looking upon them as servants of Jesus Christ because they are servants of His members who are poor, and as their own sisters, since they are all in a special way daughters of the same Father, who is God. They will minister to them with all possible affection and exactness, but will remember, in caring for them in their illnesses, that servants should not be better treated than their masters with regard to medications, food, and other similar needs. If, through excessive charity, the Ladies might wish to treat them more delicately and indulgently, they will thank them very humbly for their kind intention and ask them most respectfully not to keep them from observing their little Regulations on this point, which, however, do not prevent them from accepting some small gratification when there is a great need.

**15. Duty of the sick Sisters**

The Sisters who are sick should not show any impatience nor complain when they are not always treated as they would like, reflecting that they do not know what they need as well as the physician and the nurses do; and after all, being poor persons, they should be glad to suffer something for the love of God, who is pleased to try their patience in this way.

**16. To use no remedy nor consult the physician without permission of the Superior**

Since too much tenderness for themselves may often prompt the Sisters, especially those in parishes, to speak about their minor ailments to the physician of the poor persons, who gives them remedies nearly every time they complain to him of the least discomfort they experience, causing many of them to ruin their health while thinking they are improving it, they will take no medicine nor be bled nor consult the physician for the same purpose without permission of the Superioress—that is, for those who are with her, or in the parishes of the city where she lives because those who live at a distance will have to ask this permission of the Sister Servant, who will not permit it unless she thinks it necessary. Furthermore, the said Sister Servant herself will strive to give the example to the others in the practice of this Rule.

### **17. Uniformity**<sup>13</sup>

As far as possible, they will observe uniformity in all things since it is the means of maintaining union and good order in Communities, and will avoid all singularity as the cause of divisions and disorders in a Company. In keeping with that, all of them will conform in everything to the common way of living in the house where the Superioress lives, complying with the maxims and customs taught there for their spiritual and temporal direction and following no others, although they may seem good and even better. With regard to their material needs, they will beware of having clothing, shoes, headdress, sleeping arrangements, food, or furnishings better than or different from what others have. Nevertheless, if anyone feels in conscience that she needs something special because of illness, she may mention it quite simply and with indifference to the same Superioress, who will decide before God and with the Superior what is best to do in the situation.

### **18. Chastity**<sup>14</sup>

They will do their utmost to preserve perfect chastity of body and heart. To that end they will banish promptly all kinds of thoughts contrary to this virtue and avoid carefully every occasion that might harm it ever so little, particularly the desire to appear pleasing, vanity and affectation in the way they dress, walk, and speak, as well as curiosity to see and hear people, particularly through the windows and when going through the streets. Because of the dangerous consequences that may ensue, they will beware above all of speaking unnecessarily with men, be they priests or others, even if their conversations are on matters of piety.

### **19. Modesty**

Because holy modesty is necessary not only to edify their neighbor—since it is a wordless and continual sermon—but also to preserve purity, which is easily sullied by immodest acts, they will be careful to preserve it at all times and in all places, even during their recreations. They will refrain from—among other things—frivolity, unbecoming gestures, and excessive laughter, and especially from touching one another without necessity, even though this be done playfully and as a token of friendship, unless charity requires it, as in the case of cordially embracing newly-received Sisters or those coming in from the country, or to be reconciled with someone whom they have saddened. Then it is permitted to kiss one another on the cheek, but never on the mouth. With regard to men, however, Daughters of Charity must never allow them to kiss them or to touch them in any way and under any pretext whatsoever.

### **20. Obedience to the Superior, the Superioress, and the Officers of the Company**<sup>15</sup>

They will honor and obey the Superior General of the Mission as the Superior and Director General of their Company; those whom he designates to govern it; the Superioress; and, in her absence, the Sister Assistant and the other Officers of the house, in all that concerns their office. They will also obey the Sister Servants who will be given them in the parishes and other places

where they are established and see to it that their obedience is prompt, submitting their will and judgment in all things in which there is no sin, and to all sorts of Superiors and Officers, both those who are imperfect and disagreeable as well as those who are perfect and agreeable. They will recall that it is not so much persons they are obeying as God, who gives orders by their mouth and says Himself, speaking of those who have charge of others, *He who hears and obeys you, hears and obeys me; and he who rejects you, rejects me.*<sup>16</sup>

### **21. Obedience to Superiors outside the Community in what concerns persons who are poor**

In what concerns the service of persons who are poor, they will likewise honor and obey the Administrators of the hospitals where they are established, the Ladies of Charity in the particular parishes, the Lady Officers, and even the physicians, carrying out their orders promptly and exactly. The sick Sisters must also obey the nurse and the physician in what concerns their duties.

### **22. Obedience and respect toward Pastors**

When they are sent to any parishes to live there while serving the sick poor, they will go to receive kneeling the blessing of the Pastors. As long as they remain in their parishes, they will show them every kind of honor and respect, and even obedience with regard to the care of the sick.

### **23. Respect and submission toward other priests**

They will also show great respect to all other priests, but especially to those who are appointed to direct them and to hear their confessions. They will do the same for the confessors of those who are poor, regarding them at all times and in all places with almost the same reverence as when they are at the holy altar. They will submit to their orders and advice in all that is not sinful nor contrary to the Regulations and usual customs of their Company or the intention of their Superiors.

### **24. Use of corporal mortifications<sup>17</sup>**

Although the constant work of the Daughters of Charity does not allow them to perform many bodily penances and practices of austerity, they may, nevertheless, sometimes do them, but only after obtaining permission of the Superioress in ordinary matters and of the Director in extraordinary ones. They will be convinced that exterior mortifications are of little benefit if they are not accompanied by interior ones, which consist in combating and overcoming their passions and evil inclinations, refusing the senses the satisfactions they demand—except in case of necessity—and, above all, keeping their tongues in check, reflecting that, even as Christians, they are obliged to do all that.

### **25. Not to write nor to receive any letters without permission**

They will neither write nor receive any letters without the permission of the Superioress, to whom they will give those they have written, to be sent out or held back as she sees fit. Those Sisters living far from the house of the Superioress will act in the same way with regard to the Sister Servant. All will know, however, that this Rule does not oblige them to show anyone the letters they write to the Superior, Director, or Superioress, nor any they receive from them.

### **26. Not to eat outside mealtime nor out of the house without permission**

And because moderation and good order at meals contribute greatly to health of soul and body, they will do their utmost to conform in this regard to the Regulations followed in the house of the Superioress concerning the quality and quantity of food and drink and the time and places of taking them. If, however, someone needs to eat and drink outside of meal time or out of the

house, or to take something extra, she will ask permission of the Superioress, or of the Sister Servant of the place where she is living.

**27. Not to go out without permission**

They will not leave the house without the permission of the Superioress, whom they will tell where they are going and why; and will give her on their return an account of what they did. The Sisters in parishes and in other places will do more or less the same with regard to the Sister Servant, who will likewise inform her companion before going out.

**28. Not to make nor to receive any visits without necessity and permission<sup>18</sup>**

They will make no visits, not even to their Sisters in another parish, without the permission of the Superioress—except in case of necessity, such as to visit the sick Sisters. Neither will they, especially Sisters who are not living near the Superioress, try to get others to visit them by way of recreation. They must not allow any outsiders, particularly men, to enter their rooms without great need, not even priests nor their confessors, unless they are sick. Even less should they go to see them in their rooms when they have to speak with them, but will do so in church or at the door of the house. They will take care of matters briefly and not at a late hour, regardless of their good reasons and intentions.

**29. To remind Superiors of the faults of the Sisters and to be willing to have their own disclosed**

Since neither the Superior nor the Superioress can remedy disorders that may arise in the Community unless they are aware of them, nor can know about them unless they are informed of them, and since, if they are not informed of them the Company, with time, might be in danger of perishing, each Sister will be careful to apprise the Superior and the Superioress, humbly and charitably, of the significant faults or strong temptations she has noticed in her Sisters. In addition, she will be content to have her own faults disclosed to the Superior and Superioress and will accept willingly the reproofs given her both publicly or in private.

**30. Not to speak to outsiders in the house nor to allow the Sisters to speak to them without permission<sup>19</sup>**

Since frequent contact with persons outside the Company, except in cases of necessity, may be as harmful to purity and to the vocation of the Daughters of Charity as it is worthwhile and meritorious when done through obedience and to fulfill their obligations toward poor persons, as long as they are in their Community house they will not speak to any outsiders, especially men, nor allow any Sister to speak to them, without the authorization of the Superioress, or the Sister Servant if this takes place in their other houses.

**31. Criticism of authority**

They will not have the curiosity to probe into the affairs of the house in order to find fault with what is being done there, and will be very careful above all not to grumble about the conduct of the Superior, the Superioress, the Sister Servant, or about the Rules and good practices of the Company. This sort of criticism is capable of drawing down the malediction of God, both on the person who does it and on the one who listens to it with pleasure, and, in a word, on the entire Community because of the great scandal it causes.

**32. To avoid malicious gossip**

They will be very careful in their conversations not to reveal the faults of others, especially of their Sisters, nor, on the other hand, should they listen to those who might speak unkindly of them. They will do their best to prevent this, or else leave quickly, as if they heard the hissing of a serpent.

### **33. To unburden their heart only to Superiors and Directors<sup>20</sup>**

To prevent many serious inconveniences that might ultimately cause the downfall of the Company if each one were free to unburden her heart to whomever she wished, they will not tell their temptations and other interior troubles to their Sisters—even less, to outsiders—but will go to the Superioress or her representative, or to the Superior or the Director appointed by him, and, in case of need, to the Sister Servant because God has called them and no others for that purpose. If, however, someone feels before God that she needs to speak to or ask the advice of someone outside the Community, she may do so, but she must have permission from the Superioress, Superior, or Director for fear that, by acting otherwise, God may allow someone to give her bad advice in punishment of her disobedience.

### **34. Not to waste time nor to speak with outsiders in the street**

In going through the streets and even in the houses they enter, they will not linger with outsiders without real necessity. Even then, they will have little to say and will keep the conversation short, carefully avoiding any curious inquiries about current news and worldly affairs. If someone should mention these things to them, they will try to change the conversation in order to speak about something good and then leave politely and unobtrusively.

### **35. Confidentiality**

Above all, they will be careful to keep silence regarding confidential matters, especially what is said or done during conferences, communications, or confession, particularly with regard to faults mentioned or heard and penances performed or given, because it is certain that, besides the offense they commit against God by revealing what is secret, they cause all these holy practices to become in the end loathsome, useless, and harmful to many. It is not forbidden, however, to mention something good that the Superior, Director, or one of the Sisters has said there, provided it be to edify others and without saying where it was heard, especially if in confession; but it is never permitted to speak of these things by way of recreation or, even less, in order to complain of something.

### **36. Union and charity among themselves<sup>21</sup>**

They will often think of the name of Daughters of Charity that they bear and will strive to make themselves worthy of it by the holy love they will always have for God and their neighbor. Above all, they will live in great union with their Sisters and never murmur or complain about one another, being careful to dismiss any thoughts of antipathy they may have for one another. They will refrain from anything that may cause disunion among the Sisters, particularly feelings of envy at seeing others better treated and honored.

### **37. To ask forgiveness**

If it should happen through weakness that a Sister offends another Sister, she will not fail to kneel down and ask her forgiveness immediately, or at least in the evening before retiring. The other will also kneel and will accept this humiliation humbly and willingly. This practice is a good remedy to heal promptly the antipathy that might have been caused.

### **38. Condescension<sup>22</sup>**

They will bear willingly the slight imperfections of their Sisters as they would wish to be tolerated in a similar situation. They will adapt as far as possible to their moods and sentiments in everything that is not sinful nor against the Rules. This holy condescension, joined to mutual support, is a sovereign means to maintain union and peace in the Community.

### **39. Cordiality combined with respect<sup>23</sup>**

Just as they should not manifest too much cordiality or pleasure in speaking to anyone

whomsoever, particularly to men, but should always have a respectful attitude—more or less as the rank and condition of each requires—neither must they seem to be rude or ill-humored, especially to their Sisters, but maintain a cordiality that consists in Christian gentleness and respectful cheerfulness, which can be remarked in our expression.

**40. To avoid exclusive friendships**

Although they should love one another dearly, they will, nevertheless, be careful to avoid exclusive friendships. These are all the more dangerous as they appear less so because ordinarily they are cloaked under the mantle of charity but are, however, only an attachment of flesh and blood. For this reason they will reject them as much as or more than enmities because, in the course of time, these two vicious extremes are capable of destroying a Company.

**41. Confidence in Divine Providence<sup>24</sup>**

They will have great confidence in Divine Providence, abandoning themselves completely to it as an infant does to its wet nurse. They will be convinced that, provided they strive on their part to be faithful to their vocation and the observance of their Rules, God will always keep them under His protection and assist them with everything they need both for body and soul, at the very time they think that all is going to be lost.

**42. The four virtues most appropriate for the Daughters of Charity<sup>25</sup>**

Although their vocation calls them to strive their entire life to practice all sorts of Christian virtues in imitation of Jesus Christ their Patron, they will, however, give more particular attention to those represented by the four extremities of the Cross: humility, charity, obedience, and patience, since they are the foremost ones Our Lord practiced principally during His crucifixion, and which He requires of all Christians and, for even greater reason, of Daughters of Charity because of the great need they have of them to carry out their ministry. That is why they will make sure that all their actions are animated by them, and will reflect that it is useless for them always to have a material cross on their person if, at the same time, they do not have the spiritual one, which is none other than the framework and practice of these four virtues.

**43. To have a deep appreciation for all the Regulations and customs of the Company and to be very faithful in observing them<sup>26</sup>**

They will think highly of all these Regulations and the body of all the praiseworthy customs they have kept until now. They will consider all of them as means given by God for their greater perfection and to save themselves more easily. For this reason they will endeavor and strive earnestly to put them into practice. If perchance there are some articles that are repugnant to their thinking and sentiments, they will try to overcome and mortify themselves in that, recalling that Our Lord has said that *the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.*<sup>27</sup>

**SCHEDULE FOR THE WORK OF EACH DAY AND OF THE YEAR  
WHICH THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY ARE TO OBSERVE**

**1. Rising<sup>28</sup>**

They will rise at four o'clock, giving their first thoughts to God. Each will dress quickly and then make her bed. Before they finish dressing, they will take holy water and kneel down to adore God, to thank Him, and to offer themselves to Him with all the actions of the day.

## **2. Morning meditation and vocal prayers**

At half past four they will recite the usual prayers in common and then listen to the points of meditation that are read. They will make meditation for half an hour, beginning with the Come, Holy Spirit, and concluding with the Angelus, the Litany of the Name of Jesus, and other customary prayers. The Sisters in the parishes who do not know how to read will meditate on some mystery of the Passion or another assigned to them, or on some holy picture, or something else. For vocal prayers, they will say those they know by heart—at least the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the *Confiteor*, and a few decades of the rosary.

## **3. The regular schedule; Mass<sup>29</sup>**

After prayer, they will work at what is most urgent, each according to her duty; then they will go to Mass if they can do so then; if not, at another more convenient time.

## **4. Breakfast**

After Mass, they will go to breakfast; then each will return to her duty. If they cannot hear Mass until very late, there will be no difficulty in their having breakfast before going.

## **5. Particular examination of conscience; dinner**

At half past eleven, they will make the particular examination of conscience for the space of a *Miserere* or two, reflecting on the resolutions taken at morning prayer and particularly on the virtue they have as their practice. Next they will go to dinner, saying grace before and after the meal. If possible, they will have reading at table; if not, they will have it immediately before the meal, during which they will talk about what has been read or some other edifying topic. Following grace after meals, they will recite the *Angelus*; if they do not know it, then three Hail Marys.

## **6. Work and recreation**

After dinner they will devote themselves to their duties, if necessary; if not they will work together at spinning or sewing. At the same time, they may converse on something edifying by way of cheerful, moderate recreation. They will often remember to raise their hearts to God, and, if something improper or some forbidden topic escapes them, a Sister designated for this purpose will say, ALet us remember the presence of God.@

## **7. Time of silence and spiritual reading**

From two to three o'clock they will keep silence as strictly as possible to honor that of Our Lord, beginning with spiritual reading, which one of the Sisters will do aloud, in order that they may have some good thoughts while at their work. They will conclude with the words, AChrist became obedient unto death for us, etc.,@ which will also be said aloud, kneeling, to offer to God the Father the moment His Son died for the salvation of our souls and to pray for those who are in their agony and in a state of mortal sin, as well as for the souls in purgatory, that this divine merit may be applied to them. At the end, they will kiss the floor. Those who do not know how to read will say one Our Father, one Hail Mary, and one *Requiescant in pace. Amen*. Those who are obliged to speak during this hour because of their duties may do so, provided they say only what is necessary. Even when going through the streets, they will recall from time to time that this is the time of silence and that during this same hour the newly-arrived Sisters who are in the house where the Superioress lives will be listening attentively to the instruction being given there to teach them the duties of a good Christian and a true Daughter of Charity. The other Sisters—even the older ones—will try to be there occasionally for the good example they will give and because there is always something beneficial in it for all of them.

## **8. Conversation among the Sisters<sup>30</sup>**

After the hour of silence they will continue working. They may still converse as before on something edifying, but more seriously and devoutly, since the time of recreation will be over.

#### **9. Evening meditation, particular examination of conscience, and supper**

At half past five, those for whom it is convenient will make their prayer until six, followed by the particular examination of conscience as at dinner. Then they will go to supper, saying grace before and after meals with reading at table, and do everything else that was said concerning dinner.

#### **10. Recreation and work**

After supper they will apply themselves to their duties, if necessary; otherwise, they will work with the others and observe what is prescribed for recreation after dinner.

#### **11. General examination of conscience and prayers in common**

At eight o'clock they will go to the place designated for making the general examination of conscience and the evening exercise in the usual manner; namely, prayers in common; reading of the martyrology, where this can be done; then the points of meditation for the following day. They will make the general examination of conscience, then recite the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and other customary prayers. After that, at least the beginning of each point of the same meditation will be reread; then they will get ready to go to bed.

#### **12. Friday conference**

On Fridays they will be present for the little conference that will take place after evening prayers in the presence of the Superioress or her representative concerning the failings noted against the Rules of the Company and the means to correct them. To this end, each Sister mentions her fault and accepts willingly the advice and penance she is given. They also ask pardon of one another if they have offended or given one another bad example. In parishes and other houses they will do almost the same thing in the presence of the Sister Servant.

#### **13. Bedtime**

At nine o'clock, after taking holy water and kneeling to say their usual short prayers for the space of one or two Our Fathers—or three at the most—they will go to bed and try to fall asleep with some good thought, for example, on the subject of the next day's meditation.

#### **14. Time of silence**

From the end of evening prayer until after prayer the next morning they will keep strict silence. If, however, it is necessary to speak, they will do so in a low voice and in few words.

#### **15. Time for learning to read and write**

Those who have permission to learn to read and write will spend half an hour in the morning for reading and the same amount of time after dinner for writing, provided this does not hinder the service of poor persons or any other duty for which they have a stricter obligation.

#### **16. Rosary<sup>31</sup>**

In addition to the above, they will say part of their rosary at different times, such as one decade after morning prayer; two in church while waiting for Mass to begin, or, if it has already begun, up to the Gospel; one after the noon *Angelus*; and another after the *Angelus* in the evening.

#### **17. Program for Sundays and feast days; catechism**

On Sundays and feast days they will follow the same schedule, except that the time spent in manual labor on work days will be devoted to spiritual exercises, such as devotional reading, listening to the sermon, catechism, Mass, pious conversations, catechetical formation with the Sisters so they may become proficient in teaching poor persons and children things necessary for

salvation, or some other similar occupation in conformity with their state. All that should not prevent them from taking their little recreation together after the meal, according to the time remaining.

### **18. Kneeling before going out**

Before leaving the house, they will take holy water and kneel before a picture of Our Lord to ask God's blessing and the grace not to offend Him. On their return they will do the same to thank Him for having preserved them from sin or, if they see that they have committed some fault, to ask His forgiveness.

### **19. Days of fast and abstinence in addition to those of the Church**

Every Friday and on the eves of the feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin they will fast; every Wednesday of Advent they will abstain; however, the infirm and those who go to visit the sick will take a small piece of bread every morning or some other small amount of food by way of a remedy, even on fast days of obligation, provided this is done with the consent of the Superior or of the person delegated for their direction.

### **20. Confession and Communion on Sundays and feast days<sup>32</sup>**

Every Saturday and on the eves of feast days they will make their confession to the confessors the Superior has appointed, and to no others without permission. They will receive Communion on Sundays and feast days and not more often, nor on two days in succession, without the permission of the same Superior, or, in his absence, of his representative or someone else delegated by him; neither will they refrain from Communion on the assigned days without the same permission. To prevent many abuses that may arise from this general permission to receive Communion on all the aforementioned days, and, at the same time, to have the merit of receiving this sacrament always through obedience, the Sisters who are in the house of the Superioress will ask her each time for permission to receive Communion. The Sisters in parishes and other places will act in about the same way with regard to the Sister Servant, but neither they nor the others will receive Communion if the Director or confessor does not allow it.

### **21. Review and communication**

Every month they will make their review to the Director designated by the Superior, and by the same occasion will see the Superioress to give her an account of their ministry and present their difficulties to her. If not, they will come back another day for that purpose.

### **22. Retreat**

Every year, if possible, they will make a spiritual retreat in the house of the Superioress and their general confession of the faults committed since the last general confession, in accord with what the Superior has prescribed for them.

### **23. Meetings**

Whenever they are notified that there will be a meeting or conference, which the Superior or his delegate will hold in the house of the Superioress, they will be punctual in going to it, provided it is in no way prejudicial to the service of poor persons or some other occupation of stricter obligation.

### **24. Special instructions for the Sisters in distant places<sup>33</sup>**

Those who live in villages far from the house of the Superioress, and who, consequently, are unable to get to it as often as those who are nearby, will go there for the reasons mentioned above whenever they can do so conveniently, in such a way that those who are at a distance of a day's journey or two will try to get there at least once a year, one after the other, to make their retreat. They will, however, ask permission beforehand by letter or otherwise. As for the others

who are much farther away—around sixty or eighty leagues, for example—they will not go unless they are told to do so. For their retreat, monthly confession, conference, communication, and other spiritual assistance, they will have recourse to the regular Directors who will be given them for that purpose on site. When an extraordinary Director comes to visit them for a few days, they will go to him for all of the above.

**25. Good use of time<sup>34</sup>**

If, after having done all that is prescribed in their Regulations, they have some extra time and no work to do, particularly sewing and spinning, they will ask the Superioress or the Sister Assistant for some in order to try to earn some of their board. Those in distant houses will do about the same with regard to the Sister Servant, and they will all make it a matter of conscience to lose a minute of time, remembering that God will require an exact account of it.

**26. To prefer the service of persons who are poor to every other ministry**

Although they must do their utmost to observe exactly all these Regulations, including the daily schedule, a Sister should, however, have no scruple about changing the times and even leaving some of her work, when the extraordinary needs of the sick, the children, or other similar necessities require it. They will remember that their chief ministry is to serve poor persons faithfully, in both spiritual and temporal matters, and that, when they do so, they are leaving God for God, and therefore are doing the Will of the same God.

**27. Reading of the Rules**

They will read these Regulations, or hear them read, together with those of their duties, once a month, if this can be done conveniently.<sup>35</sup> They will examine themselves on them to see if they have observed them well or not, so as to thank God if they have and to ask His pardon if they have not.

**149b. - PARTICULAR RULES OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY<sup>1</sup>**

**RULES FOR THE SISTERS IN PARISHES**

(1) They will consider that, since their ministries oblige them to be out of the house and among the people most of the time, and often even all alone, they need greater perfection than Sisters who minister in hospitals and other similar places, which they rarely leave. For this reason they will make a very special effort to advance in the virtues recommended to them by their Common Rules, particularly deep humility, exact obedience, perfect union among themselves, great detachment from creatures, and constant foresight in order to preserve intact purity of body and heart.<sup>2</sup>

(2) They will often think of the principal purpose for which God has sent them to the parish where they reside, namely, to serve the sick poor, not only corporally by giving them food and medicine, but also spiritually by seeing that they receive the sacraments worthily and in due time, *including confession on the first or second day after they are welcomed into the Charity*,<sup>3</sup> so that those who are near death may leave this world in a proper state and those who are recovering may make the firm resolution to live a good life in the future.

(3) The spiritual assistance they will endeavor to give them, according to their modest ability and the disposition of the patients, will be mainly to console and encourage them and to instruct

them in things necessary for salvation, helping them to make acts of faith, hope, and love for God and the neighbor, contrition for their sins, reconciliation with their enemies, asking pardon of those whom they have offended, resignation to God's Will--whether to suffer or to be healed, to die or to live--and other similar acts, which they should suggest to them, not all at once but a few each day, and very briefly for fear of fatiguing them.

(4) Above all, they will give themselves to God to dispose them, particularly if the illness is serious, to make a good general confession of their whole life, helping them to realize its importance and instructing them how to make it well. *Among other things, they will tell them to confess not only the sins committed since their last confession but also all the others they have ever committed, both those already confessed and the ones they have forgotten.* If they are unable to make this confession of their whole life, they will encourage them at least to have general contrition for all their sins and the firm resolution to die rather than to commit them in the future, with the help of God's grace.

(5) If the patients begin to rally and then relapse once or several times, they will urge them to receive the sacraments again, even that of Extreme Unction, and will make it a point to procure this great blessing for them. If they are with them in their last moments, they will help them to die well, having them make briefly some of the acts mentioned above, praying for them, sprinkling them with holy water *with an asperges brush*, and reminding them to gain the plenary indulgence given for some medal<sup>4</sup> *if they have one*, by saying on the point of dying, with their lips or in their heart, the Holy Name of Jesus. After their death, they may help to lay them out for burial, *in case of necessity, if they can do so conveniently and the Sister Servant allows it.*

(6) If the patients are restored to health, the Sisters will intensify their efforts to encourage them to benefit from their illness and recovery, telling them that God has permitted their physical illness to heal their soul, and has restored their physical health to them so that they might use it in the future to do penance and to lead a good life; consequently, they must make some firm resolutions and renew the ones they made during their illness. They will suggest some little practices to them according to their ability, such as to pray kneeling, morning and evening, to go to confession and Communion several times<sup>5</sup> during the year, or to avoid the occasions of sin *or other such things*; but they will always mention these things to them briefly and humbly.

(7) For fear that these spiritual services may be prejudicial to the corporal service they should render to the sick, as might happen if, by spending too much time speaking to one of them, they caused others to suffer by failing to bring them their food or medicine at the right time, they will strive to limit themselves in that, regulating their time and exercises according to whether the number and needs of the patients are great or small. *And because their afternoon duties are not as urgent as the morning ones, they will ordinarily take that time to instruct or encourage them as explained above, particularly when they are rendering them other necessary services.*

(8) If the instruction given to one patient can be extended to others in the same room, they will try to do so with the requisite discretion. This can easily be done when children are there because, in questioning them on the principal mysteries of our holy faith or reminding them of their duties, the parents who are present can benefit from it without realizing that it is partly for them that they are speaking.

(9) They will make it a matter of conscience to fail in the smallest service they are supposed to render to the patients, especially with regard to remedies, which they should give them in the way and at the time prescribed by the physician, unless some great necessity obliges them to act otherwise; for example, if the patients were to take a bad turn, had chills or fever, or something

similar.

(10) In serving the sick, they should have God alone in view and pay no more attention to the praise given them than to the insults they receive, except to make good use of them by rejecting the praise interiorly at the thought of their own nothingness and accepting the insults to honor the contempt the Son of God received on the Cross from the very people on whom He had showered His blessings.

(11) Although they should be neither too lenient nor too condescending if the patients refuse to take the remedies or are too insolent, they must, nevertheless, be careful not to be harsh or disrespectful to them; on the contrary, they will treat them respectfully and humbly, remembering that the harshness and disrespect they show them, as well as the service and honor they render them, are directed to Our Lord Himself.

(12) They will not accept any gift, however insignificant, from the poor persons they assist and will be very careful not to think that the patients are under any obligation for the service they render them. On the contrary, the Sisters must be convinced that they are greatly indebted to the patients since, for a little alms they give them--not from their own property but merely by providing them with a little care--they make friends who are entitled to give them access to heaven some day, and that even in this life they receive from them more honor and true happiness than they could ever have hoped for in the world. They should never abuse this, but be ashamed at the sight of their unworthiness.

(13) To avoid any serious inconveniences that might arise, they will not undertake to sit up with the sick *nor with women in labor, nor to assist loose women*. If they are asked to do so by the Ladies of Charity, poor persons, the neighbors, or others they will humbly apologize and say that it is forbidden by their Rules; and even though certain cases of urgent necessity may seem to oblige them to be of service to someone *in these three categories of persons*, they will not undertake it without a general or special permission from their Superiors and an express order from the Superioress of the Charity.<sup>6</sup> *Even then, they will do their best to assist them only through someone else and will inform no one but their Superiors about it.*

(14) If there are any sick persons so abandoned as to have no one to make their bed or to render them some other service even more lowly, they may do it if they have time and the Sister Servant judges it appropriate. They will try, nevertheless, to get someone else to continue this same charity, for fear that it may delay the assistance of other poor persons.

(15) When a Sister becomes ill and is confined to bed, they will inform their Superioress of the illness the next day, or the third day at the latest, *so that she may come to visit her and do what is necessary for her relief. The Sisters who live in places at a distance from the Superioress will notify her at the first opportunity.*

(16) They will be careful to manage well and preserve the money they have to handle; for this purpose the Sister Servant will keep locked up in a separate place what is for the Sisters, and they will make very sure that they not use for themselves anything intended for poor persons, be it food, linen, or money, reflecting that in so doing they would commit a theft of which they would be guilty before God. They are permitted only to use at any time utensils and household linens such as sheets, tablecloths, napkins, etc., and when they are ill they are given the ordinary portion of the sick poor and all the necessary remedies, *even those they may need by way of prevention, after discussing this with one of the Lady officers of the Charity, if an offer has not been made to them to that effect.*

(17) As for the money given them for their support, the Sister Servant may leave a certain

amount with a Sister companion, who will take care of their minor expenses. She will, however, purchase nothing without the consent of the Sister Servant, unless the need is urgent and for ordinary things. None of them, however, will use the money remaining after what is spent for their food has been taken out, without the permission and according to the intention of their Superioress.

(18) They will also pay very special attention to the other articles of their Common Rules that particularly concern them, and to the following above all:

[1] To prefer the service of the sick poor to every other ministry, be it corporal or spiritual, and to make no scruple either of advancing or postponing everything else for that, provided it be the urgent need of the patients and not laziness or lack of discipline that leads them to act in that way. They will also be exact in always going to bed at nine o'clock and rising at four.

[2] To show great respect to the Ladies of Charity, physicians, and, above all, Pastors, the confessors of those who are poor, and other priests. They will be very reserved in their behavior toward all these persons, never being familiar with them and, even less, becoming attached to them.

[3] Not to waste time speaking to persons when going through the streets or in the houses where they are obliged to go, unless there is great necessity, and even then dealing with matters briefly, particularly with men.

[4] Not to take it upon themselves to treat any patient nor to give anything to a poor person contrary to the order prescribed or the intention of the Lady officers.<sup>7</sup>

[5] Not to make use of any drug or bloodletting<sup>8</sup> for themselves nor to consult the physician for the same purpose, without the permission of their Superioress<sup>9</sup> or *in distant places* of the Sister Servant.

[6] To be satisfied, when they are ill, with being treated like the poor persons they assist, since it is unreasonable that servants be better treated than their masters. If, however, they *really* need some little delicacy, and the Ladies or their Superioress<sup>10</sup> give them any, they may have it.

[7] To buy no clothing nor furnishings<sup>11</sup> for themselves but to be content with what the Superioress<sup>12</sup> will give them for their personal needs and, if they must buy something besides their food, to ask her permission for it, either verbally or in writing.<sup>13</sup>

[8] Not to fail to take to the Superioress or to send her annually payment for the clothing she provides for them according to the custom of the Community.

[9] To be very careful not to become attached by misplaced affection to the parish where they reside, because of their satisfaction in being with a certain Sister or in speaking with the Ladies or their confessor. Should they become aware of this, they must try to break off this attachment by telling the Superioress promptly of their weakness and their need for immediate assistance.

[10] Neither to eat nor to drink in the homes of persons outside the Company--not even of the Ladies of Charity--but always in their own rooms.

[11] Not to allow outsiders to enter their rooms, *except poor persons in the place set aside for their dressings or bloodletting*, and much less to allow anyone to eat or sleep there--not even their relatives, particularly men.

[12] Not to go to the residence of priests, except in the cases mentioned in the Common Rules, and, on those occasions, never to go alone but always two together. If only one Sister can go, she should take as a companion some married woman or young woman of the house or neighborhood.<sup>14</sup>

[13] Not to absent themselves from their parish without necessity, not even to go to hear a

sermon, gain indulgences, take part in processions, etc.

[14] To be conscientious in whatever they have to do, working at sewing or spinning<sup>15</sup> when they have some time to spare, and, if they have no work, to get some *from their Superioress or, in distant places*, from the Sister Servant.

[15] To be very submissive to the Sister Servant and to show her great respect, even if she is younger in age or vocation, undertaking nothing without her order or permission, not even giving an egg or a larger portion *than usual*, nor any medicine, nor going to the homes of the Ladies,<sup>16</sup> nor speaking to them about anything unless they are questioned about it.

[16] Not to fail to go once a month to make their review to the confessor of the house, and, for those who are in the parishes in Paris, to give an account of their ministries to the Superioress; the others will do what is stated in the Common Rules.<sup>17</sup>

[17] With regard to the order of the day, they will conform as much as possible to that of their Community, adapting it to the service of poor persons *in approximately the following manner, which they will try in general to observe*:<sup>18</sup>

1. *Immediately after morning prayer--and in summer, after the reading of the subject--they will be careful to take the medicines to the patients. On their return they will go to Mass, during which they may also make their prayer, if they have been unable to do so at half past four.*

2. *After Mass, they will eat a piece of bread for breakfast in their room.*

3. *Next, at the usual time--or earlier, if need be--they will go to the home of the Lady where the soup for the patients is being prepared, so that the soup pot may be ready at exactly nine o'clock at the latest and they can be back by half past eleven.*

4. *Afterward, they will read carefully the prescriptions of the physician and prepare the medicines in order to take them to the patients at the proper time; they will also deposit the soup pot for the next day in the home of the Lady whose turn it is, unless they have to make it in their own house. After supper they will prepare the medicines for the next morning and, if anything else is urgent, they will do it quickly without wasting time, so they can be in bed by nine o'clock.*

5. *They will lock the door at six o'clock in winter and eight in summer, and will not open it again without great necessity.*

6. *When they are able to teach little girls in the parish without being prevented from going to the sick, one of the two will do so, but will be relieved by the other if necessary, presuming, however, that the Superioress approves. If she does, they will observe as far as possible the Rules drawn up for the Sister who teaches school, which they will be given for this purpose.*

Signed: RENÉ ALMÉRAS, *and sealed with his seal*

## **PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SISTER WHO TEACHES SCHOOL**

(1) She will often think of her great happiness in being called by God to cooperate with Him in the salvation of those poor little girls, who might perhaps be damned one day if they did not receive the instruction she gives them. That is why she must be extremely faithful in carrying out her ministry well and exact in keeping the following Rules:

(2) She will be sure to learn well herself what she has to teach others, particularly all that concerns faith and morals.

(3) She will not instruct them either on the catechism or on morality before previously asking the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

(4) She will do her utmost to form these little creatures<sup>19</sup> in good habits and keep them from contracting bad ones, remembering how very difficult it is to correct them when they become deep-rooted.

*(5) As far as possible, she will regulate the times of instructions, except the ones she has to give to poor little girls who go to beg their bread or have to work to earn their living. These must always be given priority and welcomed whenever they come, and be allowed to leave whenever necessary.*

(6) She will make it a point to encourage poor little girls to come to school, inviting them with kindness and affection when she meets them in the streets or on the roadways, even giving them for this purpose booklets, rosaries, and holy pictures. If she has none, she will see that the Ladies supply her with them.

(7) She will arrange her classroom as neatly and devoutly as possible, but simply and without overdoing it, bringing to it and having others bring to it the respect due to places where God is pleased to have people speak of Him, and in which special graces are received.

(8) She should be more anxious to teach the girls the articles of faith, devotion, modesty, obedience, purity, and other necessary virtues than to have them answer well at catechism on matters of lesser importance or that are too lofty for them, or to make them memorize maxims to be recited with a certain studied manner, which often causes vanity both in them and in their teacher. Nevertheless, those means should not be neglected insofar as they may help to encourage the pupils to learn well, provided this be done with the requisite moderation and discretion.

(9) When she reminds the pupils to live in the fear and love of God, depicting to them the evil caused by sin and the good that comes from virtue, she will remember to apply to herself what she says to them and be ashamed at not possessing the virtues she recommends to others.

(10) She will urge them often to kneel down and pray to God morning and evening and will endeavor to make herself respected and loved at the same time, in such a way that the pupils will have in her a confidence that does not prevent respect,<sup>20</sup> *modesty, or the silence they should observe in school.*

(11) She will be very careful to say or do nothing that might give them the slightest bad example, reflecting that Our Lord curses those who scandalize others, especially children.

(12) She will correct them earnestly but gently, encouraging them by expressing the hope that they will not commit again the faults for which they have been reprovved, and telling them that they should often ask this grace of God.

(13) She will be careful to punish them for their usual shortcomings but give them a whipping only rarely and for serious faults, and never more than five or six strokes, taking them for this purpose to a place in the school out of sight of the others. Typical punishments she will give to correct them of their faults are to have them kneel down and ask pardon of God and of those they have offended, to kiss the floor, to deprive them of part of their snack, to have them remain kneeling for the length of a *Miserere*, to make them sit on the dunce stool, to give them a few taps on the hand with a switch, and similar things. She will, however, be very careful never to strike them on the face, the head, or elsewhere, either with switches or with her hand--and even less with disciplines--or give them any other extraordinary penances.<sup>21</sup>

(14) She will praise publicly and reward with prizes those who excel, not only in their lessons,

but also in catechism and in virtue.

(15) She will not follow her own opinion regarding the way to instruct children, but will conform to the one observed in the house of the Superioress for reading,<sup>22</sup> catechism, and morality. For this purpose she will try to comply as far as possible with the following articles *which contain more or less the order that should usually be observed.*

(16) She will be punctual in getting to school at the appointed time,<sup>23</sup> which is usually half past eight in the morning and half past two in the afternoon.

(17) *Before beginning to go over the lessons or to give the instruction, she will take holy water, kneel before the little oratory with all the pupils, and say the come, Holy Spirit; then one of the girls will say aloud the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo, and the Commandments of God. Next they will all take their places and study their lessons in silence, while she begins to hear one bench after the other recite a part. For example, one will say Pater, another Noster, and another qui es, and in this way each of the beginners will recite consecutively a word or two or a verse of their lesson. Once they know how to read a little, they may say more.*

(18) *At half past ten, before dismissing them, she will have them recite aloud the Angelus, then the Confiteor, to ask pardon of God for the faults of the entire morning. Next, she will take them to Mass two by two, if possible; and if they have heard Mass previously, she will not dismiss them until eleven o'clock.*

(19) *After dinner the same will be done as in the morning, except that at five o'clock, before they leave, she will have them recite the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo, and the Litany of Jesus or of the Blessed Virgin, alternating these with silent prayer. They will also chant the Commandments of God and three times *APraised be the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.*@*

(20) On Thursday afternoons and Saturday mornings she will teach them the catechism, making sure they understand thoroughly what they are reciting. She will ask them various informal questions for this purpose, among the six main ones indicated in the catechism lesson, and in terms other than those used in the book.<sup>24</sup>

(21) On all the eves of feast days she will explain to them simply what feast will be celebrated the following day and how it should be spent.

(22) *She will be careful to take them to confession on the eves of the four principal holy days of the year; in the villages, she will also take them to Vespers on the eves of the feasts of Our Lady, the first Sunday of the month, and other more solemn ones. For confession, she will remind them, among other things, not to go several together but one after the other, even though they may only be receiving the blessing of the priest because they are not yet ready for absolution.*

(23) When the time comes to instruct those whom it is desirable to prepare for First Communion, she will beware of favoring any one of them, or of proposing them because of their knowledge or apparent desire, but, seriously considering the importance of this holy action, she will carefully inquire about their conduct and natural inclinations in order to inform the person who is to examine them.

(24) She will keep a list of all the pupils and check it every month to see who has been absent. She will make note of this in order to remind them of it, if need be, and to give a prize to those who are faithful.<sup>25</sup>

(25) *She will also have regulations for the pupils, which she will read every month and will see that they are kept exactly.*

(26) *She will keep in mind that the schools of the Daughters of Charity are only for girls;*

*consequently, no boy, young or old, may be admitted. Nevertheless, if she has the time and the opportunity, she may teach the truths of faith to poor beggars, either at the door of the house or on the roadways, at least on the way to the country.*

(27) She will also understand that all sorts of girls are not to be received into her school, but only those who are poor. If, however, Providence and obedience should call her to a parish where there is no teacher to instruct those who are rich, and the parents insist that they be admitted with the other pupils, in that case she may accept them *with the Pastor's consent*, but on condition that those who are poor always be preferred to those who are rich and that the latter do not look down on the others.

(28) *Lastly, although she should do her best to observe all the articles of these Regulations, still she will note that some points cannot be practiced in very small places, particularly those that set down the times of entering and leaving school, and a few others that are incompatible with their ministry with the sick. For this reason, she will not hesitate in such cases to omit or change the ones that she sees before God cannot be observed in their entirety without prejudice to something else of stricter obligation. And in order not to be mistaken in that, she will find out from the Superioress what she should do, and follow her decision as best she can.*

(29) She will be convinced that if, *after all*, God Himself does not instruct interiorly the children for whom she is responsible, in vain will she herself invest her time and energy in teaching them. Therefore, she will often commend them to Our Lord, entreating Him to bestow His graces and blessings both on the pupils that they might profit from her instructions, and on herself *that she might fulfill her duty well*, so that together they may receive the rewards promised them for that in heaven.

Signed: RENÉ ALMÉRAS, *and sealed with his seal*

## **PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SISTERS IN THE VILLAGES**

(1) Because the Sisters who minister in the villages are deprived for long periods of time of communication with their Director and with the Superioress, and because there are usually only two of them together, they must strive particularly for great confidence in Divine Providence and the faithful practice of their Rules, including these [Particular] Rules. They should endeavor especially to be on such good terms with one another and so supportive and cordial that they enjoy the holy liberty of helping, consoling, and encouraging one another in their needs, even sharing their minor difficulties with one another, except those that might be detrimental to their Sisters or should be disclosed only to the Superior, the Director, or the Superioress.<sup>26</sup>

(2) *Those who are in places where the Confraternity of Charity is established<sup>27</sup> will do more or less all that is done in the parishes of Paris,<sup>28</sup> except that, if there is no physician, they themselves will go to see what the patients need and, depending on their illness, will administer<sup>29</sup> remedies such as bloodletting, enemas, or drugs. If, however, the illness is very serious, they will at least consult a surgeon.*

(3) *In places where the Confraternity of Charity is not established, they will have full responsibility for the patients and, for fear of neglecting something with regard to remedies, will comply with the following advice:*

*First, they will be careful not to let blood or purge, unless it is really expedient, because of the dangers that might arise; therefore, as soon as they are called to go to see the patients, after giving them a cheerful, cordial welcome, they will find out how long they have been ill and begin their treatment with an enema--or a bloodletting, if the patient is reluctant to have an enema.*

*Second, if the patient has a chronic fever, they will increase the bloodletting to three or four and, if the fever persists, will bleed the foot, then start over on the arm, until the fever subsides. They will begin to purge them with a laxative tea if there is intermittent fever and recurring chills, but they will be careful not to administer any remedy during the chills or fever, other than a glass of tonic that is not too strong with a measure of theriac<sup>30</sup> in it shortly before the chill, and the same amount near the end to make them perspire for a good three hours. After half an hour of rest and when they have dried them off well, they will give them a good enema; for everything else they will follow the two sets of regulations regarding the manner of living and the medicines indicated for hospitals.<sup>31</sup>*

(4) They will also be concerned about the instruction of poor girls--and not only those who come to class in their house--regardless of their age and at whatever time they come, *particularly those who have to beg their bread*, even if this be at meal time, if they cannot wait. In addition, they should try to attract cordially those who, through timidity, dare not come, giving them a very warm welcome, even taking them to a place apart to accommodate their weakness.

(5) *They will be as careful, and even more so, to instruct those who are almost never able to go to school, such as shepherdesses, girls who mind cattle, and others who tend animals, taking them individually whenever and wherever they meet them, not only in the villages but also in the country, along the way.*

(6) They will endeavor chiefly to teach these poor girls how to make the Sign of the Cross; to kneel down and pray morning and evening; the mysteries of the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar; and how to make a good confession and Communion; in a word, everything a Christian is obliged to believe or to do in order to be saved, depending on the age and intelligence of each and the time available. Besides that, they will show those who come regularly to class how to read and, by the same means, recommend to them the virtues they should practice, while instilling in them a horror of the contrary vices. And they will do whatever else is contained in the Rules for the Sister who teaches school, which they will have in order to observe them in all that is not incompatible with these Rules.<sup>32</sup>

(7) *When there are any sick persons to be served, one of the Sisters will be responsible for that and the other will teach school; when there are none, they will both devote themselves to teaching the children, except that the one who is not in charge will take care of preparing the meals.*

(8) On days when they are obliged to be away from their house for a long time for the service of the neighbor, they will take a lunch with them so as not to burden anyone for their food. *Should it happen, however, either because they were taken unawares or because of forgetfulness they may have brought nothing with them and so might be obliged to eat something in the homes of poor persons, they may do so, provided they pay them for it and let them know that they are doing it only out of sheer necessity.*

(9) *In places where there is little for them to do for poor persons, they will use the time for a more exact observance of their Rules and also to work together to earn part of their living. If they do not have enough handwork for that, they will at least keep busy with spinning in order to be able to make linen.*

(10) If they are in places where the churches are very neglected and dirty--especially if through carelessness the lamps are not always kept burning--they will inform the Superioress<sup>33</sup> to see if they may tend to all these needs.

(11) Since they may easily be diverted from their good practices and resolutions if they are not careful to be attentive to them and to avoid adverse circumstances, they will be on their guard, especially in conversations with the villagers, against forgetting themselves and contributing to the gossip, scandal, and complaints that are often so common among them. Above all, they will refrain from speaking, under any pretext whatsoever, of what goes on among themselves, especially the imperfections of one another, reflecting that they are there by order of Divine Providence to edify and not to scandalize others.

(12) They, *and the Sister Servant in particular*, will carefully observe what is prescribed in the Common Rules concerning the letters that she and her Sisters are to write to their Superioress.

Signed: RENÉ ALMÉRAS, *and sealed with his seal*

### **PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SISTERS IN THE HÔTELS-DIEU AND HOSPITALS**

The purpose for which the Daughters of Charity are established in a Hôtel-Dieu or hospital is to honor, corporally and spiritually, Our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of the sick poor; corporally by serving them and giving them food and medicine, and spiritually by teaching the patients the things necessary for their salvation and seeing that they make a general confession of their whole past life. By this means, those who are going to die may leave this world in a good state, and those who are recovering may take the resolution never to offend God, with the help of His grace.

(1) The conditions under which they are sent and received there are: first, that they will always be dependent on the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission. He can visit them, personally or by someone else whom he will delegate, *and even hear their confessions from time to time, with the approval of the Ordinary*. He may also designate an approved confessor for them, and give them the advice he thinks proper for the observance of their Rules so that thereby they may be better able to carry out their duties toward God, the Administrators of the temporal affairs of the said Hôtel-Dieu, and the sick poor.

(2) With regard to temporal matters, in what concerns the service of the sick poor and the governance of the said hospital, the Sisters will be under the complete authority of and dependence on the Administrators, *who will order them whatever they please in that regard*. The Sisters will obey them entirely<sup>34</sup> and will be bound to interrupt the order of their spiritual exercises, advancing or postponing them when necessity or the service of poor persons requires it. They will even omit them if they are unable to get back to them before the following exercises, to which they are already obligated by their Rules, that being their primary and principal duty.

(3) The Sisters *alone* will be responsible for the service of the said poor persons, *and no one may impose on them as associates any married or unmarried woman*, so that the patients may be better served by the union and good relations existing among the Sisters.

(4) Their room, board, and maintenance will be paid by the hospital for everything they need. With regard to their clothing and linen, each year the Administrators will give the Sister Servant responsible for the others the sum of money agreed upon in the contract, and they may not make them change either the fabric, color, or style used in the Community.

(5) They will not be obliged to sit up with patients outside the wards of the hospital, *except for women who are in the enclosure of the hospital, such as the lying-in rooms.*

(6) *They will give an account of their services and management only to the Administrators, who must uphold their authority, considering that, if the Sisters are not given authority by them with regard to the officers and servants in the house as well as the poor persons, they will not be able to do the good God wants them to do.*

(7) When they become ill or infirm, they may not be sent away for this reason alone if their Superior does not judge it advisable to recall them to their Paris house, but will be kept at the hospital and given food and medicine as daughters of the house. To replace those Sisters who, through old age or an incurable infirmity can no longer carry the ordinary workload of the service of poor persons, the Administrators will be obliged to welcome and assume the support of others of the same Company, whom the said Superior may send them at the expense of the hospital, even if the infirm or elderly Sisters are not recalled.

(8) When these Sisters die, their companions will give them a proper burial in the usual manner, leaving the corpse in their little infirmary until it is taken to the church, followed immediately by the Sisters, each carrying a candle. After the High Mass and three low Masses, the body of the deceased will be interred in the chapel or cemetery of the hospital, with a small stone marker over the grave to indicate the place where she has been buried. *If the corpse cannot be kept, it will be taken into the church, where the Office of the Dead will be said, and the following day a High Mass and three low Masses will be offered through the kindness of the Administrators, that God may be pleased to be merciful to the deceased.*

(9) The Sister Servant, to whom the Administrators will address their orders for the admission of poor persons into the hospital, and without which none may be admitted or discharged, will have those poor persons who enter it registered with their name, surname, age, profession, state, religion, birthplace, discharge date, or date of death. Lastly, she will have a list made of their clothing and money, and everything will be returned to them when they leave after their recovery. If, however, they should die, everything will be given to the hospital, and she will ask the Administrators to have some Masses said for the deceased.

(10) She will remind the Administrators to have an inventory taken of all the furnishings and clothing of the hospital *on the day after the feast of Saint John* to check the increase or decrease, so as to provide accordingly.

(11) She will see to it that the sick poor are visited *once a day* by the confessors, physicians, pharmacists, and surgeons *and, if these should fail in their duty toward the poor persons, she will notify the Administrators.*

(12) She will make sure that no one enters or leaves the hospital without her knowledge<sup>35</sup> *and, for this purpose, the porter or the Sister receptionist will notify her of those who enter and leave, and will bring her the keys of the house every evening.*

(13) And in order that the service of those who are poor be carried out better and the Administrators obeyed more exactly,<sup>36</sup> she will take care to distribute and change regularly the little duties for each Sister--except the three principal offices in large hospitals--whenever she thinks before God that this is advisable. She will also see to it that they fulfill their duties

properly.

(14) If the Sisters are given money to purchase necessary items and small supplies for the hospital, they will give an account of this to the Administrators whenever they are ordered to do so, as well as of all their weekly receipts and expenditures, except what is given them annually for their clothing and linen. These weekly accounts will be calculated daily in each duty, and settled and signed at the usual time and place by one of the Administrators, if the others are absent. After that, the Administrators--or one of them--will give orders to the Sisters for the little supplies<sup>37</sup> for the following week because most of the supplies will be purchased at a convenient time and season at the request of the Administrators.

(15) The Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission can withdraw the said Sisters when he judges it advisable for the good order of their Company, sending others in their place at the expense of their Community. Likewise, the Administrators, after having tested them for a year, may ask the Superior to send them others, but the journey will be made at the expense of the hospital, as also in the following cases:

[1] When the Superior sends Sisters there for the first time to begin their establishment.

[2] When he sends others to replace those who die or who have exhausted their health and strength in the service of poor persons and are no longer able to do the work.

[3] When the same Superior judges it advisable to recall the aged and infirm Sisters to their house in Paris to relieve the hospital of the burden.

[4] Lastly, should it happen that the said Superior is obliged to recall all of them because the Administrators break the contract drawn up *with the municipal authorities, in that case, since the journeys are made for service*, the journeys will be made at the expense of the hospital; but should the Sisters themselves break the contract, they can be sent back at the expense of their Community *by the municipal authorities if, when their Superior has been informed of this by them, he does not provide for this within one year.*

### **MEANS THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY WILL USE TO CARRY OUT THEIR DUTIES IN THE HÔTELS-DIEU AND HOSPITALS**

(1) They will faithfully observe their Common Rules and the order of the day they have been accustomed to follow in their Community, as far as the particular obligations of the service of the sick poor will allow. In addition, they will also be very faithful to the Particular Rule concerning spiritual exercises and temporal matters that they are to observe in the hospital, especially the following articles:

(2) At quarter past four the Sister whose week it is for the kitchen will go to light the fire *under the pot she has filled with water and for which she prepared the wood the previous evening*. She will heat as much broth as is needed for the patients who are frail, taking care to put in just the amount necessary for each serving time because broth becomes more salty each time it is reheated. At half past four she will go to prayer.

(3) At quarter of five the Sisters named to distribute the broth or other things needed by the frailest and the dying will leave to do so, after having heard the point of meditation read in the oratory. The others will remain there and make their prayer until quarter past five;<sup>38</sup> then they

will recite the *Angelus*, the Litany of Jesus, and two decades of their rosary.<sup>39</sup> After that, they will go off to do whatever is most urgent, such as distributing medicines, or *bloodletting if they are the ones to do it*, or some of them will go to hear Mass, if possible.

(4) *At six o'clock, each will eat a small piece of bread; on Communion days, the Sisters not yet accustomed to the odors of the hospital may inhale a little vinegar and rub some on their hands. Then*<sup>40</sup> all of them will go to the wards and will begin by emptying the chamber pots, basins, and cuspidors, making the beds of the patients, and cleaning and straightening out the wards.

(5) At seven o'clock at the latest, a Sister will give holy water to the patients and recite aloud in the ward *the acts of morning prayer*. Then the sickest patients will be fed a little broth or a fresh egg, and the others given a little butter, apples stewed or roasted in wine, or something similar.

(6) Next, they will hear Holy Mass if they have not already done so; then they will eat *a piece of bread* in the refectory. Those in charge of the wards will go to care for the patients, *and give some broth to those who have taken some medicine, three hours afterward at the latest. They will also teach those who are uninstructed the things necessary for salvation, explaining to them how to make a good general confession of their whole past life, to go to Communion in a worthy manner, and to receive Extreme Unction properly, as soon as it is time for that, consoling and encouraging those who are near death so that they may leave this world in a good state. They will likewise urge those who will recover never to offend God again, and, should they have this misfortune, to go to confession as soon as possible. If those who are recovering have a relapse of their illness, they will encourage them to receive the sacraments again, even that of Extreme Unction, and if they remain ill for a long time, will see that they receive the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist once a month, if possible.*

(7) *At ten o'clock all the Sisters will go to the wards to serve the patients their dinner and take care of them. The Sister Servant or the Sister she designates will say grace aloud before and after the meal. If there is a priest present, he will be asked to say it, reminding the patients to lift their hearts to God.*

(8) They will take great care to see that the sick poor have their meals on time<sup>41</sup> and are given something to drink whenever they need it, and that the frail patients are fed some tidbits occasionally.

(9) At half past eleven, they will make the particular examination of conscience together in their oratory, during which time the cook will prepare the soup and dish out the portions. Then they will eat in their little refectory, each having her portion. If there are more than three Sisters, they will have reading at table; if they are only two or three, they will have it previously and eat in silence. After thanking God for the meal, they will say a decade of their rosary to offer Him what they have to do in the afternoon and to ask Him for the grace to do it in His holy love. Two of them will then go to relieve the Sisters who had stayed with the sick and will send them to eat at the second sitting with the reader, while they try to entertain the patients.<sup>42</sup>

(10) After the reader, the cook, and the ward Sisters have eaten, said grace, and cleared the table, they will go to the church or oratory to say a decade of their rosary, and the two others who had relieved them will go to wash the dishes or work at the tasks assigned them by the Sister Servant.

(11) *At half past one, the Sisters will prepare some preserves, roasted in wine and sugar, stewed pears or apples, etc., for the light meal of the sick poor.*<sup>43</sup>

(12) At two o'clock they will have a quarter of an hour of reading,<sup>44</sup> *after which those who*

*have been appointed will go to the wards to serve the light meal to the patients, in accordance with their needs. If there is a Company of Ladies of Charity, like the one at the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris, they will present them with some white aprons and the prepared meal, if the Ladies do not bring it from home.*

*(13) At four o'clock they will give the enemas, change the sheets of those who need it, empty the chamber pots, basins, and cuspidors and straighten the beds of the patients a little without getting them up.*

*(14) At five o'clock, all the Sisters will go to the wards give the patients their supper, and take care of them as at dinner. At six o'clock, they will go to make the particular examination of conscience and eat supper, after which they will say grace and do as they did at dinner.*

*(15) At around half past six, the Sisters will go to the wards and relieve the ward Sisters, sending them to eat supper with the reader and others, and will do as they did after dinner, putting the convalescents to bed before seven o'clock in summer, and they will prepare the eggs and broth and a few tidbits for the sickest patients.*

*(16) At half past seven, all the Sisters will go to the wards, have the patients make the general examination of conscience, recite aloud in the middle of the ward the acts and the litany of the Blessed Virgin, and read one point of the next day's meditation. Then the Sister Servant or the Sister she has designated will sprinkle all the patients with holy water.<sup>45</sup>*

*(17) At eight o'clock the Sisters will retire, leaving the night nurses in the wards to assist the sick. Toward midnight, they will give them some eggs or broth and help the dying in their last moments. When the patients have fallen asleep, they will finish their rosary and spend the night sitting up with the sick, reading, dozing at times while the patients are resting, but not forgetting to make their half hour of prayer. When the others have gone to their duties to prepare in silence what is needed for the next morning, they will go to bed at exactly nine o'clock, after having briefly made the acts of adoration, love, offering, and petition.*

*(18) At half past three in the morning, the night nurses will make their prayer until four if they have not done so sooner, and at four o'clock they will awaken the others. After they have taken something to eat if they wish, they will go to bed until nine o'clock, at which time a Sister will awaken them and they will get up to go to Holy Mass. Before they leave the wards to go to bed, however, the Sister Servant will send one or two Sisters to replace them, who will ask them what remains to be done or what is most urgent for the patients. They will make their prayer in the same manner and at the same time as the Community unless some patients require their attention, in which case they will be aware that the service they render to the sick is a continual prayer before God.*

*(19) For admissions, deaths, recovery, discharge, and other details concerning their duties toward the patients, they will follow the regulations and advice given them for each duty they will have to do.*

*(20) And that God may be pleased to grant them the grace of accomplishing all these things, they will ask it of Him often, go to confession and Communion on Sundays and holy days, for that intention, and walk in the presence of God. They will take as their patrons and intercessors before God: the Blessed Virgin, Saint Joseph, Saint Louis, Saint Genevieve, Saint Joanna the wife of Chuza, Saint Margaret the Queen, other holy women who followed Our Lord, and the holy patrons of the parish and hospital.*

*(21) They will be faithful and exact in performing their daily actions well, living in great union, gentleness, and cordiality with one another and with the poor; they will strive to be very*

humble with everyone and very respectful and obedient toward the Administrators.<sup>46</sup> They will *distance themselves from any kind of contact with the world, as well as, and even more so, from priests, male religious, and other men, to whom they will never speak unless there are two of them together and for necessary matters. Even then they will keep the conversation brief, although it may be under pretext of charity or of their own little affairs. They will tell their troubles to no one except the Sister Servant. From time to time, they will write to their Superior General or Director and their Superioress and follow their advice, obeying them exactly. Every month they will read the present Regulations at table, recalling often that it is a great happiness for them to serve Our Lord in the person of those who are poor; that, at the last judgment this same Lord will acknowledge as done to Himself the services they will have rendered them; that, by continuing to do the good they have begun, they will fulfill perfectly the law of God; and, in a word, that as long as they persevere in charity, they will always be in God and God in them.*

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTER SERVANT OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU AND HOSPITAL**

(1) The Sister Servant will always keep these Rules before her eyes in order to be an example to her Sisters. She will do her utmost to be the first to practice what she asks them to do, *making the beds along with them*, emptying the basins, and cleaning the wards, unless her duty sometimes obliges her to do something else. Above all, she will be exact in carrying out the articles of the contract of their establishment in the hospital.

(2) She will take great care to see that each Sister performs her ministry well, always watching over their actions with great gentleness and charity, refraining carefully from doing anything that might disedify them, even though she may think there is no great harm in it.

(3) She will not reprove her Sisters publicly for their mistakes in front of persons outside the Community unless the edification of the neighbor requires it, nor should she do so when she herself or the Sister she must reprove is angry, so as not to embarrass them or give them bad example and so that her correction will be beneficial. Neither will she reveal the faults of her Sisters to persons within or outside the Community, and if someone informs her of their faults, she will thank the person, without showing that she has a poor opinion of the one at fault, but excusing her as far as she can reasonably do so.

(4) She will treat all her Sisters in a humble and very respectful manner, especially her Assistant and the other officers given to her. As far as possible, in doubtful matters she will take the advice of these officers, but so discreetly that she will not reveal to them what the other Sisters have told her in confidence.

(5) She will say grace aloud before and after meals as with the patients, adding the prayer *Retribuere*. She will also say or have someone say morning and evening prayers and make the particular examinations of conscience, taking her turn for the times of service in the hospital along with the other Sisters, and finding out from each of them some time during the day the condition of each patient, in order to know how they are treated and what they need.<sup>47</sup>

(6) Whenever she can, she will take her turn sitting up with the patients and will help when those poor persons who have recovered are being discharged, after receiving the orders and advice of the physician. She will do this with great gentleness, reminding them to put into practice the good resolutions taken during their illness, and consoling those who leave

reluctantly with the assurance that, provided they live in the love and fear of God, He will not abandon them.

(7) She will make sure that there is always at least one Sister in the wards at times when all of them are not present and that it always be one who is neither a reader nor a night nurse, and she will provide the patients with clean linen, both sheets and other items.

(8) She will keep a duplicate key of all the duties in the house and for the linen of the patients, and see that everything is kept in good order. She will be very careful to have the doors of the hospital locked at night and have them opened in the morning at the appointed time.

(9) She will see that the church and the hospital chapels are arranged properly, having them cleaned every other day and dusted thoroughly every three months, and will not allow any soiled linen or anything unsuitable to be left around.

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTER WHO ADMITS THE PATIENTS AND PUTS THEM TO BED**

(1) The Sister responsible for putting the patients to bed will also take care to receive them in a spirit of humility and charity *after they have seen the priest*, recalling that she is their servant and they are her Lords and Masters. In this spirit she will bathe their feet with warm water, cleanse them of vermin, and even cut their hair, if necessary. She will also change their nightshirt and give them clean linen *and nightcaps*. Then she will put them to bed, having previously warmed the linen she distributes to them, and will have them given some broth and a pitcher of something to drink.

(2) As soon as the new arrivals have been put to bed, she will make sure that the physician is notified, and will lock up their clothing and money--if they have any--in the place reserved for that, writing it down immediately in order to give an account of it at the proper time, either to return everything to them when they leave or to leave it for the use of the hospital if they die. If it is the rule that men attend to the men, she will have those who are on duty put them to bed, giving them what is needed to change them, and she herself will put away their clothing, etc., as mentioned above.

(3) When they are leaving, she will see that their shirts are returned with their other clothes when they have been washed, in order to take back the ones that belong to the hospital.

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTERS WHO DISTRIBUTE THE BREAD AND WINE**

(1) They will go to the wards as soon as the bell summons them. While they are distributing the bread, they will recall that Divine Providence provides for all our needs, and think about the multiplication of the loaves Our Lord had distributed. They will give each poor person as much bread as he or she needs, being careful not to give any to those who have a fever, or to refuse others harshly, should any of them want more than they should be given.

(2) When distributing the wine, they will remember to begin this action by an interior act of gentleness and charity, whether giving it to those for whom it has been prescribed or refusing it

to others who should not have it, and express regret at not being able to satisfy them in this respect.

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SERVING THOSE WHO ARE INFIRM**

(1) They will take great care to see that those who truly have a need receive their fill, and will gently and charitably discourage those who request something that may be harmful to them.

(2) They will notify the Sister Servant of those who eat too little because of dislike or otherwise.

(3) They will strive especially to differentiate clearly those who are truly infirm from those who only imagine they are, and ascertain their number so as not to forget any of them. When they are unable to eat one thing, they will have them take something else at certain hours; when they are dying, they will give them no more food, particularly eggs, but just a few spoonful of wine, a few drops of syrup, or some other liquid. They will not move them very much at that time, and then gently and rarely. They will not go too far away from those who are about to die so as to be able to sprinkle them with holy water from time to time and help them at intervals to pronounce the Holy Name of Jesus. They will recite the *De Profundis* as soon as they die, *place the corpse on the straw*, change their linen, and fold their arms.

(4) They will be very careful not to favor the care of one patient over another, but treat them all alike, according to their needs. They will do everything possible, in moving, changing, *or cleaning* them, that nothing appears in view that is contrary to modesty and Christian propriety.

### **ADVICE TO THE COOKS REGARDING FAST DAYS<sup>48</sup>**

(1) *When no fish is available, they will see that some prunes are stewed early in the morning, have the porridge cooked before the bread is brought, and break and beat the eggs into each of the plates so that everything is ready at the same time the broth is served.*

(2) *In the evening, the porridge should be made before the bread is served and the soft-boiled eggs cooked; sometimes they will have an egg dish prepared in verjuice instead of an omelette.*

(3) *In places where porridge is not customary, they will not introduce it, since it is not food that is really suitable for sick persons; in its place they can have buttered toast prepared, sprinkling a little water on it before buttering it.*

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DISHES<sup>49</sup>**

(1) *She will count them every night, taking care to put them aside and lock them away, and will set the table with them for every meal. She will also put out the cutlery and see that there is always a cloth on the table. Every two weeks she will have the dishes scoured, half of them to be*

*done each week.*

*(2) She will be careful to keep the lamps and candlesticks ready to be lit on time.*

*(3) When a dish gets broken, she will be careful to set it aside and to notify the Sister Servant if it needs to be changed.*

### **ADVICE FOR THE NIGHT NURSES**

(1) When they go into the wards to sit up with the sick, they will think of the vigils Our Lord kept when He was on earth--such as the one in the Garden and several others--to teach us how to keep watch. With this thought in mind, they will remain in great modesty during the night, not detaining anyone to keep them company, be it a sick man or woman or an officer of the house. If someone should try to insist on staying with them *in spite of them*, they will go immediately to inform the Sister Servant.

(2) In addition, they will be careful to prepare in the evening whatever they will need for those who are very weak.<sup>50</sup>

(3) They will also be very careful to find out in the evening from the ward Sister if there are any patients in urgent need of receiving the sacraments, and both of them together can make the rounds of the wards so as not to be mistaken on this point.

(4) They will likewise reflect that the hour of darkness is also that of the demon; for this reason they should always be on the alert and wary of everything, having recourse to God and their good Angel.

(5) If the priest has to be notified to administer the sacraments to some very sick patient, they will inform the Sister Servant as soon as they have awakened the person who is supposed to go for the priest, and one of the Sisters will remain for this.<sup>51</sup>

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTERS WHO REPLACE THE NIGHT NURSES<sup>52</sup>**

*(1) In order to know the needs of the patients, they will find out from the night nurses the state in which they left them; if they see that they need no nursing care at that time, they will make their prayer peacefully as the Rule requires, in the ward of the female patients.*

*(2) The Sisters who nurse in the wards all day long will clean them after the patients' dinner.*

*(3) All of them, including those who have just preceded them, will be on their guard concerning everything, since they have to be alone in the wards for three hours in winter.*

### **ADVICE FOR THE LAUNDRESSES**

(1) They will see that the soiled linen is collected every day, put the small pieces together the day before it is counted out for the washerwomen, and mark the number of each kind. In accord

with this count, they will get back everything they have given out and fold it carefully with the help of their assistants.

(2) They will make sure that the sheets for changing the patients' beds are washed daily, and the four youngest will each take a week to wash them, without, however, excluding others when the Sister Servant assigns them to help.

(3) In folding and putting away the linen, they will be careful to set aside what is to be mended or can no longer be used; they will also separate the men's linen from that of the women and be careful not to fold anything that is too damp or wet.

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CLOTHING OF THE DECEASED<sup>53</sup>**

*(1) As soon as she hears that a patient has died, she will go to the Sister responsible for receiving the patients, putting them to bed, and setting aside their clothing, and ask her to remove it and put it in the place designated for that purpose.*

*(2) Every month she will remind the Sister Servant to sell the clothing of the poor persons who have died. If she is unable to accompany her for that, she will give her another Sister to be with her to help with the transaction; she will not fail to record in her register what she has sold, together with the amount she has received, noting also the date and the year.*

*(3) She will spend what is required for the little needs of the patients, in line with the order given her concerning this by the Sister Servant, to whom she will give an account of it, as also to the Administrators.*

*(4) If some of the clothing is very good, she will not conclude negotiations before consulting one of the Administrators.*

### **ADVICE FOR THE SISTERS WHO LAY OUT THE DEAD**

(1) They will be careful not to put the shroud on the deceased until at least twelve hours after the person has died,<sup>54</sup> and will sprinkle the body with holy water beforehand. They will perform this work of mercy with great modesty and discretion, bearing in mind that the Son of God willed to be in this state.

*(2) They will see that the bodies are removed from the beds immediately after death and will close the eyes and mouth; they will also see that they do not remain too long without being buried, even though there are others who are to die soon.*

Signed: RENÉ ALMÉRAS, *and sealed with his seal*

### **THE ORDINARY DIET TO BE GIVEN TO A PATIENT<sup>55</sup>**

(1) *When the patient is feverish, he or she is given four good broths and three eggs a day; that is, the first broth is given to the very weak at four forty-five in the morning, and the first egg around eight o'clock, alternating them in this way every three hours.*

(2) *Broth is to be given in place of eggs to those who cannot take them, and if they cannot take the broth all at once, try to have them take it at several different times.*

(3) *For very weak patients who can eat only a little at a time, an egg yolk can be beaten into their bowl or they can be given a spoonful of jelly if they can have it, and a little something sweet placed in their mouth from time to time. Those on the point of death should never be given an egg, and very little broth, but a few spoonfuls of wine sweetened with sugar from time to time.*

(4) *As to the kind of broth and the amount of meat, three quarters--or at least half a pound--of meat, a third of beef, a third of veal, and a third of mutton should be used for each patient and, if possible, one fowl for every twenty-five patients, and a hind shank of beef boiled in six pints of water, which will make four good broths a day for each. The beef and the mutton are to be put on to cook together at half past four in the morning, the fowl at six, and the veal at seven. The pot must be skimmed as soon as it begins to boil, which gives a good flavor to the broth, and some herbs added to that.*

(5) *The usual herbs that are best for a patient's broth are sorrel, lettuce, purslane, chicory, white beet, Chinese leaves, or Chinese cabbage, and caraway. In winter, when not many herbs are available, chicory, parsley root, cercifie, and a little hulled barley are used.*

(6) *Broth that is the least salty is always best for all sorts of illnesses; if a little spice has to be added to give some seasoning to the meat of the convalescents, it should be done sparingly.*

(7) *No nourishment should be given when the fever breaks until the patient has been purged two or three times, following the orders of the physician in the place where he is.*

(8) *The first two or three days, no matter how hungry they say they are, they must be given only two or three pieces of bread in their broth; on the fourth or fifth day, this may be gradually increased to the full portion, when it is clear that they are in no danger of relapsing.*

(9) *Some patients have a special diet and remedies for which the particular order of the physicians must be followed and the quantity and quality of the food adjusted on the orders of the Administrators or the Ladies.*

(10) *The usual beverage served during a fever is herbal tea or water with bread in it; and when a patient is able to eat he or she may be given a setier of wine a day.*

(11) *During prolonged illnesses, those who have lost their appetite and been abandoned by the physicians may be given whatever they feel like eating, provided it is not too much and they are not too near death.*

### **THE ORDINARY DIET FOR A PATIENT ON THE DAYS HE OR SHE TAKES REMEDIES<sup>56</sup>**

(1) *On the eve of the day when medicine is to be given to a patient, a laxative must be administered if the patient is constipated.*

(2) *Medicines are administered at five o'clock in the morning in summer and six in winter, some broth three hours later, and an egg two hours after the broth. If the patient is able to eat, he or she may be given soup, a little meat, and some stewed fruit at noon, and in the evening*

*some soup, a very small portion of meat, and a soft-boiled egg.*

*(3) Nothing raw should ever be given on the days medicine is administered.*

*(4) The best time for bloodletting is the morning, unless the illness requires that it be done at another time. The orders of the physician must be followed in this with regard to the time, the vein, and the amount of blood that should be drawn.*

*(5) The amount of blood to be drawn from the arm is usually nine ounces, which will make three basins [for bleeding], and twelve ounces from the foot of persons with a strong constitution.*

*(6) As a precaution, it is important to find out the exact need of those who come for a bloodletting in order to see if it is a real necessity for them because most of the poor people have greater need of food or mild laxatives than extensive bloodletting.*

*(7) Pregnant women are not to have a bloodletting without a prescription from the physician or on the advice of a surgeon or midwife.*

*(8) Neither should it be done to any young woman without a clear knowledge of her condition; in addition, as far as possible, their arms should not be uncovered in the presence of men.*

*(9) Half an hour--or one hour at the latest--after the bloodletting, some broth, or failing that a soft-boiled egg and a large glass of herbal tea or water, should be given.*

*(10) If the persons are not bedridden, they should be warned not to lie on the arm that has been bled and to avoid going to sleep after the bloodletting or going to work that day, for fear that the arm or the foot might start to bleed or some other accident occur.*

Signed: RENÉ ALMÉRAS

We the undersigned Superioress and officers of the Company of Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor, and the Sister Servants and other senior Sisters of the same Company, established in the parishes and hospitals of Paris and its environs, assembled at our principal house, in the faubourg St-Lazare-lez-Paris, after having heard the public reading of the above Common and Particular Rules, which were first given to us by our Venerable Instituter and Founder M. Vincent de Paul, first Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, and by our most worthy Mother and Foundress Mlle. Louise de Marillac, widow of M. Legras, Secretary of Queen Marie de Médicis, and which since that time have been carefully reviewed and put in order by our authority and request through the care of our Most Honored Father M. Alméras, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and of our Company, to remedy the discrepancy found in most of the manuscript copies and thereby to give them the highest perfection; in the name of our entire Company, represented according to our Statutes and customs by this principal part of our Community, have renewed with all the affection of our heart the declarations and resolutions always to observe them faithfully and inviolably, recognizing from the experience we have had from the beginning of our Company that they are means that are not only very useful but even most necessary to maintain it in its primitive spirit and in fidelity to its works. And to prevent any change or alteration from creeping into them in the future, we have entreated our Superior M. Alméras to sign them with his own hand and seal them with his seal, as he did for the original. With this Act, we also have signed and sealed them with our ordinary seal, declaring by this same Act that no copy made of them henceforth, even if it is printed, will be considered valid and authentic unless it is signed by the Superioress and one of the officers, and sealed with the seal of our Company.

Drawn up in Paris, August 5, 1672

Signed: Mathurine Guérin, Superioress; Françoise Carcireux, Assistant; Barbe Bailli, Treasurer; Philippe Bailli, former Assistant; Suzanne Chanteau, Local Treasurer; Claire Jaudoin, Sister Servant at the Foundling Hospital; Marie Joly, Sister Servant at St-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas; Anne Rose, living in the house; Marie Le Joine, living in the house; Marguerite Autin, Sister Servant at St-André-des-Arts; Nicole Haran, Sister Servant in Versailles; Catherine Jesse, companion at St-Merry; Geneviève Cailloux, Sister Servant at St-Benoît; Andrée Maréchal, Sister Servant at St-Hippolyte; Laurence Dubois, Sister Servant at St-Merry; Perrine Cretté, Sister Servant at St-Germain-l'Auxerrois; Colombe le Gras, Sister Servant at St-Jacques-de-la-Boucherie; Antoinette Voisin, Sister Servant at St-Étienne; Anne Deveau, living in the house; Anne Denoval, Sister Servant at St-Jean-en-Grève; Charlotte Baillé, Sister Servant at St-Roch; Michelle Percheron, Sister Servant at St-Sauveur; Jeanne Milleret, Sister Servant at St-Séverin; Marguerite le Gras, Sister Servant at St-Médard; Marie Charpentier, Sister Servant at St-Louis; Marie Bourdais, Sister Servant at St-Côme; Madeleine Chateau, Sister Servant at St-Leu; Françoise Fianchon, Sister Servant at the Hôtel-Dieu; Nicole Bildet, Sister Servant at St-Sulpice; Marie Robodet, Sister Servant at the Petites Maisons; Julienne Laboue, in charge of the new Sisters in the house; Marie de la Ruelle, living in the house; Antoinette Richevilain, companion at St-Hippolyte; Élisabeth Dufour, companion at the Galleys; Nicole Rousselot, Sister Servant in Chantilly; Anne Valin, Sister Servant in Montlhéry; Étienne Dupuis, Sister Servant in Maisons; Avoye Vigneron, Sister Servant in Corbeil; Claude Laurent, Treasurer at the Foundling Hospital.<sup>57</sup>

### ***PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SISTERS OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU OF PARIS***<sup>58</sup>

*(1) Their ministry with regard to the Ladies of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu and with the foundlings who are brought to their house almost daily obliges them to greater perfection than others because of the example of humility and charity those persons of rank give them and the purity and obedience those poor little innocents preach to them by their very presence. They will do their utmost to grow in these four virtues, which are the source of all the others, and will be encouraged to do so by the confidence they should have of being aided in this by Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, seeing that they have the happiness of living close to their holy houses and visiting them there every day.*

*(2) They will be careful to have the light lunch ready and laid out in the kitchen cupboard of the Hôtel-Dieu punctually [at two o'clock] each day and to take some work there. They will wait for the Ladies in order to be of service to them, welcoming them simply according to the order that will be given and guiding them, and, when it is necessary to remind them about something, doing so humbly and respectfully.*

*(3) They will see that nothing ordered for this work is lacking and particularly that there are always white aprons, water, and a basin for the Ladies to wash their hands after they have*

*served the poor persons.*

*(4) In passing before the Blessed Sacrament while coming and going, they will not fail to kneel down and offer to God, the first time at least, the service they are going to render Him in union with similar actions of His Son.*

*(5) If, when they are bringing the light lunch for the sick into the wards, some urgent spiritual or temporal need of one of them should come to their attention, the Sister Servant will notify one of the Ladies concerning the instruction.*

*(6) They will show great honor and respect to the nuns of the Hôtel-Dieu, both because they deserve this and also in recognition of the honor they do them of allowing them to minister in their house, and they will strive to be an edification to them. They will not, however, have any communication with them, being satisfied to carry out their humble assignments with the Ladies and the patients, and if they have to refuse them something, they should do so humbly and discreetly.*

*(7) To avoid many inconveniences, they will have no communication with the surgeons, pharmacists, and other officers of the Hôtel-Dieu, and accept nothing from them under any pretext whatsoever, even if they are ill. If, however, the nuns offer them any medicines, they may accept them and thank them for them. As for bloodletting, they will have recourse to the Superioress of the house, who will get a Sister from one of the neighboring parishes or someone else to administer it.*

*(8) The Sister Servant, or, in her absence, the Sister who represents her, will be most careful not to take in any children until after all the customary formalities have been observed and she has received the report made of them. This is to be sent along with the children to the hospital where they are to be raised with the others. Should it be judged that a child is in danger of dying, she will see that the child is promptly baptized without further delay, and always conditionally.*

*(9) On the principal solemn feast days, namely, New Year's Day, Candlemas, the first Sunday of Lent, Passion Sunday, the feast of Our Lady in May, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday, Pentecost, the feasts of Our Lady in August and September, All Saints', the Immaculate Conception, and Christmas Day, she will see that someone is sent to notify the Sister Servant of the Foundling Hospital to have some of them taken to the creche in the church of Notre Dame, with a Sister there to take up the collection and to make sure that nothing inappropriate happens to the wet nurses and the babies.*

*(10) She will take care to write down the names of the Ladies who bring her the money, and the amount she receives, together with the date and the year, in order to give an account of it to the Lady who is Treasurer at the Hôtel-Dieu, when this is requested of her.*

*(11) When there are collection boxes in the church of Notre-Dame for the devastated regions, and this need no longer exists, they are left there only for the babies. The Sisters will have the keys to them and will be careful to empty them at least every week and the evening of major holy days. They will also write a report to be placed conscientiously in the hands of the same Lady named for this purpose.*

*(12) In addition to the usual days, they will receive Holy Communion on the Saturday of the Ember Days to join their prayers and intentions to those of the Ladies of Charity, who do the same at the church of Notre-Dame to ask God for the graces necessary for those who are receiving Holy Orders that same day. They will also receive Communion every first Saturday of the month to commend themselves to the Blessed Virgin.*

*And, since their duties usually take up only part of the day, they will endeavor to use the rest of the time doing some work to earn part of their living, either sewing, spinning, or making jelly to be sold, and, above all, observing carefully all the Regulations and practices that should be observed in the house of the Superioress, except what concerns rising at four o'clock, when each one has to take her turn at night looking after the children the commissioners bring in.*

**PARTICULAR RULES TO BE OBSERVED  
BY THE SISTERS WITH THE FOUNDLINGS  
IN ADDITION TO THOSE COMMON TO THEIR WHOLE COMMUNITY<sup>59</sup>**

*(1) The Daughters of Charity who work in the Foundling Hospital will often reflect on the great happiness they have of being called by God for such a holy and divine ministry, since it aims to cooperate with God to save the life of the body and of the soul of these poor innocents who, without their help, might die on the street and without Baptism; or, should they escape this, might live a bad life and come perhaps to an unfortunate end for lack of a good upbringing and instruction.*

*(2) They will be convinced that the more lofty and holy their vocation, the more humility and perfection they must have, and if the thought occurs to them that the tasks are too lowly and painful, they will reflect that their ministry is to serve the Infant Jesus in the person of each baby they are raising, and in this they have the honor of doing what the Blessed Virgin did to her dear Son, since He affirms that the service rendered to the least of His people is rendered to Himself. In accordance with that, they will do their utmost to raise these poor children with as much attention and respect as if it were to the very person of Our Lord.*

*(3) And so that they might better and more easily carry out their ministry, which is to serve and assist these poor little creatures corporally and spiritually, they will be very exact in observing their Regulations and all the orders given them by their Superioress or by the Sister Servant. They will even beware of doing anything contrary to their intention, calling to mind that the life and death, the salvation and loss of these poor children depend on the good or the bad upbringing they give them and that they cannot raise them well if they do not do what they are instructed to do, either verbally or in writing, especially what is contained in the following articles.*

*(4) As soon as they are named to serve these infants, they will accept and carry out this ministry with as much respect and devotion as if an angel commanded them to do so on the part of God, as happened to Saint Joseph who was told to take the Infant Jesus to Egypt and raise Him there.*

*(5) Before beginning to exercise their ministry with these poor children, they will offer them and their actions to God, asking for the grace to carry out this duty well. In this, they will endeavor to have the same sentiments that Our Lady had in serving her dear Son in His infancy.*

*(6) When they are assigned to raise the babies who have recently been weaned, up to around four years of age, and who, consequently have greater need to be served than the others, they will do this with more special attention, making it a matter of conscience to fail in the slightest of their duties toward them, especially with regard to the youngest and most delicate among them.*

(7) *The order and manner they will observe for the upbringing of these little ones will be to awaken them at seven o'clock at the earliest and, while they are dressing them, to have them make the Sign of the Cross, join their hands, give their heart to God, and pronounce the names of Jesus and Mary, even those who can only babble.*

(8) *As soon as they are dressed, they will give them holy water or have them take some, make the Sign of the Cross again, and have five or six at a time say the Pater Noster and the Ave Maria then the other customary short prayers, particularly for benefactors.*

(9) *Around eight o'clock at the latest they will give them their breakfast, then let them play in the courtyard or in the room, depending on the weather.*

(10) *At half past ten, they will take them all together to dinner in their little dining room, where they will all be seated, boys at one table and girls at another, unless they have them eat in their room in winter. When the soup is about to be served, one of them, who has been taught to do so, will recite aloud grace before meals, and a Sister will have them join their hands at the same time.*

(11) *As soon as they have eaten dinner, they will have all of them say aloud: AThank you very much, my God,@ and immediately the same boy will say, also aloud, AWe give you thanks, etc.,@ then Retribuere for benefactors. After that, they will be sent to play again.*

(12) *At one in the afternoon they will be put to bed for a nap, without undressing them completely. As they awaken, they will get them up and let them play for a while, then have a snack.*

(13) *Supper will be served to them at five o'clock in summer and half past four in winter, then they will be allowed to play until bedtime, which is seven o'clock in summer and half past six in winter, beginning with the youngest and most delicate and taking care to separate the beds of the boys from those of the girls, even if they are only three or four years of age.*

(14) *When they are putting them to bed, they will have them make the Sign of the Cross, join their hands, and pronounce the names of Jesus and Mary; then they will be given holy water, or will take it themselves.*

(15) *On Sundays and feast days they will take them to the Mass that is said in the hospital, taking care to place the boys on one side and the girls on the other, have them join their hands and to pray according to their ability.*

(16) *When they are about five years old, they will begin to teach them the alphabet, and even the catechism, partly in the morning, partly in the afternoon; then they will let them play again. All will be done according to the instructions and manner the Superioress has prescribed, without adding, omitting, or changing anything of what she has ordered.*

(17) *They will be very careful to keep them neat and clean and to wash their diapers every day at the appointed time, which is usually two o'clock. They will, however, beware of taking pleasure in making them look pretty, curling their hair, or putting little trinkets on them to make them look nicer than the others. All that only leads them to vanity, especially the girls, who in the end will become conceited little creatures, and therefore less chaste.*

(18) *To accustom them to preserve both purity and their health, they will not allow them to get up naked, or even to walk barefoot, or to keep their head uncovered, even refraining from combing their hair in open places, such as the courtyard or in their room by the open windows. They will beware also not to allow them to linger too long by the fire in winter, but rather have the little ones play some game requiring exercise to keep them warm, although it may be necessary from time to time to have them get close to the fire. They will also keep them from*

*sleeping in the sun or in any unhealthy place.*

*(19) They will make sure, even from the time they are very little, that they do not pick up any bad habits, such as stubbornness, fighting, lying, becoming fond of delicacies, undressing themselves, or doing other similar foolish things, especially among boys and girls, for even if they do not sin in all that because they have not yet reached the use of reason, they are, nevertheless, great tendencies to offend God as soon as they do reach that age. Therefore, they will not even permit boys and girls to play together but endeavor to help them to practice the contrary virtues, giving them for this purpose a great fear of hell and a great desire for paradise. And, in order to help them to do better what they are supposed to do, the Sisters in charge of them will keep an eye on each of the ones in her group from time to time, or at least a Sister appointed for that should be present when they play together or on other occasions.*

*(20) They will treat them gently; still, they will scold them, if necessary, but without anger, trying to correct them more by words than by striking them, sometimes threatening them with some punishment if they fall back, sometimes promising them a reward if they do better, or showing by their stern expression that they are annoyed with them without saying a word, or encouraging them warmly with some sympathetic word, or having them do some slight penance, such as kissing the floor or wearing something that makes them ashamed, or depriving them of some little tidbit or trinket, and similar things. Above all they will endeavor to make them capable of mending their ways by reasoning with them and helping them to recognize their fault. When, however, they become incorrigible and the Sisters judge it necessary to give them a more severe punishment, they will inform the Sister Servant who will administer the whipping herself or ask them to give it to them. This must always be done without anger, and for this reason the punishment must be postponed until some time after their fault has been known. Above all, they will take great care not to strike them on the head, especially the youngest children. It will sometimes be well to appoint certain persons to ask their pardon when they are about to give them the whipping; this may be done if the Sister Servant deems it appropriate.*

*(21) They will also take great care to nurse them when they are ill, treating them with gentleness and kindness. In everything they will have a good store of patience because, since these little ones do not yet have the use of reason, they are more difficult to care for than adults. Still, the Sisters should not be so easygoing and compliant that this prevents them from giving them the assistance they require. In line with that, they will pay no heed when they refuse to take food or medicines but oblige them to take them and not wait until they become seriously ill.*

*(22) And although they must be careful to serve and think kindly of these poor little ones at all times, they will, nevertheless be especially conscientious about giving them what they need, even changing them, particularly when they are sick. To facilitate this work, they will make use of some good thought, such as recalling how Our Lord once asked the Samaritan woman for something to drink and that He does likewise in their regard by the mouths of these innocents; in putting them back to bed afterward, they can make an act of adoration or love of God, or some other according to their devotion.*

*(23) Those whose special duty is the care of the sick children will also take special care of their clothing, wrapping it all up so that nothing gets lost or mixed up with the clothing of the others.*

*(24) They will pay particular attention to preserving uniformity and equality with regard to the children so that, as far as possible, none of them has more than another, is better clothed, given better bedding, or caressed more than the others, especially in their presence. And to prevent*

*outsiders from giving something to some and not to the others, the Sister Servant will accept, in their presence, what they would like to give and will distribute it with their consent to all the children present. It is unbelievable how envy torments those poor innocents when they see others better treated than they are; it is even at times a cause of their death. This article does not intend to forbid sometimes giving a little treat to a certain child who is sick or in similar need, and the Sister Servant deems it appropriate.*

*(25) Above all, they will give good example and make it a matter of conscience to commit the slightest fault in their presence, keeping in mind that Our Lord says that whoever scandalizes the least of these little ones deserves to be cast into the sea with a millstone around the neck.*

*(26) The Sisters appointed to put the children to work, both boys as well as girls, will make very sure that they use their time well, sometimes working along with them, sometimes seeing how they go about it, sometimes praising and rewarding those who do their chores well, sometimes scolding and threatening those who do their work poorly.*

*(27) When they take them to the chapel for Mass, catechism, or prayers in common, each Sister will watch her group to prevent any unseemly words or behavior on the way, or any irreverence once they are there. For this purpose, they will insist that they kneel down to pray, saying their rosary or reading their prayer book, putting them in front of them so they can watch them more closely, and if they notice that they are misbehaving, they will remind them of their duty and, if advisable and the Sister Servant allows it, will punish them when they get home, but discreetly and not in anger. If they are not going to Mass, they will have them recite their rosary aloud in three parts, namely, one decade after morning prayers, two decades after grace at dinner, and another two after grace at supper.*

*(28) The Sisters in charge of the older children, particularly from nine to twelve years of age, will see to it that the schedule set up for them is observed, having them rise at five o'clock in summer and half past five in winter, and when it is time for them to get up, the Sisters whose duty it is will be in their room to help them dress and comb their hair, if need be, and have them go to the chapel for prayers and recite their lessons afterward. Then they will give them something to do, which, for the boys is usually knitting and for the girls lacemaking. Breakfast will be brought to them at eight o'clock, after which they will return to their work until dinner time, except the boys who are learning to write, who will apply themselves to this for an hour after lunch. They will not eat until the younger children have eaten, that is, the girls in the Sisters' refectory and the boys in the room where they are working, everyone at the same time. After dinner, the children will play together for a short time, then go back to work until supper, except that the boys will do their writing again from two until three, then go back to their work.*

*(29) When they finish supper, they will be put to work again, but they can still have a little recreation; then they will all go to public prayers in the chapel, after which they will get ready for bed, making their little devotions before lying down, and everyone will be in bed by nine o'clock.*

*(30) Should it happen that there are not enough wet nurses, or because of some other necessity they might have to feed the babies who are still at the breast, they will be very careful about this, especially in seeing that they drink cow's milk. In all that they will follow the order set up and the manner customary in the hospital, making it a matter of conscience to omit the slightest detail of the service they should render them in this great need.*

*(31) They will not communicate with the wet nurses, unless they are obliged to do so through obedience or because of their duties, and then they will endeavor to have them benefit by some*

*good word of devotion, and especially by their good example. They will refrain above all from saying or doing anything in their presence that might scandalize them ever so little, not even permitting, if possible, that the other Sisters give them any reason for disedification. Should that happen, or if there is any trouble among the wet nurses, they will not fail to inform the Sister Servant.*

*(32) They will avoid idleness and laziness as the mother of all vices, and when their duties give them any respite, they will work at sewing or some similar occupation, but in such a way that they recall from time to time the presence of God and offer Him their actions, reflecting on the resolution taken at morning prayer.*

*(33) They will show great respect and obedience to the Sister Servant as to the Superioress--or rather as to God, since it is Divine Providence who has called them to this office.*

*(34) The Sisters who have other assignments, such as the kitchen, storeroom, bakery, or door, will reflect that they have no less merit in fulfilling their duties than if they were looking after the children in their rooms or elsewhere, but this is understood if they do their duty well and are faithful to keeping the rules of their offices.*

*(35) Both will endeavor to live in great innocence, simplicity, and humility, seeing that they are obliged to imitate these little children who are innocent, simple, humble, and so closely united by friendship. In line with that, they will beware of ever harboring a single thought of envy, murmuring, pride, or ambition in their hearts. In everything, they will make it a matter of conscience to take any notice of a temptation that might lead them to want a change of ministry, companions, or house, remaining indifferent to all that and allowing themselves to be guided by their Superioress and Sister Servants like unweaned infants with their mother who nurses them. In so doing, they may rest assured that Our Lord will give them the reward He promises to all those who become like these babies, and who has said *ALet the little children come to me and do not prevent them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, and if you do not become like these little children, you will not enter it.*@*

### ***DUTIES OF THE SISTER SERVANT AT THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL***

*(1) It is the responsibility of the Sister Servant of the Foundlings to see that the Sisters and the wet nurses do their duties well and that the children are raised and assisted, corporally and spiritually, in the way the Rules prescribe.*

*(2) She will not take in any child brought by the commissioners and other officers, before receiving the report made of him, and will inform the Superioress of this report, along with the others she has. As soon as the child is in the hospital, she will visit him, put away his little articles of clothing, and even the little note and anything else she finds on him. She will keep a record of these to serve as some sign to identify him, in case of need. She will have him given some milk or something else, depending on his age and what she thinks he needs, and will have him baptized conditionally without delay, even though there may be a note saying he has already been baptized. She will write on the back of the report his baptismal name, with whatever surname she gives him, together with the day, the year, and the age given in the report, along with any other detail, if necessary. When she sees that he is in the proper condition, she will give*

him to a wet nurse to be fed and raised, if he is not already weaned, in which case she will place him with others of this sort.

(3) Should it happen that a number of unweaned infants are brought in within a period of a few days, and there are not enough wet nurses to breast-feed them, she will see that they are fed with cow's milk by the Sisters appointed to do so, and she herself will do whatever she can to help. Meanwhile, she will find out from the Superioress whether some of them should be farmed out to be nursed either in the country or in the town, and will follow the instructions given her in this regard.

(4) She will be very meticulous in choosing carefully the wet nurses she gives them, and under no circumstance whatsoever will she accept anyone who does not have the requisite qualifications and whom the Superioress has not approved, above all if a baby is to be given to her to be nursed outside the hospital.

(5) As soon as she has hired any new wet nurses for the hospital, she will take care to see if they know all that a good Christian must believe and do in order to be saved. She will prepare them to make a general confession and even recommend them to the confessor of the house, so that they will be thoroughly instructed and prepared for all these duties.

(6) She will strongly impress on them the care and charity with which they are to look after these little innocents, especially that they should never strike them, nor curse them, nor let them sleep with her at night if they are not yet fifteen months old, nor nurse them when she is angry. In addition, she should make the Sign of the Cross on them at least morning and evening, sprinkling them with holy water. When they begin to babble, she will help them to pronounce the names of Jesus and Mary, and never teach them any offensive words.

(7) She will be exact in managing the goods of these poor little creatures and not spend too much money, acting, nevertheless, in such a way as to provide sufficiently for their needs, but in the manner poor mothers should do.

(8) She will be mindful to have the children learn some little craft when they are old enough and capable enough to do so, which is usually around five or six years of age at least--knitting for the boys, and lacemaking or weaving for the girls, as well as learning to write, at least for the boys. She will give them two Sisters, one to work with the boys, and the other with the girls. By the same token, they will see to the rest of their behavior, both for body and soul, especially having them pray, use their time well, learn how to work with thread, silk, and linen, and other similar things. In addition, she will not fail to visit them from time to time to encourage them in their duty.

(9) She will take care to buy what is needed to give the children some handwork, sell what they make, and pay the merchants who have put them to work, and will give an account of all that to the treasury office of the Ladies assigned to the foundlings.

(10) She will see that the boys are separated from the girls, at least by the time they reach six or seven years of age, depending on their capacity and intelligence. The boys will be placed apart in the quarters reserved for them, so that they may not be able to communicate with the girls. As for boys of five or six and under, who, through necessity or by reason of their young age are not ready to remain with the older boys, she can continue to leave them in the area for girls of the same age, but on condition that they always be kept apart, not only at table or in bed, but even in separate bedrooms, if possible, allowing no opportunities, especially for the older boys, to encounter the girls.

(11) If there are older girls, particularly if they are over fifteen years of age, she will be very

*careful to provide them with a steady occupation, for fear that laziness might be damaging to them, giving the heavy work to those she judges suitable. If she finds any who are capable of making their prayer, she will ask the Superioress whether it might not be advisable to form them to do so and to have them rise at four o'clock. Above all, she will do her utmost to prevent anything that would in the slightest way be detrimental to their chastity, such as communication with the boys, the wet nurses, or outsiders; in a word, keeping a tight hold on them, and requesting the Superioress to find some occupation for them, unless they are suited for working as maids, in which case they will inform the Superioress of this to see if they should be kept any longer.*

*(12) As for the working boys, she will give instructions that care be taken to confine them to their own quarters, permitting them to leave only by her order and when they are notified to go to the chapel. In that case she will see to it that they do not wander off when coming or going, and that once they are there they are always restricted to the assigned place, without being able to talk to the girls. And to better avoid the inconveniences that might arise from communication between the sexes, as soon as she sees that they have reached the age of twelve, she will have them receive some training or placed in a trade. To that effect she will request the Superioress to find them some employment as soon as possible.*

*(13) She will also be very careful that the wet nurses do not associate unnecessarily with the older boys and girls and even with the Sisters, preventing them above all from conversing about worldly matters, which are capable of upsetting them, causing them aversion, or diverting them from their vocation.*

*(14) She will make sure that no sick children are left in the room where there are healthy ones but will have them placed in another intended only for that, and will carefully recommend to the Sister assigned to look after the sick children to take good care of them.*

*(15) When there is smallpox in the hospital, she will be careful to prepare two rooms, one for the children suspected of having this illness and where they may be given the necessary remedies; the other, where they are taken as soon as it [smallpox] begins to appear. She will give instructions that those who are well have no contact with the sick ones or, if possible, with the Sisters who are nursing them.*

*(16) In all these things she will see that each member of her community acquits herself faithfully of her duty toward God, particularly the wet nurses and the children who have reached the age of receiving Communion. She will try to prepare them for Communion, at least on the principal feasts of the year, and the nurses once a month. As for the others who do not yet receive Communion, she will have them go to confession, at least on solemn feasts, namely, those who are over seven years of age, and those who are only five or six, simply at Easter, even if all she can do is to teach them how to make a good confession.*

*(17) And so that both are prepared properly to receive these two sacraments, she will see that the catechism lessons given by the Sisters are geared mainly to these two points. In order to get them to become more attached to them, will speak to them often of the great happiness of being in the grace of God and the great misfortune of being in mortal sin, of which it takes only one to be damned, and that by means of good confessions and Communions, this evil is avoided and friendship with God is acquired. In addition, they will not fail to have read in the chapel, at two o'clock every Sunday and on solemn feast days, the Lives of the Saints or some other suitable book. The whole community will be present for this, having previously chanted the litany of the Blessed Virgin or of Jesus, and, after the reading, the Commandments of God and of the Church.*

*If there is an exhortation, they will omit the reading.*

*(18) If she cannot attend to her duty, especially if she has to go into the city, she will recommend carefully to the Sister given her as Assistant to fill in for her in her absence, and particularly to see that the children are served exactly at the appointed times.*

*(19) She will beware of introducing any innovations, or of changing or doing away with anything in the way things are managed, either in spiritual or temporal matters. If something extraordinary arises, she will tell the Superioress of the Company and follow her instructions regarding it. If she cannot speak with her, and the matter cannot be postponed without danger, in that case she will do what she judges before God to be most advisable, provided she is reasonably certain that the Superioress would agree to it if she were asked right now, and she will inform her of what action she took.*

*(20) After all, she will be convinced that all means will serve very little to guide this little flock well, if God does not grant her His grace for it, and He will not grant it if she does not ask it of Him often with the requisite dispositions, among others mistrust of self while trusting in Divine Providence and the goodness of God, humility, and good example, being the first to practice what she orders others to do.*

*Jesu mitis et humilis corde, miserere nobis.*

#### **PARTICULAR RULES FOR THE SISTERS WHO MINISTER TO THE GALLEY CONVICTS<sup>60</sup>**

*(1) Just as the ministry of the Sisters of the Charity with the galley convicts is one of the most difficult and dangerous they can have, because of the management of money involved as well as the kind of persons to be visited there, it is also one of the most meritorious and pleasing to God when carried out properly, because of what is practiced there to a high degree: the corporal and spiritual works of mercy for persons who are so wretched in body and soul that it is almost beyond imagining. That is why those who are called by God to this holy ministry must, on the one hand, endeavor to make themselves worthy of it by the practice of the requisite virtues and by an exact observance of their Rules, and, on the other, encourage one another and have great confidence in Our Lord Jesus Christ, keeping in mind that, by assisting those poor persons, they will render Him a service as pleasing or more pleasing to Him than if it were done to His own person. Consequently, He will not fail to give them as a reward the graces needed to overcome all the difficulties they might encounter there, in addition to the rich crown He reserves for them in heaven.*

*(2) Their service consists in ministering to the poor convicts detained in Paris, corporally and spiritually, in sickness and in health, until they leave to be taken to the galleys. And since the Rules of the Sisters in parishes contain many pieces of advice that should also be followed by the Sisters who serve the galley convicts, particularly in what concerns those who are ill, they will adapt to them as much as possible and will, in addition, observe the following articles:*

*(3) With regard to the corporal assistance of those poor people, they will prepare their food at home every day, personally buying the meat and other things prescribed for them to eat, and bring them once a day at the exact time their usual modest fare, which should suffice for their dinner and supper. If the cooking pot is too heavy they will get the guards to help them.*

(4) *They will make it a point to bring them a change of linen every Saturday and have the soiled linen washed. At that time they will remember to renew interiorly the spirit of purity and modesty in order to protect themselves against the usual insolence of such persons in these circumstances.*

(5) *When the men are ill, the Sisters will take as much or even greater care than with persons in the parishes, taking the proper time to go to visit them, bringing them the food they need for their dinner and supper, and medicines when they require them. Above all, they will give them or obtain for them that spiritual assistance which consists in consoling, encouraging, and instructing them in things necessary for salvation, especially how to make a good general confession and to go to confession and Communion in due time. For those on the point of dying, they will see that they are given Extreme Unction, and when they die, they will have them wrapped in a shroud and attend to their burial. Should they recover, they will encourage them to lead a good life in the future.*

(6) *When the chain gang is ready to leave, they will make sure they have shirts and other linen; once it has left, they will empty and freshen their straw mattresses and do a thorough cleaning of the hall where they were detained.*

(7) *And although they should always show great modesty and reserve at all times, they will strive, nevertheless, to pay special attention to this when they are in their hall to render them some service, pretending not to hear their taunts, unless they are absolutely insolent, in which case they must reply seriously to them or leave.*

(8) *And, although it is very difficult to prevent the men from making these gross insolent remarks to them--and this even when they are doing more good for them--the Sisters will not fail to try to do so by showing great patience and, at the same time, by praying for them, as Saint Stephen did for those who stoned him. Above all, they will beware of giving them the slightest reason to complain about them, and to this effect will not speak to them rudely, or reproach them for the complaints they received from them. Neither will they answer them back to justify themselves when they accuse them falsely; on the contrary, they will take pains not to say a word to them without great necessity and to correct them gently and compassionately, in view of the pitiful state they are usually in, both of body and soul, and because with all that they are still members of Him who made Himself a slave to ransom all of us from the slavery of the demon.*

(9) *And inasmuch as experience has shown that the presence of one of the Ladies goes a long way in preventing such insolent remarks, they will do all they can to find a means discreetly to have some of them come there from time to time to be present while they are serving the men. And if this act of charity begins to grow cold, they will take care to notify their Superioress, who will discuss with the Superior what should be done in order to revive those holy visits.*

(10) *When they go to serve the men, they will be extremely careful that no persons suspected of being disreputable or of giving bad advice go in with them. To avoid that, they will never allow anyone to enter except persons who they are sure are there to be of service to them rather than to do them harm.*

(11) *They will never become involved in carrying any letters or accepting any errand for them, unless it concerns their salvation and on condition that this is clear to them and that the Sister Servant judges it to be the case. If, however, she thinks before God that it is necessary for them to take some messages for their temporal welfare, it will be done only after asking and receiving the consent of the Superior, or at least of their Superioress, who will not grant it without making very certain that there is no danger in allowing it.*

*(12) To avoid serious inconveniences that might arise and to forestall any suspicions people might have about them with regard to the way they get along with the convicts, they will refrain from having any private conversations with them. Neither will they give credence to what they tell them, not even when their relatives and friends speak with them about helping them to get out of there, unless they have sought the advice of the Superioress and obtained her permission to act otherwise, if there appears to be a great need and the detainee seems innocent.*

*(13) They will likewise be very careful to avoid any complicity with the guards of the convicts and not allow any of them to enter their rooms, except at the time they come to pick up the cooking pot when it is too heavy. If they need to say something, apart from this instance, it will be done at the door at the bottom of the steps; for this purpose they will have a bell at their window that the men will ring from the street if they want to speak to the Sisters.*

*(14) They will be careful to manage well the property of the poor convicts, refrain from appropriating any of their food for themselves, either directly or indirectly, and not favor the merchants who supply them to the detriment of those poor men.*

*(15) The Sister responsible for receipts and expenditures will keep a list of them in order to give an account of them when she is required by those whose business it is. If she receives a very large sum of money, she will inform the Superioress, who will tell her what she thinks advisable to do to prevent it from being lost and to spend it wisely.*

*(16) If some extraordinary expenditure has to be made for the men, she will ask the advice, not only of the Sister Servant, but also of the Superioress, who, depending on the need or great usefulness she sees in it, will tell her to ask permission of the Deputy of the Attorney General, or to act otherwise if it is expedient.*

*(17) Above all, they will be sure to notify the Superioress in good time so that she may find out from the Superior whether there are priests to give the mission to the convicts, when the chain gang has been formed.*

*(18) And so that they may be better able to put all this advice into practice, and that the charity they do in this place may be for the greater glory of God, their own perfection, and the salvation of those poor afflicted men, they will offer special prayers several times a day to ask the Holy Spirit to purify their thoughts, words, and actions so well--especially in temptations of impurity, if they have any--that they may be like sunlight, which passes constantly over filth without being in the least soiled itself. After that, they must trust that God will answer their prayers as He did for the three children in the fiery furnace, since it is only through charity and obedience that they undertake this ministry.*

## **150. - ACT OF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AND APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS**

(August 8, 1655)

We, Vincent de Paul, General of the Congregation of the Mission, Superior and Director of the Confraternity of Servants of the Poor of the Charity, make known that, it having pleased God to make use of the Congregation of the Mission to establish Confraternities of Charity in several places in this kingdom, in Italy, and in Savoy, by authority of Our Holy Father the Pope, of our Archbishops, and of the Local Ordinaries, for the assistance of the sick poor; and experience having shown that the Ladies who compose the Confraternity in the parishes of the city of Paris were unable to render the necessary assistance themselves, such as bringing them their food,

making their beds, preparing and administering remedies, etc., a certain number of unmarried women and widows joined the Confraternity to supply for the lack of assistance the Ladies themselves were unable to give the patients.

These unmarried women and widows were brought to live together under the direction of Mlle. Louise de Marillac, widow of the late M. Le Gras, Secretary of the late Queen, mother of King Louis XIII, with certain Rules tending to help them to live a good life and to assist the sick poor corporally and spiritually, with the result that it pleased His Divine Goodness to bless this modest work of His hands, the late Archbishop of Paris, Jean-François de Gondi to approve it, and Cardinal de Retz, his Coadjutor at the time, to give his approval, which he afterward repeated, as is clear from the letters patent he has given for this purpose, whereby he approves the Confraternity and its Rules and has established us for our lifetime, and the Superiors General of the Mission who will succeed us, as the Superiors and Directors of the Confraternity of Servants of the Poor of the Charity.

And although it pleased God to institute the Confraternity in this city of Paris about twenty-five years ago, no Act of Establishment was drawn up because we judged it advisable to see beforehand that the Rules of the Confraternity were fully observed, and that its leadership was as might have been desired by the mercy of God; and since, on the other hand, we are on the point of sending several of the unmarried women and widows into new establishments both in this kingdom and in that of Poland, we have judged it necessary at present to make the Act of Establishment. For this purpose, we have convoked the Sisters who are in this city and were at the assembly held at their Community house in this city, where we took the names of those who have already been received and who desire to persevere in it. This took place after the Rules were read to them and the approval given, as is mentioned above.

When this was done, we proceeded to the appointment of officers, and, although it is stated that this should take place by the plurality of votes; nevertheless, because the first time it is up to the one who establishes the Confraternity to appoint the officers, we named the following:

First, we asked Mlle. de Marillac to continue for life in the office of Superioress and Directress of the Confraternity, as she has been doing very successfully, by the mercy of God, since the establishment of this Confraternity until the present. For the other three officers, we named Julienne Loret, First Assistant;<sup>1</sup> Mathurine Guérin,<sup>2</sup> Second Assistant and Treasurer; and Jeanne Gressier,<sup>3</sup> Bursar. Having done this, we urged the unmarried women and widows of the Confraternity to thank God for their vocation, to live it well, and to be exact in the observance of the Rules and in their ministries. They all promised to do so, by the grace of Our Lord.

In testimony whereof, we have signed the present Act in our own hand and have had the seal of our Congregation affixed to it. Also signing it were the said Demoiselle, the other officers, and a few of the oldest Sisters who were able to do so.

Drawn up in the said house of the Charity in Paris, August 8, 1655.<sup>4</sup>

LOUISE DE MARILLAC    MATHURINE GUÉRIN

JEANNE GRESSIER    JULIENNE LORET

BARBE BAILLY (GENEVIÈVE DOINEL)G    MARIE JOLY    FRANÇOISE NORET

*BARBE FOUINS*    GENEVIÈVE POISSON    (ANTOINETTE LABILLE)+

(JEANNE GOIRAR) + ANNE HARDEMONT

MARIE CRESTÉ GENEVIÈVE CAILLOU JEANNE BAPTISTE

(VINCENTE AUCHY) V TOUSSAINTE DAVID ANNE ROSE

(JEANNE LUCE) L ANDRÉE MARÉCHAL (FRANÇOISE FANCHON) F  
MADELEINE RAPORTEBLED ÉTIENNETTE DUPUIS PHILIPPE BAILLY

FRANÇOISE (CABRY) (LOUISE DALBEL) O (RENÉE PESCHELOCHE) R

MARIE ROBIDÉ GABRIELLE CABARET AVOIE<sup>5</sup> VIGNERON

MARGUERITE CHÉTIF

(MARGUERITE MÉNAGE) + (MARIE CUNY) + MADELEINE GARNIER

GENEVIÈVE GAUTIER (FRANÇOISE GESSEAUME) + MADELEINE MÉNAGE

(JEANNE LEMERET) + MARIE (LA RUELLE) FRANÇOISE LE ROSEAU  
VINCENT DEPAUL

These signatures are followed by the names of all the other Sisters who had been received from the time of the institution of the Confraternity and Society until today, August 8, 1655: Jeanne Prévost (known as Christine), Gillette Joly, Louise Ganset, Cécile Angiboust, Jeanne Lepeintre, Henriette Gesseaume, Marie-Marthe Trumeau, Claude Carré, Marie Le Soin, Nicole Georget, Louise-Christine Rideau, Jeanne de Saint-Benoît, Catherine de Gesse, Anne Vallin, Barbe Angiboust, Jeanne Coignart, Marguerite Le Soin, Perrette Chefdeville, Jeanne Paon, Françoise Carcireux, Jeanne de Saint-Albin, Jeanne Huiot, Charlotte Royer, Marguerite Moreau, Madeleine Drugeon, Françoise Douelle, Marguerite Laval, Madeleine Riquet, Marthe Baudoin, Jeanne Goirard, Charlotte Prou, Anne Véron, Catherine Pain d'Avoine, Nicole Bildet, Françoise Goupil, Barbe, Claude Chantereau, Claude Laurent, Toussainte (Allou), Marie Navain, Françoise Ménage, Jeanne Henault, Laurence Dubois, Jeanne Huot, Perrine de Bouhery, Nicole Haran, Élisabeth Jousteau, Nicole Fouillet, Marie Gaudoin, Marie Poulet, Nicole-Colette Boquet, Marguerite Menessier, Michèle Lecontre, Étienne Massé, Anne Tacaille, Catherine Baucher, Anne de Vaux, Claude Tacaille, Jeanne Bonvilliers, Anne Lelièvre, Jeanne-Marie Boule, Suzanne, Charlotte Moreau, Marie Quinville, Jeanne Turet, Jeanne Labiche, Geneviève Vigneron, Antoinette Leroy, Marie Railleard, Claire Jaudoin, Françoise Bouhery, Radegonde Lenfantin, Claude La Mucette, Marie Rat, Julienne Allot, Mauricette Villain, Claude Thibault, Louise Chomon, Louise Corbe, Claude Parcollet, Françoise Gouin, Claude Blanchard, Marie Allet, Pétronille Gillot, Anne Bocheron, Anne Levies, Antoinette Richevillain, Jeanne La Mère, Mathurine Brillehaut, Jeanne de Vaux, Marie Damé, Sulpice Dubois, Élisabeth Morancy, Marie Papillon, Marie Petit, Michèle Métayer, Marie Roger, Jeanne Blot, Clémence. . . ., Marguerite. . . ., . . . . de Fimes.<sup>6</sup>

## **151. - AUTHORIZATION FOR SISTERS TO TRAVEL TO ARRAS**

(August 30, 1656)

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Director of the Confraternity and Society of the Daughters of Charity and Servants of the Sick Poor established in the parishes of this city of Paris, to our very dearly beloved Sisters in Jesus Christ Our Savior, Marguerite Chétif and Radegonde Lenfantin,<sup>1</sup> Sisters of the Confraternity and Society of the Charity, greetings in the love of Our Lord.

His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Bishop-elect of Arras<sup>2</sup> and some devout persons of rank of the city, together with the Ladies who are officers of the Company of the Charity of Paris, did us the honor of asking us for two Sisters of the Society to assist the sick poor of the town of Arras for at least one year. We desire to accede to the request of such a Prelate and the holy desires of so many charitable persons and, by the same token, to contribute in some way to the accomplishment of such a devout intention. Furthermore, being well informed of your uprightness, zeal, ability, and fidelity in what concerns the service of those who are poor and the observance of your Rules, we have assigned and sent you, and by these present letters do assign and send you for the aforesaid purpose, instructing you to go as soon as possible to the town of Arras to receive there the orders that the Bishop and others concerned will give you.

You will live there in the way in which you are accustomed to live in other places where you have been working by our mandate for the same purpose, under the spiritual direction of the priest we will indicate to you and in conformity with your Regulations, of which we have given you a copy so that you may act in accordance with them as far as the urgent needs of the sick will allow you to do. All this will be for as long as the persons on whom you depend will accept your modest service and as we deem it advisable. We ask God meanwhile to bless your journey, keep you always under His protection, and fill you with His graces and blessings in order to accomplish worthily all that has been and will be prescribed for you.

And in order to give greater credence and authority to all of the above, we have signed the present letters in our own hand, had them countersigned by our secretary, and had our regular seal affixed to them.

Paris, August 30, 1656

VINCENT DEPAUL,

*Unworthy Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission*

By order of Monsieur [Vincent].

DUCOURNAU

## **152. - LETTERS PATENT APPROVING THE COMPANY**

## OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

(November 1657)

Louis, by the grace of God King of France and of Navarre, to all present and to come, greetings.

Our very dearly beloved Vincent de Paul, priest and Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, has most humbly pointed out to us that, since one of the principal functions of the priests of the Congregation is to establish the Confraternity of Charity, instituted for the assistance of the sick poor in the places where they go to give missions and where this establishment is deemed useful, as is seen in the [Act of] Erection of the Congregation issued by Pope Urban VIII, of happy memory, and in the Rules of the Congregation approved by the late Archbishop of Paris,<sup>1</sup> as delegate of the Holy See for the approval of the Rules, the Congregation has established the Confraternity in our fine city of Paris and other places in the diocese, even in several other places and areas of our kingdom, for the assistance of the sick poor in those places.

The Confraternity is composed of wives, widows, and pious unmarried women, who attend to visiting and assisting the sick poor, giving them their food and medicine, and procuring spiritual assistance for those who are recovering so that they will live a good life, and for those who are near death so that they will die well. Experience has shown, however, that the society Ladies of the Confraternity found it difficult to carry the necessary food to the sick poor, make their beds, give them remedies, and, in general, to perform the other minor services they need. To provide for this, the Congregation of the Mission, on the advice of the Ladies of Charity, encouraged some unmarried women and widows of lowly condition to join the Confraternity to perform the most menial tasks that have to be done for the patients. To that end, it had them live together in a house destined for this purpose, under the direction of Mlle. Louise de Marillac, widow of the late M. Le Gras, Secretary of the late Queen, mother of the King our most honored Lord and father. She supports them by means of one thousand livres *tournois* income given them by the late King our most honored Lord and father, to be taken on our Gonesse property; in addition, from an annual, perpetual income of twelve hundred livres they have acquired on the Rouen coach line from the money coming from a donation that our dearly beloved cousin, the Duchesse d'Aiguillon, gave them; also, from what they can earn from their manual labor, when their ordinary duties leave them some leisure time; from the assistance devout persons contribute according to their resources, and from the alms that are given them. She instructs them in piety, prepares them to serve the sick poor well, to do bloodlettings and to administer medicines. Then she sends them to the parishes of our city of Paris, to some of the rural areas, and to those hospitals of our kingdom where they are requested, such as the ones in Nantes, Angers, Saint-Denis, and others. She recalls them and changes them from one place to another according to needs; engages them under her direction in several other good works, such as raising the foundlings of our city and faubourgs of Paris; assisting poor criminals condemned to labor on our galleys and sick prisoners in the Conciergerie of the Palais in our city of Paris; teaching poor girls, showing them how to pray and to read; in a word, in every good work in which they can be useful. All of this is done with the advice and direction of our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, and in conformity with the Regulations and Statutes he has drawn up for the good order and direction of the Confraternity.

It usually happens, however, that works involving the service of God die out with those who have begun them, unless there is some spiritual bond among the persons engaged in them. Unfortunately, the letters of erection of the Confraternity and Society and the letters approving

the Regulations and Statutes,<sup>2</sup> issued by our dear cousin Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris, then Coadjutor and Vicar-General of the archdiocese, and attached with our letters patent under the counterseal of our Chancery, addressed to our Parlement of Paris to be registered, were lost by the secretary of M. Méliand, our Attorney General<sup>3</sup> at the time. The latter had been entrusted with our letters patent to give his conclusions to them, but his secretary died, and no one has been able to find the approval attached to our letters, despite the search the petitioner had carried out among the papers of Méliand and his secretary, as well as in the office of the present Attorney General and his Assistants.

The petitioner was therefore obliged to turn to Cardinal de Retz that he might be pleased to approve once again the Confraternity and its Statutes and Regulations following the approval, and to empower the petitioner and his successors as Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission to direct the Confraternity under his authority and jurisdiction and those of his successors, the Archbishops of Paris. This he did in Rome on January 18, 1655, by other new letters<sup>4</sup> and once again erected the Assembly of the unmarried women and widows in the form of a Confraternity or distinct Society, under the title of *Servants of the Poor of the Charity*, ordaining that those women who had been admitted to it at that time, and those who would be admitted in the future, may freely do anything that could relieve and console the sick poor, on condition that the Confraternity will be, and will remain in perpetuity, under his authority and dependence and those of his successors, in the exact observance of the Statutes and Regulations that our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul presented to him, and according to which they had lived until then and had intended to live for the rest of their lives. By the letters of January 18, 1655, the Archbishop approved and authorized these Statutes and Regulations, once again entrusting and confiding the guidance and direction of the Society and Confraternity to the said dearly beloved Vincent de Paul for as long as it might please God to preserve his life, and, after him, to his successors as Superiors General, so that there is nothing more to be desired for the perfection of such a holy establishment except that it may please us to will to approve, confirm, and authorize it once again.

Be it known that, desiring to approve by our authority all the good works and establishments that are founded and will be founded in the future in the extent of our territories and regions under us for the glory of God, and particularly the establishment of that Society and Confraternity, which has had a beginning so filled with blessings and a development so abounding in charity with regard to the sick poor, poor foundlings, poor convicts, and little girls, and even the poor young women who present themselves to serve them, giving them a beautiful, holy opportunity to give themselves to God and to serve Him in the person of those who are poor; we, from our sure knowledge, full power, and royal authority, have by these present letters, signed in our own hand, once again accepted and approved, confirmed and authorized, and do accept, approve, confirm, and authorize, the establishment of the Confraternity, Community, and Society, under the title of *Servants of the Poor of the Charity*, instituted by our dearly beloved Vincent de Paul. We have stated, declared, ruled, and ordained, and do state, declare, rule, ordain, and will, and it so pleases us that the establishment of the Confraternity, Community, and Society remain firm and stable, now and for the future, and even that the unmarried women and widows who have been and will be admitted and accepted into the Society and Confraternity of Servants of the Sick Poor may go (with the permission of Vincent de Paul and, after him, of his successors as Superiors General of the Congregation and of their Superioress) and be welcome in all places, cities, towns, and villages of our kingdom and regions under our rule where they are

called. There they may be established and practice charitable acts similar to the ones they do in this city of Paris itself for poor orphans and the sick poor in houses, hospitals, and Hôtels-Dieu, where they will be deemed necessary for the education, feeding, and instruction of the orphans, and the service and assistance of the sick poor, by the Mayors, Municipal Magistrates, leading citizens, Syndics, Aldermen, Chief Magistrates, or local inhabitants, each in what concerns them.

And, to show how pleasing the establishment is to us, we have placed and do place under our safeguard and special protection and those of our successor Kings, this Confraternity, Community, and Society, its property, houses, lands, and revenues dependent on it, and generally everything that has been given to it as alms and will hereafter be given to it, very expressly prohibiting and forbidding all persons, whatever rank or position they hold, to conspire against or introduce anything that may be harmful to the Confraternity; to disturb and impede it or its men and women officers in carrying out their duties and the regulations and governance of matters pertaining to it and could pertain to it, to cause harm to it, or to malign it directly or indirectly, under pain of incurring our disfavor.

Likewise, we have also permitted and do permit the Confraternity, Community, and Society and its men and women officers to accept and receive from any persons whomsoever all gifts and legacies that may be made and given as alms by donation *inter vivos*, by will, or because of death, both movable and immovable, in any way or manner whatsoever, and to acquire moneys that may be given them (as they did around four years ago<sup>5</sup> for the house and place where they are living, situated in the faubourg Saint-Denis of this city of Paris), using the benefits and revenues for the needs of the Confraternity, Society, and Community. We have, as of now, written off and do write off forever as dedicated to God, the immovable goods given in this way in alms or acquired by the Confraternity, Society, and Community of the unmarried women and widows, Servants of the Poor, even the house acquired by them, as has been stated, by these present letters, with no need to obtain any others from us or from our successors as Kings, nor that they be obliged to pay us or our successors the Kings any taxes, sales, rights of repurchase, frank-fees, or new acquests; to hand over money in hand to someone appointed by the court; nor to pay any financial charges or compensation. By these present letters we have made and do make a gift of these to them.

We therefore give orders to our beloved, loyal gentlemen in charge of our Parlement courts and *Chambres des comptes* and all our other officials, judges, and officers concerned, to have these present letters read, published, and registered, and that their entire contents may be enjoyed and used by the Confraternity and Community, peacefully and fully, now and in perpetuity for the future, without causing, permitting, or allowing any trouble or hindrance to be done to them, all edicts, ordinances, commands, and prohibitions, decrees, letters, privileges, and other things contrary to this notwithstanding, from which and from the dispensations of their dispensations we have departed and do depart by these present letters.

And so that this matter may be firm and stable forever, we have had our seal placed and affixed to these present letters, safeguarding our rights in other matters and the right of others in all; for such is our pleasure.

Drawn up in Paris, in the month of November in the year of grace 1657, the fifteenth of our reign.

LOUIS

In the name of the King.

DE LOMÉНИЕ

**153. REGISTRATION BY THE PARLEMENT  
OF THE LETTERS PATENT OF NOVEMBER 1657**  
(December 16, 1658)

The Court having examined the letters patent given in Paris in the month of November 1657, signed *Louis*, and on the fold, *In the name of the King, De Loménie*, and sealed on a silk knotted cord with the great seal of green wax, letters obtained by the priest Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, by which and for the reasons contained therein the Lord accepted, approved, confirmed, and authorized the establishment of the Confraternity, Community, and Society under the title of *Servants of the Poor of the Charity*, instituted by the petitioner, it wills and it pleases it that it remain firm and stable now and for the future, and even that the unmarried women and widows who have been and will be admitted and accepted into the Society and Confraternity of Servants of the Sick Poor may go, with permission of the petitioner and, after him, of his successors as Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission, and of their Superioress, and be welcomed in all the places, cities, towns, and villages of the kingdom where they will be called, to be established and to practice there charitable acts similar to those they do in this city of Paris itself for poor orphans and the sick poor in houses, hospitals, and Hôtels-Dieu where they will be deemed necessary for the education, feeding, and instruction of the orphans, and the service and assistance of the sick poor, by the Mayors, Municipal Magistrates, leading citizens, Syndics, Aldermen, Chief Magistrates, or local inhabitants, each in what concerns them.

The Lord has placed under his protection and safeguard this Confraternity, Community, and Society, its property, houses, lands, and revenues dependent on it, and generally everything that has been and will hereafter be given as alms to it, with permission for its men and women officers to accept and acquire all sorts of movable and immovable goods, which the Lord has now written off as dedicated to God, as is stated at greater length in the letters addressed to the Court.

Having also examined the approval of Cardinal de Retz, Archbishop of Paris, of the Society and Community and its Statutes and Regulations, dated January 18, 1655, attached under the counterseal of the letters, the request presented to the Court by Vincent de Paul to have the letters registered, and the conclusions of the Attorney General of the King; having heard the report of Messire Charles Le Prévost, Councillor of the King in the Court, and having considered all of the above, the Court has ordered and does order that the letters be recorded by its Registrar, to be implemented according to their form and terms.

Drawn up in the Parlement, December 16, 1658.

DU TILLET

## **154. - AUTHORIZATION FOR SISTERS TO TRAVEL TO NARBONNE**

(September 12, 1659)

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and Director of the Confraternity and Community of Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Sick Poor of the parishes, established in this city of Paris and in other places in this kingdom, to our very dearly beloved daughters in Jesus Christ our Savior, Françoise Carcireux, Anne Denoual, and Marie Chesse,<sup>1</sup> Sisters of the Confraternity and Community of the Charity, greetings in the love of Our Lord.

Since His Excellency the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Archbishop of Narbonne<sup>2</sup> did us the honor of asking us for three Daughters of Charity of the Community to assist the sick poor of the town, we, desiring to comply with the order of the Archbishop and being well informed of your uprightness, zeal, ability, and fidelity in what concerns the service of poor persons and the observance of your Regulations, have assigned and sent you, and by these present letters do assign and send you for the aforesaid purpose, instructing you to go as soon as possible to the city of Narbonne to receive there the orders that the Archbishop will give you.

You will live there in the way in which you are accustomed to live in other places where you have been engaged for the same purpose and in conformity with your Regulations, We ask God meanwhile to bless your journey, keep you always under His protection, and fill you with His graces and blessings.

And in order to give greater credence and authority to all of the above, we have signed the present letters in our own hand, had them countersigned by our secretary, and have had our regular seal affixed to them.

Paris, September 12, 1659.

VINCENTIUS A PAULO, *Unworthy Superior General  
of the Congregation of the Mission*

A. PORTAIL, *Secretary*

## **155. - AUTHORIZATION FOR THREE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY TO TRAVEL TO POLAND**

(September 16, 1660)

Vincent de Paul, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and Director of the Confraternity of Daughters of Charity, Servants of the Poor, established in Paris, to our very dearly beloved Daughters in Jesus Christ Our Savior, Barbe Bailly, Catherine Baucher, and Catherine Bouy,<sup>1</sup> Sisters of the Confraternity of Charity, greetings in the love of Our Lord.

About eight years ago, at the urging of the Most Serene Queen of Poland, the Confraternity of the Daughters of Charity was established in the city of Warsaw for the relief of the sick poor, and several months ago Her Majesty did us the honor of asking for three of the Daughters. Wishing, therefore, to comply with the desires and orders of such a worthy Princess, we have sent you and by these present letters do send you to the said city to receive there the orders Her Majesty will give you and to observe there the manner of living to which you are accustomed in France, under the direction of M. Desdames, or someone else who will be Superior of the priests of our Congregation now in Poland, and under the good pleasure of the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend local Bishops. We exhort you to carry out your ministry well, especially by living in perfect union and observance of your Regulations. Hoping in the mercy of God in this regard, we entreat Him to preserve and

bless you.

In testimony whereof, we have signed the present letters in our own hand and have had the seal of our Congregation affixed to them.

At Saint-Lazare-lez-Paris, September 16, 1660.

VINCENT DEPAUL, *Unworthy Superior General  
of the Congregation of the Mission  
and Director of the Daughters of Charity*

In the name of the said Superior General.

THOMAS BERTHE

### 156. - COUNCIL OF JUNE 28, 1646

By the grace of God, dear Sisters,<sup>1</sup> the establishment of this little Council is a beginning of the order and foundation Providence is laying in your Company. We have met here to give some thought to certain needs--as is done in all well-regulated Communities--to tell you how you should act here, and to see how Mlle. Le Gras or the Sister Servant should conduct the meeting.

Don't begin it, Sisters, before asking the assistance of the Holy Spirit. For this purpose, it will be well for you to pray the antiphon *Veni Sancte*, with the versicle and prayer, and to close with an anthem to the Blessed Virgin. I think that *Sancta Maria, succurre miseris* or *Sub tuum praesidium* would be appropriate.

The second point is something about which you must be very careful: never plan ahead of time what you'll have to say here; don't be concerned about one point of view or the other; don't speak according to your feelings of like or dislike but allow the Spirit of God to act in you. Don't decide '>I'll say this or that,' but simply say what God inspires you to say. Do you know why, Sisters? Because, if your mind is made up on one point or another before coming here, it will no longer be free to judge clearly what will be proposed, and if it acts according to your likes or dislikes, Sisters, it won't be the Spirit of God but your own whims that will prevail during your little Council meetings. Oh! what a great loss that would be for you! Do you know what our Savior says about Council meetings to be held in Communities? '>If you are assembled in my name,' He says, '>I will be in your midst.'<sup>2</sup> Ah, Sisters! that's the truth, and since this is so, you must allow God to act, for you may be sure that He won't be present like a stone. He's there to bring light and grace into your hearts; He's there enlightening your understanding and moving your will. So then, come to it prepared to be led by what He'll say to you and have no other interest in view than His greater glory in the progress of the Company.

A third element--one that's absolutely essential--is inviolable secrecy. This confidentiality is the soul of God's affairs, for, as soon as someone mentions outside what goes on, everything is ruined and falls into disorder. Consequently, secrecy must be observed here, like the secrecy of the confessional. It's imperative that no one ever know not only what decisions have been taken but even what has been proposed. Never, directly or indirectly, should you reveal anything treated here. You mustn't even mention such matters among yourselves, as you might say, '>But what do you think about that? Wouldn't it be better this way? Let's say something.' Oh no, Sisters! Never, never so much as open your mouth about them; never mention what has been

treated here.

ASince it's the duty of the Sister Servant, who is Mademoiselle right now, to propose the topics, she'll follow this procedure. Now, in any affair there are always pros and cons. So, it's her duty, in proposing the topic, to state first of all the reasons in favor of a certain measure, then those opposed to it, as, for example, >We should do a certain thing for such and such a reason; however, there are other reasons contrary to it, namely, such and such.'

ATo ask the opinion of the Sisters, she'll address the one on her right first, then the next, and so on.

AThe Sister whose opinion has been asked will incline her head before beginning and then say, >Mademoiselle, for such and such a reason, I think it's appropriate to do or not to do that.' For the reasons should always be given. When she has finished, she'll incline her head once again. If the Father Superior is present, it will be well to stand; also, if the Sister Servant stands, I think it proper for everyone else to stand as well.

Alf the second Sister doesn't agree with the first, she might say, >For such and such a reason, I don't think that's advisable.' This is done without naming the Sister of whom she's speaking; and she'll state the reasons calling for a different course of action.

Alf the third Sister doesn't agree with either of the others, she might say, >for such and such a reason, I don't think it advisable to act in the first way or the second, but in this manner; and for a certain reason that seems to preclude it, I think it can be resolved this way.'

AAfter that, once the Sister Servant has heard the opinions, it's up to her to follow the one she thinks most appropriate. And if she doesn't want to follow any of them, it's up to her to say, >We won't finish this today; we have to think it over before God.' Or, if she wants to seek some advice, she may say, >I'll mention this to M. Vincent; we'll see what's best.'

Aln addition, Sisters, you should never take issue over your opinions but express them simply, without pressing to try to have them accepted. On the contrary, you should always want the others to be heeded instead of you.

ANow, Sisters, something has come up that requires your advice: it concerns poor Jacqueline,<sup>3</sup> who is here in the house. She's not well-balanced and is causing many minor disturbances; consequently, she shouldn't remain in the Company any longer. She complains constantly, which can upset weak persons who don't yet know her. And since she doesn't appreciate anything that's done, wherever she is she makes up ridiculous stories that can be very harmful. If her wishes are opposed, she's unbearable and incapable of accepting a correction, and, what is worse, I think that, since apparently she's here only grudgingly, she can't work out her salvation in this place and will do better if left to her own devices. In short, Sisters, she has no common sense.

AOn the other hand, you have to consider that she's a Sister who has worked hard for the poor and is one of the oldest members of the Company--even one of the very first, I think. For that reason, it might seem better to keep her.

ASister, what do you think about that?@ The Sister answered that she thought she should be separated from the Company because of the unrest she is causing in it. However, in view of the service she has rendered, it would be well not to abandon her.

AAnd how do you think that can be done, Sister?@

APlace her in some village where only one Sister is needed to look after the sick,' the Sister replied, Aand give her as much help there as possible. In that way, she'd be separated from the Company without being completely out of it, and that would be very beneficial for the

Community.@

AAnd what do you think about that, Sister?@

The Sister replied that placing her in a village wouldn't stop her from saying the same things all the time, but she felt that, for the rest of her days, it would be safer to keep her in the house to follow her own fancy, and see that she was taken care of for the love of God.

The next Sister was of the same opinion, adding: AThe others won't follow her example there when they see that she's being kept only for love of God.@

AAnd what does Mlle. Le Gras have to say about this?@

Mademoiselle said that she really should be sent away because keeping someone so self-willed here in this house would give bad example to the others. Moreover, there was no guarantee that she would remain at peace, since, at the first whim that seized her, she might start up as before and, at the slightest thing that displeased her, might turn to the newcomers or to those she suspects are the weakest. More than all that is the reason Most Honored Father gave in saying that she wasn't working out her salvation. As for placing her in a village, that's where she was spoiled in the first place. If, however, she herself wanted to withdraw, either to her own village or elsewhere, and work to earn her living, the Company could help her in some way to support herself. Mademoiselle had thought that, if Mme. de Lamoignon<sup>4</sup> had some work to be done, she could be placed in one of her houses. That might have been a good solution, and Mademoiselle had asked Mme. de Lamoignon about it. In addition, she had also thought that Sister might have been well off if they could have placed her at the Petites-Maisons.<sup>5</sup> She herself had thought about that place and would have liked it, but she would have had to be sent there under pretext of serving the poor because, despite all her caprices, this good Sister has always wanted to serve the poor, stating that she had left her own region for that purpose.

Mademoiselle added further that she had written to the Pastor of the Petites-Maisons about this. He told her that Sister would be very useful there and that the usual way of being admitted was first to be a charity case and then to talk to the Administrators of the Bureau, but sometimes there's a long wait. Those patients who bring their property with them need only an order from the Procurator General; however, since she'd be coming to serve the patients through M. Vincent's influence, he felt that this could easily be done.

After listening attentively to all of the above, Most Honored Father asked M. Almérás his Assistant what he thought. He answered that he didn't know the Sister, but, based on the report that had been given concerning her, he judged it best to remove her, and felt it would be well to place her in some village, as had been said, or, as Mademoiselle had thought of doing, in the home of some lady like Mme. de Lamoignon or another lady of rank, where she could come and go and be free to do as she pleased, without anyone contradicting her or paying too much attention to what she was doing.

After that, M. Vincent spoke again, AOh! God be praised, Sisters! For all the reasons stated, I think it's a good idea for her to leave. But how? I'm a little uncomfortable with that. She can't be kept here in this house the way she is, and to allow her to be free is even worse; that would give too much bad example, and others, who would be unaware of the reasons for this, might want to be free to do the same, thinking that the Community would put up with such conduct as well. And in a village, her imagination will conjure up the ill-treatment she'll claim she has received, and she won't fail to voice her complaints. What Mademoiselle has suggested regarding the Petites-Maisons would be very worthwhile for her--and you were right to hope for it--but I see nothing more problematic than that. If the Charity were established there, it could

easily be done; but, first of all, as regards admission, either there's a long wait or it's very difficult to get in. I can tell you that about twenty-five years ago I made my first attempt to place some people at the Petites-Maisons, and I never had any influence there. Nevertheless, maybe it can be managed some way. But even if she does go there she won't stay, and that could do harm to the Company. First of all, people would know that she was a member of the Company. Then, too, all the patients are mentally ill, extremely unbalanced, always sullen, and there are constant quarrels. Oh! There's nothing like it! I can't describe it to you. Lastly, there's so little social contact that two persons can't even get along together but have to be separated. Each does his or her own thing. She wouldn't be there a month perhaps before getting a hold over someone as unbalanced as herself; right away you'd hear complaints about her made to the Administrators, and that could be very harmful to the Company. Still, we'll have to look at it, but I'm afraid she's incapable of staying happy. If, as has been said, she herself could make up her mind to go off somewhere and live quietly, I think that would be very suitable. Oh well! we won't settle that today.

AYour second proposal is to decide whether to keep little Catherine. What do you think about that, Mademoiselle?@

Mademoiselle said that Catherine was a very good Sister, but that was her only strong point because there was no hope that she could do any work in the house on account of her disability. It's so serious that, when she kneels down, the only way she can get up is by holding on to something. She can barely walk without leaning on people she meets. If we were to keep her, we could make her a school teacher who would always remain in the house. It's almost a necessity to have a Sister who can do nothing but that because, if she's capable of doing something else, she is taken away as soon as there's a need, so the school doesn't fare very well. This Sister could give good example to the Company because she's so docile.

AAnd what do you have to say about this, Sister? Be very careful, however, about what we mentioned a little while ago, namely, not to be influenced by any human respect or consideration. Don't let the fact that she's the sister of one of our Brothers change the way you express your thoughts.@

The Sister replied that she judged her suitable only for that. She also felt that her infirmity wouldn't give reason to fear, but she might also be suitable for the bloodletting done at the house.

The other Sisters said that they didn't know her well enough to judge what work she could do, but they felt that her frailty didn't allow her to do anything more strenuous and that what was suggested would be a good idea.

AI really pity the poor child! But I still think it would be better to send her home, for you might assign her to the school and perhaps she couldn't adapt to it, or she might be able to do it for a while but not for always. She might get tired of it--even discontented--seeing the other Sisters sometimes in one duty, sometimes in another. I think it's better to follow the Rules, that is, not to burden ourselves with Sisters who aren't suited to all sorts of ministries. Yes, I think that's better, not only because of her physical disability but also for the spiritual good of the Sister we just mentioned.

AYou have to bear in mind, dear Sisters, how necessary it is for the preservation of your Company that it be composed of persons fully suited to it both in mind and body, so that they can carry out all its works. In the event that contrary dispositions are noted, particularly with regard to their mental state, don't keep them. >What good gardener,' says the Son of God,

>never weeds his plot?'<sup>6</sup> A gardener who often visits his garden takes notice of a plant that's sturdy and fruitful. He waters it, tends it, takes pleasure in it. On the other hand, when he sees one that doesn't grow, he uproots it, for it's useless. It takes up land without yielding a return. The gardener who acts this way is wise and prudent.

AYou know also, Sisters, that it takes only one scabby sheep to ruin the entire flock. What would a master say to his shepherd who, by neglecting to remove an infected sheep, allowed it to contaminate a hundred others? That would certainly be a great evil, and the master would be right in being very angry with him.

ANow then, Sisters, since Providence has in some measure entrusted the guidance of the Company to you, you'd be very poor shepherdesses if, for want of seeing those whose bad conduct can spread to others, you allowed an entire Company to fall into ruin. Oh! May God preserve you from that!

ANow it's a question of seeing whom we'll place at Saint-Paul.<sup>7</sup> What do you think, Mademoiselle? Whom do you have in mind?@

Mademoiselle said that a very competent person--something not common to everyone--was needed there. For that reason, it would be well for Sister Anne<sup>8</sup> to tell us something about what has to be done there, so we can judge better.

AWell, Sister Anne,@ said M. Vincent, Atell us a little about what goes on there.@

Sister stated, first of all, that the Charity was not organized as it was in other parishes; there was no assured income, and every month the Sister had to collect money from the Ladies, do all the buying, make the soup for the sick at home, give an account at the end of the month, and prepare the medicines. Also, since there are some Ladies who send for them, they must be accommodated because, if they are refused, it is to be feared that they might give nothing to the Charity. In addition, many poor persons who aren't on the list had been coming to ask for some remedy or for other things, but the Pastor<sup>9</sup> has absolutely forbidden that anything be given to those people because there would be too many of them, and they aren't registered with the Charity. The Sister has to be very efficient in preparing medicines and doing bloodletting because the physician comes to the house and observes part of what goes on.

ASister, draw up in writing the procedure she'll have to observe and have it signed by the Pastor. Have a clean copy made and posted in a place where it can be read. Well, Mademoiselle, who do you think will be suitable for that place?@

AI see clearly that a competent, intelligent Sister, who understands the people with whom she's dealing, is needed,@ Mademoiselle said, and right now she knew of no one else except Sister Guillemine.<sup>10</sup>

ADo you know her, Sister? What do you think?@

The Sister said she didn't know her, and for that reason she had thought of Sister Barbe,<sup>11</sup> but she felt that, since Mademoiselle knew both these Sisters, she had made a good choice of the one who was the more suitable.

To that Mademoiselle replied that Sister Barbe was not strong enough for the heavy work load there.

Sister Anne said she had thought of Sister Élisabeth Martin, who seemed to have all the necessary qualifications and had made up for all the mistakes she had made there. When she was told that she had been assigned elsewhere, she said that the Sister Mademoiselle had proposed was well-qualified.

The next Sister agreed, since she knew her well. And M. Vincent concluded, AThen Sister

Guillemine will go *in nomine Domini*.

ANow we must discuss which Sisters to send to Nantes. Mademoiselle's first suggestion for Sister Servant is Sister Élisabeth<sup>12</sup> of Liancourt, or Sister Barbe, who is now making the visitation at the Foundlings. Sister, which one do you think is more suitable?@

The Sister was in favor of Sister Élisabeth, as were all the others.

AAnd Sister,@ said M. Vincent, A in case we can't have Sister Élisabeth, do you think we should send Sister Barbe there?@

All the Sisters said yes.

AAnd if Sister Barbe can't go, or something comes up to prevent her from going, can you think of anyone else, Sister?@

The Sister Most Honored Father was questioning said she had thought of someone, but the latter was not approved by all.

AVery well, then.@ he concluded, AWe'll stay with Sister Élisabeth and, in case we can't have her, we'll take Sister Barbe.@

Next, he had someone read the memo Mademoiselle had given him, which listed Sister Antoinette of Montreuil,<sup>13</sup> Sister Catherine Bagard,<sup>14</sup> Sister Perrette of Villers,<sup>15</sup> Sister Perrette of Sedan,<sup>16</sup> Sister Marguerite Noret,<sup>17</sup> and Marthe of Saint-Jacques.<sup>18</sup> None of the Sisters had anything to say about Mademoiselle's choice but found it excellent.

The next proposal concerned postulants to be accepted into the Company, including one who was asking to go to say good-bye to her parents. Mademoiselle said that this could be a test for her, but Most Honored Father said it was better to hold to the maxim of the Son of God, who didn't advise it;<sup>19</sup> whereupon, it was decided to tell her not to go.

The next item proposed was whether or not to have a parlor. Mademoiselle stated that she considered a parlor very necessary to keep all sorts of persons from coming into the house, and so that people who might come to see one Sister wouldn't see all the others or observe what goes on within the Community, and even to prevent outsiders from entering the house.

M. Vincent asked whether Mademoiselle intended to put in a grille. She said that it would be as His Charity<sup>20</sup> thought appropriate. AThe question, Sisters,@ he replied, Ais to know whether it's advisable for you to have a parlor, and, for the reasons cited by Mademoiselle, it would seem very necessary. On the other hand, it is to be feared--particularly if there were a grille--that, with the passage of time, the Company might develop into a religious Order. There might be some Sisters in the Company itching for this, who would use this innovation as a pretext to upset the whole order God wants to be maintained in the Company. It could be an attraction for Sisters in the parishes, who might prefer this house because of that practice, thinking there would be greater regularity here than elsewhere. Moreover, even persons outside the Community might take the Company for a religious Order if they saw a parlor. So then, Sisters, see whether it's advisable for you to have a parlor.@

The first Sister said that, for all the reasons given, she thought it was very necessary, but she didn't think it appropriate to have a grille, also for the reasons that had been given.

The Sisters who followed were of the same opinion, and one added that it would really be advisable to have a companion present.

AFirst, Sister, we have to see whether we'll have a parlor; then we'll discuss whether a companion should be present. What does M. Alméras have to say about this?@

M. Alméras said that it was good to have a parlor, but it should never have a grille because that would smack of religious life, and it might come to that some day, if anything that could give

such an impression were not avoided early on. Then, too, since our Sisters in the parishes are free to converse, it might seem that there was greater recollection here. As for a companion, he didn't feel that was necessary because the Sisters in the parishes most often go about alone. When newcomers would see Sisters conversing only in this way, they might think they were lost when they happened to be alone with men. It would be well to accustom them to this so they won't feel strange on occasions when they have to go somewhere alone. To avoid any danger, however, it would be well to keep the door open at all times so that persons passing by could see in and those in the parlor would act as they should.

Speaking again, M. Vincent continued: AWell, Sisters, I think it's good for you to have a parlor, but it's not expedient to have any grilles. Were people to see that, they'd say: >The next step is the cloister.' And perhaps with the passage of time some Sister might say, >We would do much better to become nuns.' The others would hear her, and we don't know what might happen. That's not to be feared right now, but if there's some way to remedy what could happen, it must be done; for, dear Sisters, that would be the exact opposite of what God is asking of you.

As for a companion, we won't decide that right now; we'll have to think about it. Meanwhile, I ask God Himself to preside at this Council meeting. May He be the soul of it and allow it to deliberate only through Him. May He grant it light, discernment, and strength of will, and, since He has willed that one of the virtues be called counsel, which is a gift of the Holy Spirit, may He grant it to you by the same Holy Spirit. @

*Sub tuum praesidium. . . .*

### 157. - COUNCIL OF JULY 5, 1646

The topic for this Council meeting, dear Sisters, is modesty in dress, especially in the headdress. Exterior modesty is like a mirror of everything that's within. By it people judge whether our souls are well-regulated or not, and by it what occupies our minds can be known.

Assuming this to be the case, Sisters, it's now a question of seeing whether the Sisters in the Company wear their dress and headdress properly, make appropriate use of them, and whether anything is slipping in which they shouldn't be doing. For the Daughter of Charity who is careless and does not wear her headdress the way she should, and is complacent about this, shows that her mind is filled with something other than God because, if she were truly filled with God and had no other desire than to please God, she'd be careful to act in the way God is asking her to behave. On the contrary, if, by concentrating on arranging herself in some fashion that's inappropriate for her but flatters her, she does this often and even continues to do so, oh! it's easy to surmise that it is to please someone else, and that would be a serious--a very serious--evil.

Tell me, Sister, if you know anyone in the Company like this. @

The Sister replied that sometimes certain Sisters let their hair show, but she thought it was because their hairline was naturally low, and that might be the reason why their headdress didn't fit closely enough to cover it. She was unable to give the exact number of these Sisters.

The following Sister agreed, and the third one added that some Sisters were careless about that.

Mademoiselle added that there was a rather large number of them, and she had even heard that

some of them were showing affectation in this.

When Most Honored Father heard that, he said:

ASo, the question right now is to see whether it's advisable to say something to them about it. There seem to be pros and cons for this.

AThe reasons in favor are that, since your Company seems to hold a place in the Church of God, only what is modest and well-regulated should be permitted in it. And, as we've said, modesty is the indicator that reveals the impulses of the soul. That's one reason in favor of saying something to Sisters who are careless about this.

AAnother reason is that, if they are doing it intentionally and are self-satisfied about it, this should in no way be tolerated.

AA third reason is that seeing Sisters who let their hair show could damage the reputation of the Company. *Mon Dieu!* What more can we say? For, there's no vanity more dangerous than that involving hairstyle, since it adorns the face. Ah no! There's none worse.

AThese, then, are the reasons that seem to prompt us to say something to them.

AOn the other hand, you said that maybe they don't think there's any harm in it, and this could cause them to think so. They might take things the wrong way, become angry, make a fuss, and be put off. For this reason it might seem better to let them continue as they are and not give them any reason to think there's anything wrong, where perhaps they're unaware of it.

ASister, do you think we ought to say something to them?@

The Sister replied that she thought we should, no matter what their reason for doing it: if they were doing it without thinking they wouldn't take it badly; if they were doing it through affectation, they wouldn't want this to be apparent and, therefore, would correct themselves.

The others agreed with this.

Then M. Vincent replied, AI praise God with all my heart, Sisters, for the insight He's giving you, making you realize that this should be rectified. In no way should it be allowed. Oh no! Everyone must be as she should be, and that's what the Church prescribes. The canons state that a priest may not be allowed to say Mass if his hair isn't trimmed properly, and the Church even insists that someone do it for him, in spite of him. Well then! God be praised! Let's go no further. We have to show to whom we belong. So then, it's well for them to be told about this. How to do it remains to be seen.

ASister, how do you think we should go about this?@

The Sister replied that she thought it should be done gently, giving them no reason to think we felt they were doing it deliberately, but that we supposed they didn't have the convenience of a headband to keep their hair in place.

The second Sister said it would be appropriate to tell them informally that they're not wearing their headdress properly and that we'd be glad to teach them how to do it.

The third Sister agreed with the above.

Mademoiselle added that sometimes they were told what had been said in a conference on that very matter, namely, that they were serpents, and might it not be advisable to repeat this to them. This sounded like a good idea, as also that it might be appropriate for one of the Council members to do it; she could remind them of it at the right moment because they could have confidence in her. M. Vincent said that this could sometimes be done; nevertheless, as far as possible, reprimands should be reserved to the Superioress.

Mademoiselle also said that another form of immodesty was not having their shirt sleeves fastened, which is the reason why many of them often have too much of their arms showing.

M. Vincent said they should really be careful about this and, when a fault like that came to their attention, a conference should be given on it.

The second proposal was to see whether two of our Sisters should go to visit the sick every afternoon. Most Honored Father made the following suggestion:

ASisters, we have to see whether it's advisable for two of you to go every afternoon to visit the sick poor of the parish to comfort them. There are some strong reasons urging us to adopt this practice, and others that seem to discourage us from it.

AWhat would favor our prompting you to do so is the fact that visiting persons who are poor is, in itself, an action very pleasing to God. These visits can be most helpful for the sick, who may often lack instruction. Our Sisters who bring them their medications in the morning can't take much time to stop and talk with them because they have a large number of persons to see. That can even be very useful for us because our Sisters will be formed in visiting the sick and in speaking with them. They will even be able to find out if the Sisters responsible for taking care of them are doing their duty properly.

AThose are four reasons that seem to urge us to adopt this practice, for the glory of God, for the help it gives the neighbor, and for our own interest considered in the same glory of God and the service of the neighbor.

AOn the other hand, it may seem inappropriate for Sisters to go to visit and comfort the sick. In addition, the Church itself reserves that to priests, other parishes don't do it and are satisfied with Sisters who serve in the usual way, and the Pastor or his assistants might be displeased and think we were trying to encroach on what is their responsibility. They might say: >That's taking too many liberties. Isn't it sufficient that Sisters who have to serve the poor bring them their medications in the morning and their meal at dinner time, without others going in the afternoon to cheer them up?' They may say that, Sisters, along with other things I'm not aware of. Some of our priests have been designated for that, and I remember that in the beginning we discovered that the Pastor or his assistants had become alarmed by it, with the result that we had to send someone to ask permission to continue.

ANow, Sisters, see whether, for all these reasons, it might be more advisable not to do that. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister replied that she thought it was fitting for the reasons given, and that two of those that seemed to militate against it could very easily be resolved, namely, the one stating that it isn't appropriate for women, which can be answered by the fact that it's our calling; and the other, claiming that other parishes don't do it, which can be answered by another, namely that our community is established in this parish.<sup>1</sup> She had nothing to say about the orders of the Church and the interests of the Pastor.

M. Vincent said that the Church didn't order this but neither did it forbid it, and he asked the next Sister what she thought. She replied that, for all the reasons already stated, she felt it was very useful to do it and, since there were always medications to be brought in the afternoon, maybe the Sisters responsible for making the visits could bring them. That way, it wouldn't look like they were going for some other purpose, and they wouldn't fail to comfort the sick, would learn how to speak to them, and find out whether the Sisters looking after them satisfied them.

The next Sister added that, so that things wouldn't appear that way, she felt it advisable not to go every day but only a few times a week.

When M. Vincent asked Mademoiselle what she thought, she said she had envisaged this practice as something very helpful for the patients as well as for the Sisters. She also felt there

was no reason why it couldn't be done every day because in other parishes there are Ladies who go to visit the sick daily and, since there are no Ladies in this parish, the visits of our Sisters take the place of that. Nevertheless, for the reasons stated, she felt it proper to do it in the way proposed, and thought the suggestion made by a Sister of bringing the medications while visiting the sick was very expedient. She also thought it a good idea for a new Sister always to accompany an older one, and if we changed the Sisters frequently, people wouldn't notice that there were others than those who were there to look after the poor.

Continuing what he had been saying, Most Honored Father went on: AI praise God, Sisters, and I always have reason to praise Him for the insights He gives you to guide you always to do what's best. Ah yes! Visiting the sick will be most useful, and it's very good that the Sisters who visit them bring them the medicines that should be brought them in the afternoon. I'm even more pleased at your moderation in not going every day. That could inconvenience the house, which might not always be able to supply Sisters. Then, too, the patients themselves might be wearied by it. It's better this way. It's also quite appropriate that a new Sister go with an older one. The new one will listen and be formed by what the older one says, and will do the same when she's designated to go with someone newer than she is.@

When M. Vincent asked the opinion of M. Alméras his Assistant, the latter thought all of the above very appropriate and said that, if things were done the way that had been decided, he didn't think the Pastor or his assistants at the church could take any umbrage; on the contrary, they would have reason to be more satisfied with the help being given to their sick, seeing that someone was being sent in the afternoon to find out if they were satisfied with the Sister who had taken care of them in the morning.

Then Most Honored Father sent for Sister Élisabeth Martin and Sister Henriette from Saint-Germain.<sup>2</sup> When he had them sit down, he said to the first named, ASo, Sister Élisabeth, why have you come?@ And she replied: ATo do God's Will.@ Delighted with this reply, M. Vincent turned to M. Alméras and said, AWell, Monsieur! What more could you want?@ And turning back to her, he said, AWell, Sister! God be praised that you have come to do His Will! An important occasion has arisen, namely, the establishment to be made of your Company to serve in a hospital in one of the well-known towns of the kingdom,<sup>3</sup> and Divine Providence has chosen you to be the Sister Servant.@ She replied that she was very incapable of this, but our venerable Father went on to say:

ARight now we're trying to see if a Daughter of Charity, who is going to be the Sister Servant of six or seven Sisters in a new establishment in a faraway region, needs one or two Sisters to serve as her Council. There are pros and cons for this.

AOne of the reasons in favor of it is that, being far from Paris, she has no one whose advice she can ask about how to act with the poor, her Sisters, and the Administrators. If something unforeseen arises, about which the Sister Servant has no knowledge, she'll be perplexed and not know what to do. Several problems may arise at the same time and she'll be even more perplexed. One head can't suffice for everything. If she has shared things with one or two Sisters, who will confirm her opinion, she'll be more reassured and her mind will be at ease.

ABesides, the Sisters are there to obey the Administrators; there's no need of advice for that. A servant in a household doesn't seek advice as to whether she should do what her master tells her. In addition, when the Sister Servant asks the advice of one or two of her Sisters, she might not find it practical and might act otherwise, for it should be noted that, when the Superioress asks for advice, it's her privilege not to do what has been suggested if she thinks it better to act

differently. Should this occur, the Sisters might perhaps be displeased to see that their advice was spurned. Moreover, the other Sisters might be jealous of those belonging to the Council, and that could cause some division. For all these reasons, therefore, it seems that it might be better not to have a Council. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister answered that she thought it advisable to have one for the reasons given, and it was not to be feared that the other Sisters might be jealous of those named to the Council, since they would be well aware that this was the choice of Superiors.

The others said that they felt the same way and that it would give the Sister Servant great peace of mind.

They then discussed whether one Sister would suffice, or if two were needed.

One Sister said that ordinarily one should be enough, and if some business matter came up that required another, the Sister Servant could summon a second one.

The next Sister thought that one was enough because, if there were only six Sisters, and the Sister Servant had to summon two of them, half of the community would belong to the Council.

The other two Sisters agreed with the first one, namely, that ordinarily there should be only one Sister, and two for matters of great importance. Mademoiselle also felt inclined toward this.

When asked his opinion, M. Alméras stated that he thought it would be very good if, for more important matters--which might come up perhaps only once every six months--the Sister Servant would call in a third Sister. This could even be done without the other Sisters realizing that it was in order to ask her advice.

The fifth matter proposed was to decide whether their Council meeting should be held on a fixed day or only when needed.

The first two Sisters questioned stated that they thought the Council meeting should be held when needed and not on a fixed day because sometimes unforeseen business came up that had to be settled promptly.

The next Sister was of the same opinion, adding that if such affairs should arise, finding a solution for them they couldn't be put off until a fixed Council day. The last Sister also agreed.

When Mademoiselle was asked for her opinion, she said she felt it would be well to have a fixed day in order to make it more authentic and that they should keep to that order, foreseeing some of the matters that might arise. If something urgent came up, nothing would prevent them from meeting to see what should be done. Those who saw the Sister Servant and certain Sisters often speaking together might not always think it was for business matters; on the contrary, however, if they knew there was a regular day set aside for that, they would be inclined to give greater credence to it.

When M. Vincent asked M. Alméras for his opinion, he said that, until then, he didn't see the need to hold Council meetings more often than the occasion required; but after hearing the reasons put forth by Mademoiselle, he thought it advisable to meet every week. If the Sisters had something to say when they came together, they would do so; if not, the Superioress might say: ASisters, we're here because it's our regular day and the Rule calls for it, but I'm not aware of any business for the present, so let us adjourn until next week.@

Then M. Vincent began speaking: Alt has been decided, then, that ordinarily there will be only one Sister for the Sister Servant's Council, or, if she isn't there, the Sister Servant may call another, who will be named for that purpose. If she has something very important to settle, then she may summon both of them. She can call the third one quietly and ask her: >Sister, what do you think of such or such a thing?' in such a way that the others don't notice that she's doing it

to ask her advice. And there's no reason to fear that the others will be jealous; oh no! don't think our Sisters are so imperfect, or that a difference of opinion will cause division, for God will preside there to see that matters are decided according to His Will.

ABut I'm still not convinced that this Council meeting should take place on a fixed day, or whether it should be only when there's a need. It's to be feared that an appointed day might seem too much. The Administrators might say: >Today is your Council day; what did you decide?' or something else inappropriate. We won't settle that; and I'm even taking back what I said recently, that it should be held here every week. Some Communities have it only every two weeks--or even less frequently. We'll see about that. Also, the term *Councillor* is a little pretentious; we should do away with it. The usual word is *Assistant*.<sup>4</sup>

AOh! God be praised! But what shall we give Sister Élisabeth for her journey? For each of us has to give her a present. Let's see what virtue we have to give her.@

The first Sister gave her the love of God. The second gave her charity, which consists not only in the love of God, but also that of the neighbor, especially of the poor persons she will have to assist and the Sisters she will have to guide. The third Sister gave her humility, as being very necessary for her. The fourth gave her patience in all the setbacks that may occur. Mademoiselle gave her cordial support for the Sisters. When M. Alméras was asked for his gift, he said he had thought of giving her charity, but seeing that it had been taken, he then chose patience, which had also been taken, but he wished for her in addition a patience that is cheerful and good-humored, content to endure always whatever God willed.

M. Vincent continued: AThose are quite a few treasures, Sister, and I hope you will have them to the full. What I desire most especially for you is the accomplishment of God's Will, which consists not only in following what Superiors ordain--although, as you have said, that's a sure way of doing it--but in responding to all the inspirations God sends us. Sister Marie Despinal<sup>5</sup> was very faithful to that, and it's what I'm going to ask God for you.

AWe still have some advice to seek regarding whether or not we should recall to this house a Sister with whom one of the Ladies is dissatisfied.@

When he was told that one of the Sisters knew her, he questioned her. She said she knew that this Sister was very self-willed, so much so that it was impossible to make her change her mind; furthermore, she was somewhat worldly.

When he heard this, M. Vincent said: AThose are reasons for recalling her to this house; however, one contrary reason is that, when the Ladies see that because they have indicated that she doesn't suit them--for it isn't because she's not a good Sister but because not everyone pleases that Lady--if, I say, we withdraw her because of that, they may find an excuse, at the slightest thing they dislike in another Sister, to complain about her and to demand that she be removed. Sister, see if you still think it advisable to recall her under the circumstances.@

The Sister who said she knew her answered Ayes,@ and that a stay at the motherhouse would greatly help her to correct her bad disposition, for she wouldn't be so free to annoy people there as she would be with only one other Sister.

The next Sister said that, for all those reasons, it would be very advisable for her to return to the motherhouse, and that if it wasn't done too quickly--and since the Lady didn't say it openly--the latter couldn't claim that the Sister was recalled because of her.

The other Sisters concurred with this. Mademoiselle said it could be handled so discreetly that the Lady in question would notice nothing.

Most Honored Father thought that was excellent. He wanted to propose someone to replace the

Sister, but seeing that it was too late, he said: AOh well! Mademoiselle, you'll find someone.@

Then he knelt, said the *Sub tuum praesidium*, and added: ASisters, I ask Jesus Christ to be Himself the thanks offered to His Father for all the graces He bestows on your Company. May He be pleased to continue giving us the grace to know and to accomplish His Holy Will.*Benedictio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. . . .@*

I had forgotten to put in its proper place the discussion concerning a confessor for our Sisters in Nantes. M. Vincent stated that a priest of excellent reputation, formerly the Lieutenant-General in Nantes,<sup>6</sup> who had become a priest not for any benefice but solely out of devotion, had offered to serve our Sisters in any way possible.

ASo, Sisters,@ he said, Asee whether this priest should be the regular confessor, or whether the Sisters should ordinarily go to another, and only occasionally to the priest I mentioned. He's a very upright man, a man of prayer, and very interested in your Company.@

All the Sisters agreed that, if this priest was willing to go to that trouble, such an arrangement would be very advantageous to our Sisters.

Mademoiselle proposed that, while accepting this, it would be well for our Sisters to go to an extraordinary confessor sometimes during the year. Most Honored Father said that this was necessary and was permitted four times a year to religious by the Council of Trent.<sup>7</sup>

I had also forgotten to state at the beginning of this discussion that when M. Vincent saw Mademoiselle stand to address him, and all the Sisters with her, he said: AExcellent! and I think it's also a good idea, when the Sister Servant rises, for all the others to stand as well.@

## 158. - COUNCIL OF OCTOBER 25, 1646

After Most Honored Father had invoked the Holy Spirit as usual by the *Veni Sancte*, he asked what matters were to be considered. Thereupon Mademoiselle said that a young woman from Angers<sup>1</sup> had been in the Company about a year, and during that time, had been a great example to all our Sisters, assiduous in observing all the Rules, and faithful to all the customs. She didn't hesitate to do the most menial tasks, and waited upon the sick with exceptional kindness; above all, she was most prayerful, to the point that some said she was too withdrawn. She had left the Company in consequence of a serious illness that had affected her mind; and when she continued to imagine things, she herself asked to withdraw. The Company took her at her word, fearing that this might continue.

No sooner had she returned home than she regretted leaving and expressed a strong desire to come back. She shared this with Abbé de Vaux,<sup>2</sup> who looks after our Sisters in Angers, and he wrote us several times on her behalf. Even during her visits to Paris, she always expressed a desire to be readmitted. No matter how often she was refused, she still persevered in that hope. Ultimately, Mademoiselle said that, when she was passing through Angers this good young woman came to see her again with her very great desire. Since leaving the Company, she had had several opportunities to become a nun, to which she paid no attention but always continued to work in the service of the poor, going of her own accord to the hospital at the times she knew they were cared for; and she earnestly asked to be readmitted into the Company, either at the Paris Motherhouse or in the Nantes or Angers hospitals. She'd bring her own property, be an extra Sister at no expense to anyone, doing her duties like all the others, as far as her health

would allow.

Turning to Most Honored Father, Mademoiselle added that she had promised her in Angers that she would explain her plan to His Charity to see what could be done for her. In reply Most Honored Father said, "This is a case, Sisters, in which there are reasons for accepting her into the hospitals in her own region and other reasons that suggest she shouldn't be accepted at all.

The reasons that favor receiving her are that charity seems to require it. She ardently desires to return, and to refuse her would seem to be contrary to charity. A further reason is that she didn't leave of her own accord or because of distaste for her vocation or its works, but because of illness--an illness that deprived her of freedom of judgment. Another motive is that she soon repented of having left, as is clear from what she told Abbé de Vaux about her wish to return, in which she has persevered ever since. There's also the good example she has given the Company. Now, for all those reasons, it would seem that she should be readmitted here.

The motives for receiving her for Angers or Nantes are almost the same as for here; there's the motive of charity, which we should practice everywhere. Moreover, it seems that, should she fall ill again, if she's living in her native area it will be easier to place her in the care of her relatives, who will be close by, than to send her away from here, which would also cause her considerable expense. Besides, being located in her own region, she'd be able to go during the day to the hospital to serve the poor and return home in the evening. So, for all those reasons, I think it more advisable to accept her in Angers or Nantes, and not in Paris.

As for not readmitting her at all, it's likely that, being unable to stay the first time, she'll do nothing a second time. Experience teaches us that, of all those who leave and then return, not a single one stays. I have seen many leave us and many return, who have made all sorts of appeals and expressed marvelous desires, but couldn't remain after all that. That's because they don't have a vocation and aren't prepared to do what's required; they don't know how to be submissive and are prone to anxiety. Because of that, they can't stay any more than they did the first time. So for that reason we should consider ourselves fortunate not to have this young woman any longer. If she does have this desire, perhaps God is giving it to her to perfect her through the work she's doing. Consequently, it would seem better for her to remain in her own region, going to serve the poor by day and returning to her home in the evening. We have a Rule that forbids associating any outsider to the Company. Therefore, to avoid complications, it would seem best not to take her back at all. What do you think, Sister?@

The first Sister felt that she shouldn't be readmitted. The second was in favor of accepting her in Angers. The third, fourth, and fifth were of the opinion that she should be taken back because of the good example she'd give in the house; added to that, since she'd bring her own property, she wouldn't be a burden. It seemed more advisable to admit her in Paris than elsewhere, because, should her illness recur, she might create problems for our Sisters; also, being a little anxious by nature, she could get sufficient advice to recover.

Most Honored Father asked his Assistant<sup>3</sup> what he thought. "Monsieur,@ he replied, "While you were speaking, I recalled what M. . . . told me lately about a Dominican who was in a convent in a city belonging to the Sultan. One day, he became intoxicated after drinking too much wine. No longer rational, he said he wanted to become a Turk.<sup>4</sup> The persons with him made him repeat that several times; seeing that he persisted, they took him to the Governor, to whom he reiterated what he had said to the others. The Governor reminded him that he was a monk, but he said it was all the same--he was renouncing his faith and wanted to become a Turk. They removed his habit at once and clothed him in Turkish attire and a turban. The next day,

when the effects of his wine had passed and he came to his senses, seeing himself amid the Turks and dressed like them, he was quite astonished and began to ask >Where am I?' >Don't you realize that you're a Turk?' they replied. >Me?' he said, >God forbid! I'd rather die a hundred times!' They reminded him of all he had said and done. He remembered nothing, but kept saying that he was a Christian and a monk. The Governor explained the tortures for this and gave him two days to reflect. At the end of that time, he continued to proclaim himself a Christian and a monk, and died confessing this. Two or three years ago, the Greeks ransomed his body, paying two hundred écus for it.

ANow, Monsieur, that thought came to me while you were speaking about that good young woman, considering that, when she asked to leave, her judgment was impaired, and, since she has always persevered in asking to return, it's to be believed that she didn't go of her own free will; accordingly, she shouldn't be refused readmission. That's why, Monsieur, in my opinion she should be granted it, and in Paris rather than elsewhere, for the reasons given.@

After that, M. Vincent asked Mademoiselle for her opinion. She replied, AI had thought, Father, that it would have been more advisable to accept her for the hospitals in her own region, but, for the reasons that have been stated, I think it more suitable to receive her here--not that it's to be feared she might return to her family in her bouts of illness because she doesn't do that even now, but only because, if she should get sick, it might inconvenience our Sisters. Here, we can keep her busy, sometimes in one village, sometimes in another. I don't recall her anxiety being so great as to cause a problem, apart from her illness. Sometimes she was a little distracted, and I think that was caused by being too intense at prayer, but they say that's over now. That came about because of a priest who was directing her, who aimed at a very lofty kind of spirituality, making everyone under his guidance do the same, but it was too much for the mind of this good young woman. I was informed that she has given up all that and has since become quite moderate, so much so that, with God's help, I hope her example will edify the Company and she'll do good here.@

After that, Most Honored Father said: AI would have sided with our Sisters who felt she shouldn't be allowed to return. Since, however, the majority agrees that she should come back, I willingly accede, asking God to bless the resolution adopted and to give this good young woman all the graces she needs.<sup>5</sup> Let's move on another matter now, please.@

Mademoiselle then said that one of the Sisters assigned to nurse the galley convicts had to be changed because those two Sisters with very different temperaments don't get along. ABut,@ she said, Abecause one of them has to know how to write, I think we'll have to leave Sister Nicole,<sup>6</sup> the present Sister Servant, there. She has been in the Company only eight months and has been at this house only a very short time. She was with the foundlings, where she did well enough, but, since she was put in charge, she has become authoritarian and follows only her own ideas. That's why I thought we could put Sister Marguerite Guyon there to watch her, see how she controls herself, and teach her how to be submissive because Sister Marguerite seems to have sufficient intelligence and leadership to do all that discreetly.@

Whereupon Most Honored Father said, AThere are two aspects of this matter to be considered: one, whether a change is necessary; and two, whether Sister Marguerite Guyon is the person we need for that place. Has she been Sister Servant elsewhere?@

It was answered that she had, and had done very well. AWell, Sister,@ said M. Vincent, Ahow do you feel about that?@

A Sister replied that she thoroughly approved; so did another Sister, but said it was to be feared

that the Sister who had formerly been Sister Servant might be unwilling to submit. Another stated that any of us unwilling to submit wouldn't be a true Daughter of Charity; for that reason it would be good--since she was of such a disposition--to place someone over her to try to keep her in check, and she felt that the Sister proposed was the one to do it.

The others agreed, as did Most Honored Father's Assistant and Mademoiselle, so the matter was settled as follows: AI thank God, Sisters, to see that you're unanimous in following common sense, for it makes sense to separate those two Sisters. The problem that may arise is that the Sister may not be able to submit and may be indiscreet. Let's try it, however, with the option of changing her if it becomes obvious that it's necessary. What else is there, Mademoiselle?@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, AThe next matter we have to look at is that there is in this house a Sister from Touraine,<sup>7</sup> a woman of good background, whose parents are said to be wealthy. She came to the Company after some reflection, but without really knowing what it was. She seemed to have some repugnance from the beginning, when there was question of taking the habit, and since that time has still continued to disdain our manner of living here in this house. Since, however, she's good-hearted and well-bred, she doesn't reveal all her sentiments. Nevertheless, when she's with someone with whom she feels free, she makes it rather clear that she's dissatisfied. When I left for Brittany, I offered to take her back home, telling her she could be safe returning with me and that if she had no intention of working in earnest she should go. She had been sick before that, had a relapse afterward, and has been ill ever since. She's very difficult about food, and we can hardly get her to eat anything. She doesn't get involved in anything except a little sewing. Furthermore, we don't know what to do with her. We tried her in school, but she did nothing there. We had her with the foundlings for a while, and I was thinking about reassigning her there, but the Sisters begged me not to send her back to them. So, Father, I'm bringing her up to see if you think we should send her home.

AThere's another reason that seems to be an obstacle to this. Her parents are influential and will cause an uproar about it. There's also M. de Mondion,<sup>8</sup> the Pastor in Saché, who is very devoted to us; he's the one who sent her to us, and I'm afraid of offending him.@

Thereupon M. Vincent said, AYou must consider, Sisters, that this is a woman who shows no sign of a vocation. Perhaps she wouldn't have delayed so long to return home if she didn't fear her parents, who most likely were delighted to get her off their hands. If she doesn't make it obvious that she's completely dissatisfied, she still lets it be seen that she's not happy here and doesn't enjoy being among you. I, for one, can tell you that, from what I know of her temperament, she must have made her parents very happy not to have her with them. Living as she does, I don't think she'll ever do anything with us, but she will be able to do something and work out her salvation in the world.

ACounter to that suggestion is what Mademoiselle has stated. Her parents will consider it an insult to have her sent back to them, and M. de Mondion could become angry, because he was the one who recommended her. His displeasure may even make him less willing to get involved on other occasions that may present themselves. That's why you have to weigh these two things: first, that this young woman seems to have no vocation; and second, that her parents and M. de Mondion could be displeased. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister replied that it seemed to her that, if the young woman had no vocation and was neither able--nor seemed to be willing--to render any service to the Company, we shouldn't be concerned about their displeasure but should dismiss her. All the other Sisters agreed, suggesting only that, because her parents might say we had made her ill, it would be a good idea to have

them informed that she was ill, and perhaps they themselves might ask to have her back.

Most Honored Father's Assistant and Mademoiselle agreed to her dismissal. Then Most Honored Father said, Al thank God, Sisters, that all of you have reached the same conclusion, and that's how it should be. I thank Him again because you disregard human respect when there's question of the glory of God and the good of the Company. O Sisters! you mustn't have any, either. Let us always look to God and never to what people will say, when the interests of God are at stake. So then, Mademoiselle, I think you should send her home as soon as possible. Don't keep her longer. Oh, no! the sooner, the better.@

When Mademoiselle asked M. Vincent how to go about this, he continued, AWrite to her parents and to the Pastor of Saché, who sent her to you, and don't wait for a reply. Inform them that you're sending her back in four or five days, and be sure to have her leave. To the mother, say that she's ill; and to the Pastor, explain the entire affair.@

When someone objected that, if her departure was to take place so swiftly it would have to be at our expense because she had brought nothing to this house, he said we should prefer paying the costs to keeping her any longer. Then he asked if there was any other business.

Mademoiselle stated that there was a young woman in Angers helping the sick under the direction of the Ladies of Charity recently established. She had a great desire to give herself to God in the Company; she was strong and skillful, had a good mind, and was promising, but was subject to an illness that was a type of epilepsy; however, her attacks were neither frequent nor severe.

AYou must understand,@ said Most Honored Father, Athat this is a troublesome illness that may really cause inconvenience and even get worse with age. It's an irregularity for the reception of Holy Orders, so an epileptic can be ordained only with a dispensation. Since this is a young woman, however, the matter may not be so serious. I do know that a well-regulated Community wouldn't accept her. That's why I don't think we should accept her either.

ASo much for reasons. We might add that, being already involved in doing something she does well, it would seem better to leave her there because the most common temptation for those who are doing some good in the world is the thought that what they left behind was more worthwhile than what they have undertaken, and that often causes them to leave.

AOn the positive side, she's a sensible young woman, with good judgment, strength, and skill--qualities very necessary for a Daughter of Charity. Weighed against them, her ailment doesn't seem so great. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister said that she didn't think we should burden ourselves with such illnesses. Another added that we recently had the experience of one Sister who didn't succeed because she thought she was doing better on her own. The others were of the same opinion.

Most Honored Father's Assistant said he didn't feel that the malady had to be an impediment to anything, but, since the young woman was doing well where she was, he thought it a good idea to leave her there, for fear that she wouldn't do the same here.

AAnd what does Mlle. Le Gras have to say?@

AFather,@ she replied,@ I don't think the illness is an impediment; but, for the other reason given, I think it more advisable to leave her there a while longer because, since she's now involved in the service of the poor but sees that she might not be able to do the same here, that might put her off. Besides, she has the applause of everyone, and she'd see that she wouldn't be getting any special attention. If God wants her, He'll cause her to persevere in her desire and will strengthen her with time. That's why I think it's a good idea, Father, to leave her where she is.@

In reply, Most Honored Father said, AI'm really consoled, and there's great reason to hope and believe that God has presided at this little Council meeting because He has given you a similar way of thinking in deciding what is most reasonable. Well then! we'll leave it at that for the present, asking God to be pleased to bless this Council more and more. Counsel is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Pray for it, and never give your opinion before you have turned to God. When a matter is proposed, raise your mind to God to ask what He wants you to do and say. Oh! let's all ask this of Him together and thank Him.

*Sub tuum praesidium. . . .*

### 159. - COUNCIL OF JUNE 19, 1647

After having invoked the assistance of the Holy Spirit by the *Veni Sancte*, M. Vincent said: AWe have many matters to consider at this meeting, Sisters; for that reason, I have decided to speak to you about the importance of holding the Council meeting in the way necessary to profit from it.

ASince these are important matters, it's advisable to get more than one opinion. There's less risk of error with several, and God gives a special blessing to advice taken for matters related to His service. That's why, Sisters, to teach you how to discuss business, I'll tell you that, when matters are proposed, before everything else consider the purpose, which must be the glory of God; after that, the interest of the Company; and lastly, the welfare and advantage of the persons with whom one has to deal. As regards the purpose, for example, take Sister Anne,<sup>1</sup> who's preparing to go to Montreuil. To understand this clearly, look at what she's going to do there. She's going to open a new establishment for the assistance of the bashful poor of the town and to raise the orphans. It's obvious why she's going there. So much for the purpose.

ATo find suitable means for implementing this plan, look to God: if this is done, will God be glorified by it? Will it be beneficial to the Community, and will the neighbor be helped by it? Then we have Sister Jeanne<sup>2</sup> who is going off to visit our Sisters in Nantes and Angers to observe each one's dispositions. Above all else, look to God's interest. Many Communities consider only the interest of the Community, for it's so great that it encompasses the interest of God. As for me, however, I think the latter certainly merits being viewed before any other, Sisters. From that starting point I think the rest can be more clearly known. Now, doesn't it seem to you that this is the first thing to consider when we come to Council? What do you think, Sister?@

Questioned one after the other, all the Sisters replied Ayes.@ Mademoiselle added that there could be another fault, which would be to focus too much on oneself and one's interests.

*AO mon Dieu!* yes,@ responded Most Honored Father, AI almost forgot to say that, and it's so important. Alas! we'd spoil everything if we paid too much attention to that. Sometimes, when my opinion is asked, I feel the stirrings of this self-interest, but I turn to God immediately. Wouldn't He be offended by that? Does His glory allow it? In this way I come around to reason. It's natural to consider ourselves, Sisters, but we have to turn immediately back to God.

AWe have to beware of something else--not that I see it among us, by God's mercy, but since we're speaking of considering ourselves, this remark is appropriate.@

Here Mademoiselle said, AWhat I mentioned about self-interest, Father, comes from my own experience of the faults I have committed several times in that area, for which I most humbly ask

your pardon. @

Most Honored Father had her stop there, saying, AAlas! how many times a day I, too, do the same! @ And he went on: ASo, Sisters, this is the fault into which we can fall if we look at ourselves too much: wanting our opinions to be followed; and, if someone else has a contrary view, wanting to have the upper hand because we know a little better how to uphold our own opinion. Oh, Sisters! To want to be thought clever because we know how to give reasons to support our opinions is an ill-regulated love of our own esteem, of which we must beware more than of anything else. Well, God be praised! I hope that He in His boundless kindness will grant us the grace for this.

ANow we have two matters to discuss: the journeys of Sister Anne and Sister Jeanne. I think we should begin with Sister Anne. Mademoiselle, have you thought about whom you'll give her as a companion? @

After Mademoiselle replied that the Sister who had been suggested<sup>3</sup> was the one she felt most suitable, he continued: ADo you have any guidelines for journeys? @

Mademoiselle said that it was our custom to pay our respects to the Blessed Sacrament in the churches of the places where we stopped and to visit the sick, if there were any; to instruct along the way children or poor persons, taking with us for that purpose rosaries, holy pictures, and catechisms. When we had to stay at inns, we never ate at the general table but went to our own room.

AThat's very good, @ said Most Honored Father. AIn the past I was amazed at how the Jesuits never take a trip without having in writing all they're supposed to do, and it's even in their Rules. Since then, however, experience has taught me that this is extremely necessary, for a person can't fail if he observes his regulations.

ASo, here we have Sister Jeanne, who is leaving for Nantes,<sup>4</sup> going to a house she has never seen, and among people she doesn't know. Won't she be very pleased to have in writing the orders she's supposed to follow? Someone may say that those are business matters, and when dealing with an intelligent person, it's enough to tell him or her; but, believe me, Sisters, having it in writing is the surest way.

ASo then, we have Sister Anne on her way, too. What will she do when she arrives? First of all, what route will she follow? There's the Calais coach and the one that goes to Abbeville; one passes through Montreuil and the other doesn't go that far. Don't you think she should take the one that goes there? I think it would be better. @

Since everyone agreed, he continued, AWhen she gets there, will it be better for her to stop at an inn and send someone to inform the Comte<sup>5</sup> that the Sisters are there, or shall they go directly to the chateau to meet with him? If they were nuns, they would have to send a servant, but since these are Sisters who come and go in the world, I think it's better for them to go there themselves. The other way would be putting on too many airs for Daughters of Charity; don't you think so, Mademoiselle? @

Mademoiselle and the Sisters replied that it would be better for them to go to him.

ASo then, now we have to see who will be responsible for the bashful poor, and who will take care of the poor children. What do you think, Mademoiselle? @

Mademoiselle said that, since Sister Anne had a great deal of experience in serving the sick, she thought it better for her to be the one to care for the bashful poor; and since Sister Marie Lullen knew how to work with children who were in the hospital, she would do well with them. They could, however, help one other, so that, when a need arises, one won't say to the other,

AThat's not my business.@

At that, Most Honored Father said: AFor a long time I have been hoping--and I really do wish--that our Sisters would reach such a degree of respect among themselves that persons outside the Community would never know which one is the Sister Servant; for, Sisters, since God is but One in Himself, and in God there are three Persons, without the Father being greater than the Son or the Son being greater than the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup> it should be the same for Daughters of Charity. They should be the image of the Most Holy Trinity; and even though they are several, they should form but one heart and one mind.<sup>7</sup> Among the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, even though their operations are diverse and attributed to each one in particular, they are related to one another, without implying that to attribute wisdom to the Son and goodness to the Holy Spirit deprives the Father of these two attributes, or that the Third Person lacks the power of the Father or the wisdom of the Son. In like manner, among the Daughters of Charity the Sister who is with those who are poor must be in close contact with the Sister who looks after the children, and vice-versa. Furthermore, I wish that, in this respect, our Sisters might conform themselves to the Most Holy Trinity so that, as the Father gives Himself entirely to the Son, and the Son entirely to the Father, from whom proceeds the Holy Spirit, likewise the Sisters might be totally one for the other to produce the works of charity attributed to the Holy Spirit, in order to have a kinship with the Most Holy Trinity. For Sisters, you can see that the person who says charity says God. You are Daughters of Charity; therefore, as far as possible, you should conform yourselves to the image of God. This is the goal of all Communities that aspire to perfection.

AAnd what is there in God? There is equality of persons and unity of essence. And what does that teach you, except that all of you, such as you are, must become one and equal. If there has to be a Superior--a Sister Servant--then she should be an example of virtue and humility to others: the first at every task, the first to throw herself at the feet of her Sister, the first to ask forgiveness, the first to set aside her own opinion to follow that of another. That's what the saints did; that's the advice they gave to those aspiring to their Order; and that's what must be done by everyone who wants to lead a life of perfection. For what the Bishop of Geneva<sup>8</sup> said about Peter and John, he said of all other Communities; and what he taught Peter and John, you should do. Oh! may God in His goodness be pleased to make it so. Don't you think that would be well, Mademoiselle?@

Mademoiselle answered that she certainly desired it.

AThen please receive Communion tomorrow for that intention--and you, too, Sisters--asking God to give this Spirit to the entire Company.@

They all showed that they desired this.

AWell, that's enough for today. I didn't expect to dwell on that topic, but for a long time I've felt impelled to say these important things to you, So then, God be praised! I'll say good evening to you. The other matters can wait until tomorrow. We'll be seeing one another again.@

*A Sub tuum praesidium. . . .*@

## 160. - COUNCIL OF JUNE 20, 1647

AYesterday<sup>1</sup> we spoke about Sister Anne's journey, the route she should follow, her conduct on the way, what she'll have to do concerning the Count on her arrival, and even how she should act with her Sister.@

Thereupon Mademoiselle said, AFather, I think we need to discuss how our Sisters should act

with regard to the Count because, since he doesn't have important business there and is fond of this establishment, he'll be with the Sisters quite often.@

ASister Anne,@ said Most Honored Father, Ashould consider the Count as a Lord whom God has established there to govern in His place and who has full authority; moreover, he is one of the finest men of his rank; that's obvious from his zeal in establishing this work. So, Sister owes him respect as a great Lord, obedience as a Governor, and every kind of submission as a benefactor. He must be considered in God and God in him, with all possible respect, honor, esteem, and deference.@

ABut, Father,@ said Mademoiselle, Aone thing may happen: since the Count is so extremely frank and open that he would share his thoughts with a child, he'll easily voice his opinion to our Sisters. And since that may seem like a sign of trust, we easily allow ourselves to speak freely, and without considering the difference between their station and ours, we sometimes fail in respect by taking too many liberties with them.@

AOh!@ said M. Vincent, Athat's a very good point and really needed to be said, for the Count is the best man alive. If he sees that you're the least bit interested, he'll unburden his heart and tell you everything. Your duty is to listen with respect and always keep him apprised of what's going on in your establishment. Never, however, complain about your Sister. Always let him see that there's a good understanding between you, for he's very astute. No sooner would you say something about your Sister than he would want to speak with her. The result would be that, by talking with her, he would oblige her to talk, for that's what happens when we tell our business to persons outside the Community. Then he would be put off, would complain here and there to others--to M. D. L, and M. . . . , and to people to whom he spoke about his project. He would say freely: >those Sisters aren't what I thought they were; the Spirit of God isn't there; they don't get along; there's no union between them.' Oh! he would say that openly.

ASo watch out for that, Sister; never complain to him about your Sister, speak only well of her to him and never otherwise. I can't sufficiently recommend to you respect and discretion with regard to him. He'll visit you often, perhaps, and Mademoiselle had very good reason to raise this issue. If you please him, he'll sing your praises; if you don't, he'll tell you so frankly and complain about it. So, Sister, be very careful to satisfy and edify him, and respect what he tells you to do, as if it were God Himself speaking.

AI recall that, when I became part of the household of the General of the Galleys,<sup>2</sup> I took the resolution to look upon him as if he were God, and his wife as the Blessed Virgin, and to do everything they directed as coming from God and the Blessed Virgin, and I can say that, if I had any success there, I attribute it to the intention I had on entering their service. Likewise, Sister, if you consider God in the person of Comte de la Noie, God Himself will bless your way of acting, and you'll succeed in it.@

AVery well, Father,@ said Mademoiselle, Aand what about the sick? If he wants to change something in the system observed there, shall the Sisters follow his wishes, as for example, to distribute more food, or to hand out money instead of food, or something else? Do you think it advisable for them to take Regulations for the Charity with them?@

AOf course they may take them, and if he asks for them, they can simply say to him, >Monsieur, this is what is done elsewhere.' And if he wants them to act differently, they'll do so.@

AFather, what shall they do at present at the hospital?<sup>3</sup> I don't know whether it's the Count's plan for them to go into it right now. He told me he had a room prepared for them, but he didn't

say where. I think it's somewhere else, perhaps, because he doesn't want it to be apparent that that's why they're going there; nevertheless, I think he's planning for them to train the young women.@

AThey have two--even three--things to set as their goal,@ said Most Honored Father. AFirst, they must reflect that they're going to a place to which they are called, and where it's likely that God will be glorified by this; after that, they'll either be set to work in the hospital or they won't. If they aren't, fine! they'll be happy to be placed elsewhere; if they are, in the beginning it will be only to train the young women, following the way it's done here. Be very careful, however, not to let it appear that you're so much as thinking about the hospital, but be very reserved, give good example, and don't interfere with anything. There are some young women there now for the care of the children. If you're there, and they remain to work under you, as the Count claims, treat them with great kindness and cordiality and put up with everything; oh yes, Sisters! put up with everything because they've been there for some time, perhaps, and had hoped to remain there. It looks as if it may be a disgrace for them or for their families if they were to leave, or if someone else came in to reform them. That's very important, Sister. You have to empathize with them and realize that, if they're not chagrined by it, they're at least distressed. That's why you have to tolerate everything that resentment and sorrow may cause them to say or do against you. No matter where we go, there's always a bitter cup to drink, and we have to be resigned to that.

AWhen we were in a place to which some religious had called us,<sup>4</sup> we were determined to put up with any annoyances that might come to us from them--and we had plenty. All that is past now, thank God--or at least there are very few misunderstandings--but five or six years had to pass, with many contradictions. The Superior of the religious<sup>5</sup> regretted his decision. If he met someone in the city who said to him, >What were you thinking about? You've done harm to religious life,' that was enough. If, when he returned from town, the porter didn't open the gate fast enough, that was all he needed. If someone in town remarked: >I went to see you.' Oh! what a disaster! And what had to be done? Alas, Sisters! I had to go throw myself at his feet, ask pardon for everyone who had displeased him, and take the blame once again. He would calm down, and then, on another occasion, it would begin all over again. I think he saw me at his feet over fifty times. But wasn't that necessary? Fair enough! They're the ones who assured our livelihood. A little suffering was a cheap price to pay for it.

ANow then, Sister, what I especially recommend to you in regard to those good young women is to humble and abase yourself; and, if they accuse you of any fault, admit it and ask their pardon. Nothing wins hearts as that does. Recently that good man told M. Lucas<sup>6</sup> >Sometimes I had regrets, but that poor man used to come and kneel before me, and that won my heart.' So, Sister, humble yourself with regard to the Count, too; for, if you don't, he'll see it very clearly and won't hide it from you.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, Aas for the system followed in the hospital, I think it's almost like what is done at the Foundlings. If it's not the same, shall they change something?@

ADon't change what is good,@ said our good Father. ANo matter where I go, my maxim is to change nothing that isn't bad to adapt it to my own style. I much prefer to adapt myself to it because I think, >Who am I to want to order and change things? The people who did them had their reasons for doing them that way, and they sought advice; and should I upset everything by doing things my way? Oh! I much prefer to adapt myself to them.' I say the same to you, Sister; try gently to remedy what you consider bad and prejudicial to the glory of God or the salvation of the neighbor; but, as far as possible, don't touch what isn't bad.@

At that the Sister to whom he was speaking<sup>7</sup> said, AFather, the Count told me to observe what was going on in the hospital and see how it was administered so I could report back to him, but that upsets me because I really don't want to be a talebearer.@

ASister,@ said Most Honored Father, Athe things that happen there are either good, bad, or indifferent. If they're good, don't be afraid to say so; if bad, tell the truth about them but be very careful not to be mistaken, and be really certain before mentioning them; and report things as gently as possible. If they're indifferent, don't say anything at all, or, if you're asked about them, if the Count wants to be informed and you have knowledge about them, tell them as they are, without adding anything. We must always consider God, Sister, and never ourselves. If God wants you to stay there, He'll be well able to provide the means without your seeking them; if He doesn't want you there, then you mustn't want it either.

Als there anything else to discuss?@

Mademoiselle proposed the question of the Sisters' confessor, saying that there was a priest at the hospital who had charge of the boys, and she felt that the Sisters shouldn't go to him for confession because of the possible dealings he might have to have with the children. To this M. Vincent replied, ASince I don't know the priests in that region, it's really difficult to say to whom they'll go, but they definitely shouldn't go to the priest at the hospital;<sup>8</sup> and he should even live elsewhere. With regard to priests, Sister, never have any communication with them outside of confession; for we see the evil caused by this, and it's only too true that the majority of disorders arising in religious Communities are caused by us clergymen. Show them great respect and great reverence, but don't get involved with them. As for the confessor, there are all sorts of religious there, but I think it's better for them to go to one of the good priests of the parish. Don't you think so, Mademoiselle?@

She answered Ayes,@ and then remarked, AFather, there's something to be said now about the way our Sisters should act when they're together. Wouldn't Your Charity consider it advisable for them to spend some time together each day--half an hour or so--to share with one another what they've done and the problems they've encountered, and to talk over what they'll have to do?@

AO *mon Dieu!* yes!@ said Most Honored Father, Athat's a real need: close communication with one another; sharing everything. Nothing is more necessary. It unites hearts, and God blesses the advice received, with the result that things go better. Every day at recreation you can say, >How did things go with you, Sister? Such and such happened to me today; what do you think about it?' You can't imagine what pleasant conversation this makes. When, on the contrary, each one does her own thing, saying nothing about it, that's intolerable. There's a Sister Servant in the Company who causes incredible pain to her Sisters because she's like that. For my part, I find that, in places where we have poor beggars of the Mission, if the Superior is open and shares matters with the confreres, all goes well. If, on the other hand, there's someone who's aloof and uncommunicative, that could close hearts, and no one would dare to approach him. So, Sister, that's a real need: nothing should happen, nothing should be done or said, unless each of you knows it. You must have this mutuality.@

Then the Sister inquired whether, when she had to go to speak to the Count, she shouldn't first ask her Sister's opinion, to which he replied, AYes, Sister, and, if possible, you should speak to him only when the two of you are there together. Sometimes, since he'll come to see you, perhaps both of you can't be there; in that case, don't refrain from speaking to him, but, if possible, don't ever go alone to his house. And for any other business whatsoever, Sisters,

always seek one another's advice and, take my word for it, you should always try to follow your Sister's opinion rather than your own. The Bishop of Geneva used to say that he would rather bend his will to that of fifty other people than to try to adapt the will of one single person to his own. I knew a Councillor of the court who had been a Huguenot, and who, after his conversion, attained great perfection. Although he was a Councillor and up in years, he never did anything without seeking advice. If no one else was about, he would send for his valet, >Come here, young Pierre. I have to attend to a certain business matter; what do you think I should do about it?' His valet would answer, >I think you'd do well to act this way.' >Fine, Pierre; right you are. I'll follow your advice.' And he told me that he felt God blessed matters in such a way that any business he carried on in that fashion was successful.

ASo much, then, for Sister Anne. She'll have to write. If she encounters any other difficulty, she'll inform us, but it won't be necessary for her to say anything about it to the Count. She can just say, >We'll think about it, Monsieur,' and, in the meantime, she'll write to us. In the beginning, she should write at least every two weeks. Afterward, when everything is well established, she can do so once a month, as a rule.

ARight now, they'll have to have great humility and submission with respect to the town authorities--and even the people--showing great honor and respect; in a word, trying to satisfy everyone in order to win them over to God. I'll be glad to speak to those two Sisters together before they leave.@<sup>9</sup>

Mademoiselle asked whether the Sisters should prepare their meals there the same way we do here because perhaps people might want them to have something better.

AOh! that could very well be; however, Sister, you should always follow the custom you see observed at the Motherhouse. The Count may very well tempt you--yes, tempt you--to see what you'll do, but simply excuse yourselves saying, >Monsieur, we don't do that.' @

AFather,@ Mademoiselle went on, Awhat about the money remaining from their journey? Wouldn't it be well for them on their arrival to give it to him?@

AYes, Mademoiselle, that would be very well; it's good for him to witness that simplicity. Sister, you can say to him, >Monsieur, we were given such and such an amount; we spent only so much; here's what's left over.' You must get on with him in a manner that pleases him, for he has great respect for the Company; and if the slightest thing offends him, he won't be silent about it.

ANow then, Sister Jeanne<sup>10</sup> will really need four minds. If she could take along Mademoiselle's, that would give her great pleasure. Right, Sister? Well, I don't think I have anything else to tell you just now. We'll have to see you later.@

The next question was whether a Sister from Loudun,<sup>11</sup> presently placed in Angers, should be dismissed. She had made it clear that she wanted to leave; besides, she had such a nasty disposition that she often went three or four days without speaking to anyone and wouldn't eat. Some Sisters thought she should be dismissed since she was asking to go and was so ill-humored that, even if she herself hadn't asked, there would be good grounds for sending her away.

AGenerally speaking,@ said Most Honored Father, Aeveryone who expresses a desire to leave should be sent away. When one of our men was leaving us, he said to me, >If I had any advice to give you, Monsieur, and knew how to give it, I would tell you that, as soon as someone tells you he wants to leave, he shouldn't be kept any longer, for he'll only have a bad influence on the others.'

ANevertheless, Sisters, sometimes there are passing temptations, as in the case of a good

Capuchin I used to know. Once, while he was still a novice, he was attending Vespers. Since he had been a famous hunter, the pleasures of the chase came to his mind. All he did was think about horses, hounds, and birds; he was pursuing a hare. In a word, that's how he spent the time of Vespers. When he came to himself, he was really amazed. >What's this?' he said. >You want to be a Capuchin and here you are, returning from the chase. You're not fit to be a Capuchin; you should leave.' And off he went to find his Prior saying, >Father, have them give me my clothes; I want to leave.' >What's wrong, Brother?' said the Prior. >O Father, I'm not fit to be a Capuchin; I just came back from Vespers; and all through the Office I never left the hunt.' >What, Brother? You went hunting during Vespers? And were you in the choir?' >Yes, Father, but all I could think about was the chase. That's why I beg you to have them give me my own clothes, for I'm not fit to be a Capuchin.' >Well, tell me, Brother,' said the Prior, >when you were hunting like that, when you were pursuing the hare, did you cry out, AOh! the greyhound! Oh! the greyhound!@ >Oh no! Father; I didn't say a word.' >Well then, it's nothing, Brother. You'll make a fine Capuchin.' And so he remained, lived to a ripe old age, and attained great perfection.

AI said this, Sisters, to inject a little humor into our meeting, but also to tell you that, when we recognize the deceits of the devil as in that case, there's no danger in trying to help those assailed by them. But, when we see that these come from the persons themselves and they persist in them, then such persons must be removed.

AWhen Sister Jeanne<sup>12</sup> passes through that place, she'll see that Sister and how she is disposed. She'll also see what Abbé de Vaux and M. Ratier<sup>13</sup> think about it and will let us know, and we'll tell her what she'll have to do on the way back.@

Next, three Sisters were proposed: two to be sent to Nantes<sup>14</sup> and one to Angers.<sup>15</sup> Then M. Vincent said, *Sancta Maria succurre miseris*, etc., and gave the blessing in these words: AI ask Our Lord to give you His blessing to carry out all the things that have just been decided so that they may be done in the manner that will be most pleasing to Him.

*Benedictio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. . . .@*

## 161. - COUNCIL OF OCTOBER 30, 1647

ASisters, we have to deal with certain needs that Mademoiselle has noticed in the Company; if action has to be taken concerning them, it's better to do so now than later on. Things haven't yet gone too far. Mademoiselle Le Gras is still alive. What we do at present will remain forever; but, if we let things become outdated, when, later on--thirty, forty, or fifty years from now, if the Company lasts that long--someone might try to correct them, it will no longer be possible. People will say, >That was done at the beginning; that has always been; M. Vincent was there, so was Mademoiselle Le Gras, and they approved of doing things that way.' That's why, Sisters, if there's something to be done for the perfection of this Company, it must be done as soon as possible.@

Mademoiselle Le Gras questioned whether it's advisable for our Sisters in the towns and countryside who teach school to take both boys and girls and, in the event that they do take boys, to what age they will keep them.

AThere are many reasons in favor of that. First, it can do a great deal of good, imparting the

rudiments of piety to these young children, who might otherwise never be instructed. Second, this seems to be a necessity because in most localities there's no schoolmaster. In the third place, the parents want this, and they seem to have good reason for it because it's to be desired that their sons be at least as well instructed as their daughters. For that reason, in most of the places where they are, they pressure our Sisters to take them. In the fourth place, there seems to be nothing to worry about regarding the schoolmistress; such very small boys can't be a source of temptation for her. There doesn't seem to be any danger. These are four reasons why it seems suitable to take them.

Contrary to the above, we have a royal decree forbidding this and a similar ruling from the Archbishop. Another reason is the one why the prohibitions were issued. The devil insinuates himself everywhere, and we've seen such bizarre incidents that it seems necessary to eliminate any occasion for them. A while ago, in a nearby village, some girls were going to class in a teacher's residence. A priest over sixty years of age, he was so unfortunate as to assault them and committed sin. He was condemned to be burned. The sentence was executed, and the documents in the case were burned along with him. Now, although I don't know that anything similar happened to any women--and people aren't saying that it did--we do know what the devil could do. This happened to a schoolmaster who had a few little girls as pupils. We must fear for ourselves what we see happen to others.

In the third place, suppose we did take boys. We couldn't keep them very long, and it would be a big problem when we had to send them away.

In the fourth place, we shouldn't take them, according to the laws and prohibitions issued by the King and the Prelates, which seem to point out to us God's Will; and, in fact, we must believe that His Will resides in what they ordain for us. Since our Sisters should be the first to carry out lawful orders, it would be worse for them to take them than for anyone else.

So, these are four reasons why it seems our Sisters shouldn't accept boys, contrary to which you have four others: first, it can do some good, and would be a pity not to do it; second, it even seems a real necessity since there's no schoolmaster; third, the parents want it; and fourth, there seems to be no danger to fear for either the schoolmistress or the children. I might even add a fifth; namely, that you're already doing this with your little foundlings. You have boys and girls, so it would be no worse for the Sisters to take them in villages where they teach school. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister felt that, as long as the boys wore smocks, they could be admitted because there seemed to be a need for it and there was nothing to fear. Another Sister thought they should never be admitted, for the reasons given.

Mademoiselle mentioned some problems because of which she had sometimes allowed boys to be admitted; namely, that at times a little girl couldn't attend school unless she brought her younger brother with her, since their mother was not at home to look after him.

M. Lambert,<sup>1</sup> Most Honored Father's Assistant, thought that, in such cases, the little boys could come but should return home once they had learned their prayers, and the Sisters would not teach them how to read.

After listening to the various opinions, Most Honored Father gave his: I think it will be well for us to follow the regulations made about not accepting boys at all. The King made that decision after seeking advice. The Prelates are guided by God, and they gave this mature consideration, doing so for reasons that should prevent us from doing it. To do the contrary would be to expose a Sister to danger. In addition, even though there seems to be no apparent

risk, we couldn't prevent the thoughts they might have if the devil interfered, and grave disorders might arise.

ASecond, even if you were to accept boys, you couldn't take them younger than six or seven years of age. It wouldn't be suitable to keep them after they had reached eight, and even that would be too old. Sending them back home after a year's schooling, just when they're beginning to learn something, would be very painful. To dismiss their children from school then would be like extracting a tooth from the parents.

AIn the third place, there would be constant disputes. Our Sisters would have to contend with the parents of those they sent home and the parents of those they were unwilling to accept, and there would always be something that had to be straightened out. It would be impossible not to displease someone.

AIn the fourth place, even though they were to admit only the younger ones, there might be some free spirits stationed in distant places who would accept older ones and might cause scandal for the Company.

AFor all those reasons, Sisters, it will be well not to admit them at all. Two or three of us feel the same way. It should be left at that.@

The second question proposed by Mademoiselle was to know whether we may take boarders at the Paris Motherhouse and in the country. Some think this could do a great deal of good both for the young women we would take and for the house as well. The girls would receive good moral training; principles of virtue would be instilled in them early on, and, while they were still young, many evil tendencies could be broken that might ruin them if they were not carefully uprooted. As concerns the house, perhaps some of those raised among you may want to remain here. It's not rare to see girls who, in their youth, had been boarders in religious houses, have a vocation to become nuns. Who knows what God might do?

AAnother reason is that we're being strongly urged to take them; the parents wish it, and it's very hard to refuse them in the places where our Sisters work, especially in the rural areas.

AAn added reason is that taking boarders is no inconvenience, provided they have separate beds, for in no way must they be allowed to sleep together.

Alt would probably bring in a little money to the house. They could pay a fair rate. Children don't cause great expense. So then, it seems in many ways that this could be arranged and would be no inconvenience.

AOn the other hand, you have to remember that having boarders to discipline is a great concern to Sisters who already have their patients to nurse and schools to staff. They owe all their time to the poor, and taking in boarders would be to use it otherwise.

AIn the second place, think of the heavy work it creates because it requires great care.

AThese, I think, are reasons contrary to taking them. Weighed against them, you have to consider the good it could do, the advantage the house could expect from it, the desire of the parents, and the slight inconvenience caused by taking them in. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sisters felt that, for the trouble caused and the opportunity given to the Sisters to break or become relaxed in their Rules, it was more fitting to refuse boarders than to admit them. In addition, they didn't think there was much profit in it.

Mademoiselle judged it impossible to take them in at the Motherhouse in Paris and in all the parishes, but in the rural areas it seemed almost a necessity, since most of the Ladies who found establishments or contribute to them suggest and desire this, and they themselves are the ones who bring them to our Sisters. As for the inconvenience, since our Sisters are less busy in the

country than elsewhere, it shouldn't cause them too many problems. And for the possibility of breaking the Rules, those who were strongly attached to their practice wouldn't allow themselves to be led astray, whereas those who might be capable of breaking them would do so anyway. Since some already have boarders for whom the Ladies themselves are paying, it would be very difficult to send them away; that might offend the Ladies and cause them to abandon everything. For all these considerations, Mademoiselle thought it advisable to take some in certain places in the country.

Despite the reasons given, M. Lambert, M. Vincent's Assistant, thought they shouldn't be admitted since the personalities of the Sisters sometimes clash, and they're not so even-tempered that they don't have slight differences. If those girls should notice this, they could ruin the reputation of the house. Furthermore, since our Sisters have very little time for their spiritual exercises, they would, of necessity, be thinking about their boarders instead of making their prayer. They would have no freedom; the boarders would observe everything they say and do, since there's no place to give the girls separate accommodations.

Most Honored Father, taking up the discussion, said, I feel the same way, Sisters; namely, that you shouldn't take them. Oh no! not at all. In the first place, the good to be done by instructing them well is not to be considered, since, if it causes a Sister to break her Rule, that's a greater evil. To think it may produce good candidates for the Company is very rash. I've never observed that persons who have been boarders in religious houses remained there; they're usually weak people, not good-hearted, and the nuns don't want them. The Bishop of Geneva has allowed the Visitation nuns to take some, but there must never be more than six. If he felt this would have done a great deal of good, he wouldn't have restricted them to such a small number.

Moreover, if they come from good homes and pay a fair amount for board, they have to be treated differently from yourselves. It's inconvenient to prepare two menus. If, to avoid the trouble of fixing two separate dinners, our Sisters--since there would be only two of them--were to think of eating what their boarders eat, they would deviate from the frugality of their house, which is the soul and life of the Daughters of Charity. Yes, Sisters, frugality is the soul of your Institute. You subsist by it, and will subsist as long as it exists among you. But, as soon as you grow slack and no longer are satisfied with soup, bread, and cheese, oh! farewell to the Daughters of Charity! Don't even mention them again. For this reason, then, it's certainly advisable--and even necessary--for us not to take them either in the country or in Paris. @

Mademoiselle asked permission to speak, explaining to him that, regardless of the social standing of the boarders, they were informed when they took them in that they would eat the same food as our Sisters.

No matter, Mademoiselle, @ said Most Honored Father, for there are other reasons to the contrary that have been given--and very important ones--namely, the difficulty the Sisters may sometimes have in getting along with one another. If a girl should become aware of this, she'll tell everybody about it. Next, if a Sister has gone a long way to carry remedies to the sick, no sooner will she return home than, instead of thinking about making her examination of conscience, she has to think about her boarders, and all the time she could be devoting to God she'll have to spend looking after them. Perhaps you'll tell me that, since there are two Sisters, the one who teaches the children could easily teach the boarders as well. But that's not everything. The laundry and cleaning must be done; the children must be dressed; someone has to keep an eye on their conduct. If the Sisters have several patients, and both of them leave the house, the boarders will be in danger; any number of accidents could occur. There are other

persons who risk nothing by taking boarders because they're totally devoted to that. Leave matters as they are and don't take any anywhere. As for the Sisters who already have some, they can keep them, for fear of upsetting the Ladies too much; but they must not accept any others.@

For the good of the Company and the progress of our Sisters, especially since, in the regular conferences, they sometimes don't accuse themselves of anything, or don't express it properly, or mention only the smallest part, often keeping silent about what would be most necessary to say, Mademoiselle Le Gras asked whether it might not be well to have a Sister whose duty would be to say, if another Sister failed to accuse herself of a certain fault, ASister, in a spirit of charity, I remind you that you committed such and such a fault, which you forgot to mention.@

AI believe that's done in several well-regulated houses and is very helpful. What do you think, Sister? Do you think it would be advisable to do that in the Company?@

The Sisters thought it would be very useful and, when Mademoiselle was asked, she said she had felt it was a necessary practice because she saw that our Sisters were gradually becoming careless in not mentioning their biggest faults and were taking it amiss when reminded about them. She said that, if at least there was a directive about this, they would have to abide by it, and she hoped they would be more careful in correcting themselves.

Most Honored Father was then informed of what we do at the regular conferences, of which Mademoiselle gave him a brief report, after which he said, AOh! that way the accusation is free; but, as Mademoiselle is suggesting, the Sister responsible--or even Mademoiselle--will mention what they forget to say.@

Questioned as to how he felt, M. Lambert replied that, among the Jesuits, this was done during reading in the refectory. The Superior would give the reader a list of the faults he had noticed, and the reader would say them aloud; they had no other way of reminding one another. They succeeded so well in this that their progress in virtue was visible, and he felt that this practice, as they observed it, could only be very worthwhile; consequently, he felt that it was apropos to introduce it into the Company.

After M. Lambert had expressed his opinion, M. Vincent continued, AThen you all agree that it would be well to do that? Oh! God be praised! So do I. Have you spoken about this to our Sisters? Do they know you're thinking of doing it?@

Mademoiselle told him that, before informing His Charity about it, she had proposed it to the Sisters in a conference and had given them time to pray and reflect on it. Then, as a follow-up, she had asked for their opinion in a subsequent conference. All those she questioned--by far the majority--seemed to desire it.

AThat's very good. It now remains to be seen how you'll do it. First, there'll have to be a Sister placed at the Motherhouse responsible for bringing to your attention the faults she notices. You'll draw up a list of them, which you yourself will read at the conference the first time. Afterward, that could be the duty of the Sister who represents you. These Sisters will have to be the outstanding ones, the pillars of the house. I repeat, they should be the first ones.@

Thereupon Mademoiselle told him that she thought she had to be the one. AOh! that's not necessary, but, as I told you, it can be the leaders, the most dedicated Sisters in the house.@

Mademoiselle intervened again to find out whether the Sisters might not perform some little acts of humiliation.

AOh yes! it's certainly right that, when they recognize their faults, they do some little penance. We'll give you some notes on what might be suitable. We still have to consider the dismissal of a young woman from Le Mans and one from Normandy.@

Thereupon Mademoiselle gave the reasons for dismissing first the Sister from Le Mans, especially since she herself had asked to leave because of some incident in a parish where she had been placed. They had kept her to see whether she could adjust, and, in fact, she was fairly well disposed right now to remain in the Company, but, since she was melancholy by nature, as soon as anything happened to upset her she would stop eating and speaking and would become ill, as she had been for two months. There was no sign of a fever but she had been nothing but sad and chagrined for a month. In addition, she seemed to have weak lungs. It was decided that she should be sent home.

As for the Sister from Normandy, she was a good young woman who for a long time had wanted to enter the Company before being accepted. She was very gentle, but extremely slow and sluggish. She was also in very poor health and had been ill since her retreat, as she had been shortly before her entrance into the Company.

On this question, Most Honored Father said, AIn well-regulated houses, very close attention is paid to the strength of the Sisters. There are many religious Orders where a complete physical examination is given. Now, if there's such close observation in religious houses, in the Company, where you have to work much harder, no one can be accepted who may be a burden to the house. If Sisters aren't very strong, they may have some useful talent such as being able to teach school and render other services. Does that Sister know how to read?@

Seeing that the little she knew gave no grounds for hope of her being of service for very long, particularly because of her slowness, it was decided that she should be sent home.

Taking advantage of the presence of M. Lambert, Mademoiselle brought up a third Sister, who had been in the Company for over four years and had always been ill, but often the cause of her illness was not clear. Besides this, she had never given evidence of loving her vocation, always choosing malcontents as her companions. She was neither devoted to nor careful in the observance of her Rules, seeming to want to please herself and to spare herself in such a way that it was felt that, if she could have found a better opportunity elsewhere, she would have taken it. In addition, there was something to be feared in leaving her with our Sisters any longer because of the bad example she was giving the others by doing nothing at all.

Someone mentioned the length of time she had been at the Motherhouse, what she knew that could be helpful there, and how her departure might affect people, who were upset by the belief that we got rid of Sisters as soon as they became ill, she being their example of this.

Thereupon our Most Honored Father remarked, AAs soon as you see someone who acts listlessly, continues as she is, and doesn't correct herself, there's no hope for her. The infirm who are kept by Communities must be examples of regularity, virtue, and modesty, whose love for their vocation and their punctuality are the reasons why they're kept. Otherwise, that would ruin everything; for persons who do nothing and aren't well-balanced have more effect on weak minds than others who are good. That's because the mind has a tendency toward evil and would rather side with such persons if it's not firmly anchored in virtue, than it would favor the virtue of the one who could help them. Consequently, I think it's necessary to dismiss this Sister. Since, however, she has been at the Motherhouse a long time and doesn't openly appear to want to leave, it will be fitting to suggest this to her and, while reminding her of her ailments, to try to help her make up her mind to leave. You might tell her that, when she's in another place where she'll have less work, she'll feel better. No matter what, we have to dismiss her.@ This was agreed and done.

ANow we have to see whether to assign a Sister for the formation of newcomers. It seems to

me we've already discussed that. It's a matter of great importance for the good of the Company and has always been our practice. Previously it was done in several places, particularly at the Hôtel-Dieu, in the following way: a newcomer was entrusted to an older Sister to be trained and looked after; but the Anieces@ became so attached to their Aaunts@ (as they were called) that partialities arose, causing disorder in the houses. So, it was thought more appropriate to appoint a Novice Mistress; they were all placed together and the place was called a *novitiate*.

Alf anything is necessary for the advancement of the Company, it's this. Who is your choice, Mademoiselle?@

Mademoiselle then reminded him that it had already been decided that it would be Sister Julienne Loret.

So he continued, AO Sister, what do we want to do with you? This is the first and most important responsibility after that of the Superioress. It's a question of forming young women who can serve God in the Company, helping them to put down deep roots of virtue, teaching them submission, mortification, humility, and the practice of their Rules and of every virtue. Well, then! we'll give you some guidelines on how to proceed, for you'll have to have them carry out some exercises privately and have a separate place for them, if there's some way of doing so.

Thereupon, it was represented that we couldn't give them separate sleeping quarters and it would be difficult for the newcomers to make meditation and say their prayers separately, especially since the Sister assigned them as Directress recited prayers for the whole Community. Most Honored Father approved of that, provided that at an appointed time of day they would come together for an instruction by their Directress, according to the Rule he would draw up for us, and he added, AYou're deeply indebted to God, Sisters, oh! really deeply indebted (I don't know who will thank Him for this nor who will be able to do so) because His Goodness takes care to purge the Company of subjects who may do harm to it, and furnishes the means to perfect those who remain in it! That's admirable. For your part, Sisters, you must thank Him as much as possible and be very faithful to Him.@

He then said *Sancta Maria succurre miseris*, and gave the blessing as follows: AI ask Our Lord in His goodness to deign to animate you with His true Spirit, so that everything you do and say may be to render Him the service He expects of you. In this confidence, I now pronounce the words of blessing: *Benedictio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi*. . . .@

## 162. - COUNCIL OF MARCH 22 [1648]<sup>1</sup>

At the short meeting of March 22, M. Vincent addressed various topics proposed for the good of the Company by Mademoiselle, who began as follows:

AFather, since the need of our Sisters in Nantes still exists, I had the thought of making a novena to Our Lady of Loretto, whose chapel--a replica of the original--was recently built at the Madeleine convent.<sup>2</sup> And since then I thought it would be a good idea to extend the novena to include the entire Company.

Next, I also thought of including your house, Father, if you agree--not because it has any need, but because we need its assistance. Now, my idea was that, since the first devotion to Our Lady of Loretto was established at the Temple,<sup>3</sup> we could begin there and proceed to the chapel of the

Madeleine convent close by.@

When Most Honored Father had taken the vote of the Sisters, who found the proposal useful, he said, AOh! I think it's a good idea, too, and God be praised, Mademoiselle, for inspiring you to seek His assistance by this means! I'll thank Him especially for it and offer Mass for that intention.@

Mademoiselle next suggested that they begin on the eve of the feast of the Annunciation, because that's a special day for the Company, and the first Sisters to make their total gift of self in it had chosen to do so on that day. In addition, the Loretto chapel had been specifically dedicated to that holy mystery, which took place within it.

She most humbly asked His Charity to do us the kindness of sending us one of his Missionaries to say Mass on the first day and the last, which he most willingly granted, entreating God to be pleased with this; he also thought it was a good idea to begin it on the eve of the feast.

Mademoiselle continued with the second topic as follows: ADuring the past few days, Father, we dismissed Sister Marguerite who was at the school. She and a few others were involved with a confessor, to whom they were attached--so strongly attached that two of them stated they couldn't possibly go to any other confessor. Now, because of the number of Sisters, and because the regular confessor is busy with the church, we usually allowed the Sisters to go to two or three, one of whom was this priest. However, since we saw the disorder and harm this was causing, we tried to put a stop to it by sending our Sisters to La Chapelle<sup>4</sup> for a while; then we recalled Sister Marguerite, whom we had been keeping for more than a year, more through lack of courage, I think, than out of pure charity. We felt that, because of other traits she had--not bad ones but certainly contrary to the spirit of well-regulated Communities--we really should have removed her. Although she wasn't the first to have them,<sup>5</sup> she was the most attached and was influencing the other Sisters in such a way that they seemed to separate themselves from the rest of the Company and form a body apart both at church and in the house, where they would go off to speak about their confessor, the guidance he had given them, and the advice they had taken, as if they had to follow his guidance alone. No virtues were seen among them, only self-will and personal practices. They wouldn't go to Communion on the appointed days--most often because he forbade them to do so--and they asked no one's permission for this.

Now, since she has gone, all that has disappeared, by the grace of God; they have calmed down, and those who found it impossible to go to the regular confessor are now indifferent about that. So, Father, for the reasons that had caused us to allow two or three of them to go when needed, I ask Your Charity to consider whether it might not be appropriate to restore the same freedom and, if they can't find the regular confessor, that they might be permitted to go to one or to another, when the first one isn't available.

After Most Honored Father listened to the entire proposal, he replied, AYou did very well to dismiss that Sister, Mademoiselle and you'll always do well in similar cases not to keep others like her, if, after you've tried every way and means to bring them around--as you did with her--they're unwilling to mend their ways. I'm well aware that it breaks your heart and tears out your insides to reach that point; I feel the same way. When I see someone who has to be sent home, I dread it so strongly that I would prefer to have three bouts of fever. But, there's no other way; we have to be strong. The surgeon who knows only how to apply plasters is no skillful person; he has to know how to cut and amputate a member when the others risk being harmed by it. Jesus Christ, Eternal Wisdom of the Father, wanted to teach us that lesson when He said, >One scabby sheep suffices to contaminate an entire flock.' This comparison is so apropos that Our Lord

seems to have uttered it purposely; for it's true, Sisters, that it takes only one unbalanced person, convinced of an erroneous opinion, to draw others to his or her way of thinking. What a poor shepherd a man would be if, knowing a sheep to be scabby, he failed to remove it, placing the entire flock in danger of being lost! Likewise, Superiors of Communities would be blamed if, knowing they had someone of that kind, they kept the person.

Now, as for confession, Sisters, that's something of the greatest importance, for everything that's good and bad in us is results from it. Therefore, there must be no constraint. Let's keep this among ourselves. Pope Clement VIII<sup>6</sup> issued a decree ordering that nuns whose Rule obliged them to go to only one confessor should be provided with two, so that, if they experienced some repugnance at going to one, they could go to the other, for there is question of committing a sacrilege. To obviate difficulties that might arise, I thought it well to have a conference some day on this topic. Meanwhile, we must use this light God has given to the Church for its guidance, which can't be mistaken, for these are lights coming from heaven. So, Mademoiselle, it will be a good idea for you to restore this liberty, and, if you notice these attachments cropping up again, do something about them. I hope, however, that this won't be necessary, for once a mischief-making person has been removed, all those who espoused his or her opinions usually calm down. I sometimes observe this among us, and it seems to me that, whenever it happens, God gives signs soon after that it was pleasing to Him. @

AFather, @ said Mademoiselle, Amay I tell you how I understand what you just said concerning confessors? Ordinarily, as far as possible, the Sisters will go to only one confessor; but if they can't go to him, they may go to others, among whom the priest of whom we're speaking, a very upright man, will be included. @

To that Most Honored Father replied, AWe must abide by what I told you, which has been ordered by the Pope and passed from him to the entire Church, namely, that they may choose one of the confessors, and if someone is reluctant to go to the regular one, she may take the other of the two designated, provided this choice be free of attachment. There must be a holy liberty, and if those persons don't agree with that, then some solution has to be found. Not that this has to be done for all of them, nor in the same way, for a simple reminder will suffice for some; for others, strong persuasion must be used; in the end, we'll even have to resort to extreme measures. @

AFather, @ said Mademoiselle, Ashouldn't those who choose a confessor, go at least sometime during the year to the regular confessor in order to observe uniformity and not to appear singular? @

AYes, Mademoiselle, @ said Most Honored Father, Athat will be very apropos. @

Thereupon Mademoiselle, introducing another question, said, AFather, recently Sister Turgis<sup>7</sup> asked me for a catechism and we sent her one. She didn't find it sufficiently complete and requested that we send her another. We sent someone to ask M. Lambert for one, and he sent us Bellarmine's;<sup>8</sup> he told the Sister to whom he gave it that it was very scholarly and intended only for Pastors. Now, since we shouldn't appear too learned, I entertained the thought of not forwarding it, but since I was being pressured, I did,<sup>9</sup> telling her simply to read it because, since we don't automatically understand what we read in the book, it doesn't seem sufficient just to memorize and recite it. @

AMademoiselle, @ Most Honored Father replied, Athere's no better catechism than Bellarmine's; and even if all our Sisters should know and teach it, they would be teaching only what they're supposed to teach, since they are there to instruct others, and they would know what Pastors should know. Do you know what maintains those two or three Sisters of Mme. de

Villeneuve?<sup>10</sup> It's understanding the meaning of that catechism; they teach it and thereby do incredible good. It would be well to have Bellarmine read to our Sisters and for you yourself to explain it to them, so that all of them may learn it thoroughly in order to teach it; for, if they have to teach it, they also have to know it, and there's no better way to learn it more thoroughly than from that book. I'm glad we spoke about this, for I think that will be very helpful reading for them.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, AI thought of asking Your Charity the following: Since we don't have much time for instruction at our Friday conference because of the accusations, might it not be better once a week, on a day when we wouldn't be hindered by them, to give an instruction on the practice of a certain virtue, or the manner of serving the sick spiritually, or on some other subject, according to the need we would see?@

AWe have to study that,@ said Most Honored Father, Afor it has its pros and cons. On the positive side, it could only greatly benefit the whole Company because it would open minds to help them use their reasoning on the topic of the conferences. They need this because, while some grasp things quickly, others are unable to understand. It seems that this informality would make it easier for them. Another benefit is that it would keep their minds recollected, and the more they would hear virtue mentioned, the more familiar they would become with it.

AOn the opposite side, having this exercise too frequently might cause weariness and distaste, which would hinder the good results that could be hoped from it. You have these conferences monthly, besides one every Friday; this would make an added one during the week. I think that might dishearten people. However, I think it might be apropos for you to try it for a month and then allow some time to pass. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister felt that it would be a good to have it weekly because, since Mademoiselle was often in poor health, she wouldn't continue it uninterruptedly very long; and instead of causing weariness, it would spark their desire. The other Sister felt the same way. Mademoiselle said she had thought of it as a means of making reparation in some way for the faults which, by her bad example, she committed in directing the Company.

Most Honored Father replied, AGod knows, Mademoiselle; but I agree to your doing it. At our house we have another custom that really helps to maintain us: repetition of meditation in the morning. I can vouch for the fact that it has good results. It's unbelievable that God would let me be dry at prayer. My hope is that I'll learn from one of the good Brother some of the inspirations he had, and from which I'll benefit. I expect that from God's goodness, and He hardly ever fails me. Listening to those good Brothers is such a great consolation to me! And our Sisters! When I hear some of our Sisters say certain things, I can't tell you how touched I am. I don't know if others are like me, but that's how I am when they say something edifying at repetition that's beneficial to others and to themselves. Then I speak to them, and if some reminder has to be given, I say it. If any of them has committed a fault, they say so, and they are called forward: >Come here.' They kneel down to hear the correction and they accuse themselves. Without that, being as busy as you see me for the rest of the day, I wouldn't know where to begin to correct the disorders that so easily slip into Communities, if we aren't very careful.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, Ain suggesting to you a little conference every week, I wasn't thinking about having our Sisters speak there--just myself, to give them some instruction. This being the case, do you approve of my telling them the topic the day before or the morning of the meeting so they can prepare for it? There'll be no harm in sometimes also taking Bellarmine's catechism, and having something read and explained to them. At other times, I'll do as I just

suggested.@

ATry both ways. And you, Sister,<sup>11</sup> who are in charge of our new Sisters, help them to understand clearly how to make their prayer on the subject of a conference, and the reasons for doing a certain thing. For this, you have to make them realize the advantage of preparation for prayer and the disadvantage that comes from omitting it; afterward, they should consider the means that can lead them to make this preparation as perfectly as possible. In a word, Sister, it's your duty to help them to be able to do this.@

At that, the Sister knelt down and asked that someone else be appointed in her place because she felt incapable of doing that and of informing Mademoiselle of her faults, since she was not sufficiently enlightened to recognize her own.

ASister,@ Most Honored Father replied, Aon your own, you could never do it; you have neither the ability nor the insight, but Our Lord Jesus Christ will act in you; He Himself will be your ability and your insight. Make yourself a good, prayerful Sister, and Our Lord will teach you everything you'll have to know.@

Mademoiselle then noted that Sister Guillemine<sup>12</sup> had been taken from St-Paul. Sister Jeanne, who had already been there a year, had been left there but hadn't managed to learn anything about the parish, the Ladies, the poor, or the medicines. Sister Marie-Marthe<sup>13</sup> had been sent to replace Sister Guillemine and has been longer in the Company, while Sister Jeanne has been in the parish longer. Which one of the two should be the Sister Servant?

The Sisters thought that, although Sister Marie-Marthe was newer in the parish, she should be Sister Servant, since the other Sister didn't know the parish any better than she. Besides, she was older in the Company and very exact regarding the customs, so it should be she rather than the other. Mademoiselle was of the same opinion, and Most Honored Father said, AI agree. Among the Daughters of Charity, the one who is the most exact should always be in charge.@

AFather,@ Mademoiselle asked, Ashouldn't we take into account the satisfaction of the Sisters?@

ANo, never,@ said he, Aonly virtue. Disregard age, disregard length of time in the Company, disregard social standing; consider only virtue. No choice must ever be made except in consideration of a person's virtue.@

Mademoiselle then said that when the Marquise de Mortemart<sup>14</sup> had withdrawn her daughter<sup>15</sup> from this house, she had come nowhere near paying her expenses, and it was very likely that the house had been wronged. Mademoiselle wanted to know whether it would be proper for us to bring this to her attention, or should some friends inform her of it.

When Most Honored Father heard to what sum that might amount, he said, AYou have to consider two things: first, whether you'll ask for--or have someone ask for you--what you think is due to you; second, whether you want to offer that to God and await from Him alone the reward for what you've done, taking that as a warning He has given you to do nothing out of consideration for the world or social rank, but to do all for His love, and never anything for any other motive. What do you think, Sister?@

The Sister replied that, before His Charity had suggested the two courses of action, she had been inclined toward the first, for the interest of the house. Now, however, she felt it was better to let God compensate for this loss and to learn the lesson He had allowed it to teach us. The second Sister thought that at least one request should be made, and if we were not given anything, we shouldn't mention it again.

Mademoiselle was of the opinion that--not openly, but on a suitable occasion--the lady should

be discreetly informed that she hadn't settled her account; if she did nothing about it, we should leave it at that.

AOh! Sisters,@ said Most Honored Father, AI don't think you should ask for anything. Even if you have nothing but the lesson you learned from this--of doing nothing out of consideration for the world--I would think you were well enough paid. Believe me, God wanted you to see that you're not for persons of rank; you're only for persons who are poor, and henceforth you should adopt this as a maxim of not taking in boarders. One of the beautiful things I find in Mademoiselle de Villeneuve's Regulations is not to take upper class boarders, >because, Monsieur,' said she, >that would eat up all our time. If there's anything good in the house, it would have to be for them; they must be served, even if everything has to be stopped; the others will want to act like them and everything will fall into disorder.' Oh! Sister, how beautiful I found that! You must resolve to do likewise and to believe that this is what God wanted you to see on this occasion, for which you really should thank Him.@

Mademoiselle next asked whether one of our Sisters in the Company, following the advice of Mme. de la Porte,<sup>16</sup> should go to see the Duchesse de Longueville,<sup>17</sup> on whom depended the parish served by that Sister.

Most Honored Father accordingly said, AMademoiselle, I think I told you previously that the Daughters of Charity must not seek recognition from important persons. What's the use of calling on a Princess without necessity or for some business? If she hears of the Sisters' virtue, of their good lives, of the service they give to those who are poor, well and good. Virtue, and nothing else, must distinguish the Daughters of Charity, and they should never seek to make themselves known. May God in His goodness be pleased to give them this spirit and to bless the resolution we now take to do our utmost--not by ourselves, but by Him--to instill that in us!

*Benedictio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. . . .*

### **163. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 13, 1651**

On April 13, 1651, Most Honored Father thought it well for us to hold a short meeting to deal with several needs of the Company and particularly to elect a Sister Assistant to replace the late Sister Élisabeth Hellot. This election was unable to take place sooner because of the commitments of the Sisters.

Assembled in the parlor at Saint-Lazare were Sisters Julienne Loret, then First Assistant; Sister Geneviève Poisson,<sup>1</sup> representing the senior Sisters; and I. M. Vincent asked us what business there was, and after the Sister Servant<sup>2</sup> had given him the agenda, Most Honored Father said:

ASisters, having Sisters who act as a Council to the Superioress is a real necessity. All Communities are very strict about this, but the choice of these Sisters is extremely important, and so is changing them, so that several may be formed to be in authority and to give good, sound advice.

ADo you know, dear Sisters, what qualities they must have? First, they should love and esteem their vocation, be virtuous, and give good example; they must also have common sense and good judgment, and be very exact in the practice of the Rules. All that is important for the good of the Company, so that the Sisters may be formed and become accustomed to the practice of solid virtue. This is also important in order to conduct the business of the Company with

confidentiality. Therefore, Sisters, reflect carefully before God on the person you consider capable of carrying out this duty. Who do you think might be proposed, Sister Geneviève?@

The Sister stood up and said: AFather, since I usually don't reside at the Motherhouse, I can't judge too well, but it seems to me that Sister Marguerite Ménard<sup>3</sup> or Sister Phénix<sup>4</sup> would be quite suitable.@

In reply M. Vincent said: AThe candidate should live at the Motherhouse.@ This held true for the former. Then the Sister gave her reasons for nominating the two Sisters.

AAnd you, Sister?@ said M. Vincent, speaking to Sister Julienne.

AFather, I thought Sister Françoise-Paule<sup>5</sup> would be well suited, or Sister Ménard, but the latter has been in the Company only a short time.@

When Most Honored Father asked the Sister Servant what she thought, she replied that the first two named seemed to have the requisite disposition to be Assistants, but there was still something to be desired at present because Sister Phénix had been in the Company scarcely a year, and Sister Ménard hadn't yet been in it six months. As for Sister Françoise-Paule, right now she was too involved in business that others couldn't take over without being prejudicial to the interests of the Company. AWe do, however, have Sister Jeanne de la Croix,<sup>6</sup> a virtuous Sister who gives excellent example. She's gentle and charitable with the Sisters and is also a hard worker, which seems necessary in a Sister Assistant to make up for my failings that prevent me from being the first to do the work, as I should be doing.@

As soon as I had finished, our two Sisters remarked that they hadn't thought of her, and since that was simply an oversight, they felt she would do well.

AWell, Sisters,@ said M. Vincent, Aleave it at that. I certainly think Sister Jeanne is a good Sister and will do well. Be well convinced, Sisters, of the truth that Sister Assistants or Councillors should be changed for several reasons, one of them being that a Sister shouldn't become attached to this duty. Another is that it's a good idea for several Sisters to be formed to serve the others, for the entire welfare of the Company depends on the care the Sister officers should take of the whole family, giving very good example to it and acting with great solicitude. For that reason, you should never again go for so long without holding an election.

AYou still have a number of other questions on your agenda, but we can't settle them today. I ask God to bless the Sister you've named.@

Then he said the *Sancta Maria succurre* and gave us his blessing, asking God to grant us the grace of making good use of the guidance of Divine Providence for His glory and the good of all the souls in the Company.

## 164. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 15, 1651

Two days later<sup>1</sup> Most Honored Father did us the kindness of agreeing to our meeting in the same place--the parlor at Saint-Lazare--which we did with the same Sisters and the aforementioned Sister Jeanne de la Croix. Surprised at this, she was asking in her humility to be excused, not knowing what it was all about.

After the *Veni Sancte* had been said, and the minutes of the previous session given to M. Vincent, he said to us: AAt these little meetings, Sisters, we must speak in the presence of God, pay close attention to what's being said in order to give our mature opinion, and avoid repetition.

This will be easy if, recalling what a Sister has said and being of the same opinion, we can say: >I think that what has been said can be done for the reasons stated;' or >I thought such and such because of such and such a reason.' For you see, Sisters, when there's question of the glory of God, there must be no human respect, although we shouldn't contradict anyone, but simply give our opinion when Superiors ask for it.@

The first item proposed was whether to send Sisters to Picardy to help Sister Guillemine and three others. They had gone there a long time ago to care for the suffering and sick poor persons in that region, who had been reduced to the greatest misery by the devastation of the wars of the preceding year.<sup>2</sup>

ASisters,@ said Most Honored Father, Aso that we can judge things clearly, the person who proposes them should explain the situation and then give the reasons why something should or shouldn't be done. So, Sisters, I'll tell you that I think it would be well to send Sisters there: (1) because Sister Guillemine wishes this; (2) because it's not the custom of the Community to leave Sisters on their own as they are, being a league and a half from one other; and (3) because the priests who are also assisting poor persons there have thought it advisable to give each of our Sisters a girl they sent from Reims, but this isn't working out well--whether it's her fault or our Sister's. For all these reasons, it would be desirable to send some of our Sisters rather than to leave them there alone.

AOn the other hand, it's very difficult to find any to send because you don't have any. You're being asked for in several places and you can't respond. Another reason for not sending them there is that this work is temporary and shouldn't last much longer. But the strongest reason is that, since they aren't too far away, they are able to console and help one another by meeting together.@

Then, beginning with Sister Jeanne he said, AWhat's your opinion, Sister?@

Since this was the first time Sister had been at one of these little meetings, she found it difficult to be the first one to speak, but M. Vincent said to her, AGo ahead, Sister; it's the custom for the one sitting on the right to begin.@ In this way, he avoided telling her that it was the last in office who was called on to speak first. From this we should learn not to humiliate the persons to whom we're speaking. This has always been noted in the talks and conferences of Most Honored Father, and usually in his private communications as well.

AWell, Monsieur,@ said the Sister, Athe place where our Sisters are working isn't an establishment; for if it were, it would seem advisable not to leave our poor dear Sisters so isolated, and I know how hard it is to live and work with persons who aren't like us.@

ANo, it isn't,@ M. Vincent replied, Abecause the Sisters are going to be there only a short time. And you, Sister, what do you think?@

AFor the reasons given, Monsieur, I don't think it's really necessary to send one of our Sisters, even though it's very hard to be alone in a place.@

AAnd you, Sister?@ >Monsieur,' she replied, >because of the need for a Sister represented by Sister Guillemine, and for all the other reasons you mentioned, I think we need to send one of our Sisters there to satisfy her.'

AAnd your thought?@ said Most Honored Father to the Sister who was near him.<sup>3</sup>

Alt seems to me, Father, that our Sister's desire to have another Sister is legitimate in a certain sense but, since we're in such great difficulty, it's well to defer sending her one; for, being with another Sister would be an occasion of practicing virtue, since she would be obliged to put up with a great deal in order to give good example to the neighbor. The most pressing reason to

send someone is the fear that, because it's our custom not to leave a Sister alone in a place, this might set a precedent. But, as our Sister has so well remarked, since it's not an establishment, there's no inconvenience.@

AWell then, Sisters,@ said M. Vincent, Apostpone that.@ And on the proposal then made to him as to whether or not she could get some help from our Sisters in Sedan, His Charity resolved to write to the Priests of the Mission who are in that vicinity.

AAanother suggestion was to send one of our Sisters to a hospital for the sick and other poor persons in Hennebont, in Lower Brittany, where we have two Sisters, Sister Anne Hardemont and Sister Geneviève.<sup>4</sup> Since the work is much greater than they can handle, they had to have a young woman stay with them to teach them to speak low Breton and give them other information. It didn't take them long to realize the incompatibility of having persons outside our Company as associates, and for that reason they were making an urgent plea for a Sister.@

After M. Vincent, with his usual charity and humility, asked our Sisters' advice, he said, APlease see that the decision we're taking is put into effect as soon as possible; I promised those gentlemen that a Sister would be sent to them.@

To this the Sister Servant replied, AFather, the difficulties we find in sending a Sister alone on such a long journey, and in finding one suitable for this in every way, has caused the delay.@

AWell now, Sister, do you know what should be done? Be sure that, when the coach for Orléans leaves, someone you know is traveling in it and you have some assurance that they're in good company. Recommend them to the coachman, and even give him a little something. When they get to Orléans, have the Sister wait there a few days in order to go by boat<sup>5</sup> with someone safe. And, after taking all these precautions, trust in Divine Providence, who never fails us in our needs. By the grace of God, I don't think anything has ever happened on the journeys our Sisters have taken that might give us cause to fear for them. Isn't that so, Sisters?@ To this we replied that God in His goodness had always protected us. AMay He be praised for that, Sisters!@

Another proposal concerned the need to send an experienced Sister to Chars,<sup>6</sup> where the Pastor had died a year ago. He was a very upright man, always most solicitous for the Sisters, and they respected him highly and had great confidence in him. The one who was replacing him, however, although a very upright person also, was very strict and filled with the maxims of the Jansenists, and he was trying to make them give an account of their interior life and all their actions, wanting them to make general confessions and several other things. Our Sisters couldn't agree to this, despite the fact that, without causing any harm, some agreeable, discreet souls might have been able to satisfy him. On the contrary, they were so exasperated that in truth we couldn't blame our Sisters, given the situation of the Pastor and everything else. Those good Sisters needed a very thorough visitation, especially because, since the death of the Marquise d'O<sup>7</sup> had died, that place belongs to M. de Luynes.<sup>8</sup>

AFor several reasons,@ said Most Honored Father when he heard this, Asomeone should be sent there as soon as possible, the first reason being that our Sisters must not have any difference of opinion with the Pastors. That good gentleman M. de Luynes is extremely strict, and he and the Pastor are certainly adherents of those new opinions.<sup>9</sup> That's why, dear Sisters, we have to choose a Sister who is very prudent; first of all, to recognize where our Sisters are at fault, for we have to believe that there's some fault on their part; and then it will be well for her to inform us of anything unusual so we can get things organized there.@

After hearing our Sisters' opinions regarding this need, M. Vincent, our Most Honored Father, said, AIt will be well that Sister Julienne<sup>10</sup> be the one, since she also has to go to the country for

some other reason, and this should be done as soon as possible. @

The next point concerned whether or not to accept a good nun who had left her convent with a few others who were removed from there because of several cases of possession--a very fine woman who ardently desired to join our Company.

This is a very serious matter, Sisters, for several reasons. She's a nun who has left her convent, where she had been for a long time. Consequently, her lifestyle has been quite different from yours. We couldn't accept her without a dispensation from the Holy Father. She has relatives, persons of rank, who want to place her elsewhere--although that's no reason for refusing her. What do you think, Sister? @

Monsieur, @ said the Sister, it might be a little strange to see a nun among us, and perhaps our Sisters would be upset by it. That good Sister has a hard time walking. @

And you, Sister? @

Monsieur, I don't think that would be very suitable for us. She's not used to working; then, too, if people saw a nun among us, that's all they'd need to start saying that all of us will soon be nuns as well. @

Sister Julienne? @

For all the reasons you and our Sisters have mentioned, Monsieur, I think it would be inappropriate to accept that good nun. @

His Charity then asked the Sister Servant what she thought should be done, and she replied, Father, it's true that this nun has a strong desire to belong to the Company; she says she's assured of being able to remove her habit without a dispensation and to enter any religious Order and Company she wishes because the reasons forcing her to leave the convent where she was make her departure considered as regular. No other women are being received there, and there's a great evil spell in the house--even several nuns who are still possessed. Nevertheless, Father, were it not. . . . @<sup>11</sup>

### 165. - COUNCIL OF NOVEMBER 9, 1653

On Sunday, November 9, a short meeting was held with M. Vincent our Most Honored Father to send Sisters to Nantes to replace Sister Jeanne Lepeintre, Sister Catherine,<sup>1</sup> and Sister Jacqueline,<sup>2</sup> who had been recalled. Sister Marie-Marthe<sup>3</sup> would be sent as Sister Servant, and Sister Anne de Vaux<sup>4</sup> and Sister Madeleine Micquel<sup>5</sup> would replace the other two. His Charity told us that when we were called to the meetings to give our opinion, we should first recommend this to God, and, when questioned, be prepared to answer as follows: 'I'm of such an opinion for such and such reasons. @ But be careful, Sisters, @ he said, to give your opinion before stating the reasons causing you to think that way. If another Sister has spoken before you, and her opinion is different from yours, you must reply to the reasons she has suggested by giving other reasons, and say, >As to what has been mentioned, which is such or such a thing, I'd like to respond with such or such a reason.' @

Having said this, Most Honored Father pointed out to us the great privilege of being in this house and of working for all the Sisters in general, stating, Sisters, if you only knew how well the Sisters who work in this house can serve the Company, and how pleasing to God is a Sister who focuses on Him in her words and gives the example to her Sisters in her actions! That Sister does more than if she were some place where she might do wonders, because here she's working to form the Company. Yes, Sisters, even if the Daughters of Charity in Poland<sup>6</sup> were to work

miracles, that's nothing; it is something, but little in comparison with the good that's done by those here at home who give good example to their Sisters, particularly to newcomers, by their patience, mutual support, gentleness, cordiality, humility, and charity toward one another. I believe those virtues will sustain and have sustained the Company; and, on the contrary, nothing does more harm in Communities than bad example.@

## 166. - COUNCIL OF JUNE 11, 1654

Most Honored Father, Mademoiselle, and several of our Sisters assembled in the parlor of Saint-Lazare to choose the Sisters who were to go to Châteaudun to open a new establishment.

ASo then,@ said Most Honored Father, Ait's a matter of choosing the Sisters to be sent to Châteaudun;<sup>1</sup> and since it's very important for us to send Sisters who have the necessary qualifications to places where our Sisters have never been, let's see what should be done about that.

AFirst of all, let's choose Sisters who meet more or less the following criteria: they shouldn't be fond of conversing with many various persons, nor of revealing their interior problems either to a religious or to some priest--this one today, another one tomorrow. Nor should we choose those who like to speak on matters of devotion to anyone who will listen, because a great deal of talk doesn't help people to advance in virtue.

ASecond, they shouldn't be gadabouts who like to visit their acquaintances. Oh! we must be far from having this spirit, Sisters! A Daughter of Charity who takes pleasure in company other than that of her Sisters shows that she doesn't love them; for you see, we cannot have two loves, any more than we can have two hearts. If the Daughters of Charity like to gad about outside their own house, going to see Mme. So-and-So, spending their time chatting with her, they show that they don't love the Company or the conversations of their Sisters. Oh! what a great evil that is!

AThird, let's try to find Sisters who don't permit men to enter their rooms. Recall carefully what I have so often recommended to you on this point. Even should it be a Brother of the Mission, or M. Portail, or myself, don't allow it, unless it's a necessity in case of illness. Apart from that, your room must be closed to men, even under pretext of speaking of good things, of explaining something to you, or of asking you something. You see, those who seek advice from many people resemble persons engaged in a lawsuit. A man who is fond of bickering over points of procedure finds a lawyer and tells him why he wants to go to court; he lays his case before him. If this lawyer tells him he's in the wrong and his cause is unjust, he doesn't believe it and goes off to find some other lawyer who can tell him: >Don't worry, friend, you'll win, you have a good case.'And because it's not enough to find just one who thinks he has a good case, he'll go to look for a second one.

AIN the same way, there are people who are never content. They give their opinion; they ask advice; to one they tell their troubles; to another they ask what they should do to get rid of them; to someone else they will tell the moods of their Sisters and the patience they need to put up with them. Why do you think they do all that? To find someone who will flatter them in their opinions. Experience proves this; for, if someone gives them good advice, they don't follow it, but, like that litigant, think they are misunderstood, and they have to speak to someone else about it. Then, after all that, they do whatever they please. This is what Holy Scripture teaches

us: >They seek those who will confirm them in their bad opinions, they ask for advice, and in the end, they do as they please.<sup>2</sup>

Aln the fourth place, we must choose Sisters who don't love money. Ah! *Mon Dieu!* If, unfortunately, anyone in the Company would so far forget herself as to make a little bit of money for herself on the side, she should be dismissed--although I don't think there are any, by the grace of God. I say then, Sisters, that you must avoid this sin and never take for yourselves anything from the money of the poor or from what is in your savings because it doesn't belong to you. When the devil wants to make someone fall into sin, he begins with little things; today he'll make you keep back a denier, tomorrow a sou, and in this way the evil keeps growing. Judas began by covetousness; he went so far as to sell his Master.<sup>3</sup> See where the love of money led an Apostle of Our Lord! And if this Apostle, who had received so many graces, worked miracles, and lived so many years in the company of Our Lord, fell in this way, do we not have reason to fear this sin? I'm wondering if, with time, it might be better for our Sisters not to buy anything or have anything to do with the money of the poor, so as to avoid all suspicion. We'll think about this before God. Meanwhile, however, remember that you should never dwell on the desire to possess a single sou.

AThere's a story--I think it's in the life of Saint Gregory<sup>4</sup>--in which it is related that, after the death of a religious, they found on him a purse full of money. Since that was against the Rule, it was ordered that he not be interred in holy ground, but that his purse should be buried with him. Well, Sisters, doesn't this example show clearly how dangerous this evil is?

ALastly, let's try to find Sisters who don't like to write or receive letters from their relatives, friends, or anyone else; for it's a bad sign when Daughters of Charity come to that, and it's a means of committing serious faults. We've seen persons lost for having taken the liberty to write and receive letters without the permission of Superiors. Yes, Sisters, they had begun well, but allowed themselves to do things unworthy of their state. That's why the Sisters we send must be far removed from taking this liberty. I say that, under no pretext whatsoever, should they seek to receive letters from a confessor or a priest, even under the guise of preserving the friendship and acquaintance they may have. Ah! Sisters, those who dare to receive or send letters without showing them to Superiors are capable of many other wicked things.@

Most Honored Father then asked a few Sisters what Sisters they judged suitable for the new establishment, and they mentioned some. Mademoiselle said that they were very good Sisters but were too young and were needed where they were.

AYou see, Sisters,@ said M. Vincent, Awe have to act like parish officials in the rural areas. When they are choosing those whom they want to put in charge, they say to themselves, >This one will be good for the coming year, that one in two years, such a one in three years.' Likewise, we have to see who will be suitable in a few years and keep them for that time. As for those who are ready now, they should be named.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, Ait's very difficult to find Sisters who have all the qualifications you just mentioned.@

ALook, Mademoiselle, they have to have them--or have little in them to complain about. Moreover, they must be Sisters who have good judgment, prudence, and leadership qualities; for there's a vast difference between piety and the ability to be good leaders. You might find a very pious person who wouldn't be at all suitable. That's why we have to pay attention to that, and choose Sisters with good judgment.@

@Father,@ said Mademoiselle, AI don't think it would be such a bad thing if we were to find

persons who might acquire these dispositions with time.@

AI think I told you previously that we should always use the best ones in the beginning because the solidity of the building depends on that. >But, you may say to me, >why put what is best in the foundation? Why not put it in the middle, where it can be seen?' When Solomon had the temple built, he placed precious stones in the foundation--emeralds, rubies, topazes, and other precious metals.<sup>5</sup> And why, Sisters, did they not put these beautiful stones in the middle or on the front, where they could be seen? Ah! because when someone wants to erect a beautiful building, the best stones should be used. So, Mademoiselle, we must make it a rule always to send virtuous Sisters to new establishments.@

After Most Honored Father had heard the majority vote, he said to the Sister who had been chosen as Sister Servant,<sup>6</sup> ASo, Sister, you are the one Divine Providence has chosen, along with the two others who have been named, since you received the greatest number of votes. For that's the custom, Sister; we choose the one with the largest number of votes. Well, Sister, will you be a precious stone? Will you be a ruby or an emerald?@

AFather, I don't know what I'll be; I'm really afraid I'll be nothing but mud.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, Awe have two difficulties to bring up concerning two young women. One, who is already in the house, has shown by some little devious acts that she doesn't have the requisite qualities for a Daughter of Charity. She may, however, acquire them in time. The other is a young woman from Saint-Denis, who wants to belong to the Company. She appears somewhat frail and has been slightly ill at the Hôtel-Dieu. It seems she may be consumptive; and if that's the case, there's no hope of accepting her.@

Most Honored Father listened to what M. Portail, Mademoiselle, and the Sisters had to say, and it was decided that the first Sister, who had already entered, should be given a trial for a few months in menial, degrading duties to find out with time her dispositions and to see if she might be suitable.<sup>7</sup> As for the other, she could be given some medicine to take at home to see if she might get better; or she could be accepted on condition that she be willing to return home after she had been in the house for a time without receiving the habit, if she didn't have sufficient health to remain.<sup>8</sup>

## 167. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 8, 1655

On Thursday, April 8, a short meeting, regarding the recall of our Sisters from Nantes, was held in the parlor of Saint-Lazare. Present were Most Honored Father, M. Alméras (at the time, First Assistant to M. Vincent at Saint-Lazare), M. Portail, Mlle. Le Gras, and three of our Sisters.

After Most Honored Father had invoked the assistance of the Holy Spirit, he explained why the meeting had been called and the pros and cons for this recall.

AThe first reason why it seems we should leave our Sisters in Nantes is that it appeared to be a call from God. The municipal authorities,<sup>1</sup> knowing the Daughters of Charity, came to ask for them, making every possible effort to obtain them, and we granted their request. This may show that God willed it. In addition, those who asked for them to serve the poor people of Nantes had the duty and authority to make the appeal, since they are responsible for the hospital for poor persons and for their welfare. Now, when persons who hold the place of Superiors do something, it's very probable that it comes from God. So much for the first reason why the Sisters should

remain.

AThe second is that it will be said everywhere that the Daughters of Charity have deserted that place. Perhaps those gentlemen will ask for M. de la Dauversière's Sisters<sup>2</sup> or the ones from Rennes.<sup>3</sup> That will spread everywhere, and everyone will speak about it according to his or her own feelings on the matter, which will cause great scandal for the Company.

AThe third reason is that there will be great scandal among the Sisters within the Company when they hear that our Sisters have been recalled from Nantes. They will conclude that, if such a measure had to be taken, something went wrong there, and it is to be feared that this may cause great scandal.

AThe fourth and final reason is that there are few states and vocations in the world in which there isn't something to suffer. How many troublesome things are to be endured in marriage! Even in Communities, though people live more peacefully in them, there are still sufferings. In short, there's no state or condition without its share of trouble.

ASo then, those are the reasons why it seems we should still be patient and try to continue the service of poor persons in that hospital.

AHere now are the reasons for a recall. The first is that we should never do or not do anything based on what people will say. We shouldn't be worried about what they may think or say when they hear that we've recalled our Sisters. We must go straight to God and seek only to please Him when we're calumniated as well as when we enjoy a good reputation.

ASecond, if sending our Sisters to Nantes seemed like a call from God, it seems also that since that time Divine Providence has permitted us to wonder whether they could adjust, since we gave Sisters only on condition that, if the gentlemen were satisfied and were pleased with our service, they would keep them; if not, they would send them back. The same applied on our side; that is, if we couldn't do what they wanted, or they didn't fulfill their obligations, we would withdraw the Sisters. According to that, it seems it was only a trial and not a definite decision. Mademoiselle, wasn't that your understanding when you went there?@

AYes, Father, and I think I'm partly to blame for all the trouble that ensued because I didn't inform you of the state of affairs when we went to Nantes, for I could see even then that they would have a hard time adapting to the spirit of the people of Nantes. It troubled me to have to leave our Sisters there.

ASo there you have the second reason for recalling them. The third is that, ever since they've been there, the Sisters have always had a very hard time satisfying those gentlemen. It has been an almost constant struggle of one kind or another; if not because of the Fathers of the Poor,<sup>4</sup> then because of the Bishop,<sup>5</sup> who doesn't like the Daughters of Charity. In a word, it has been a cross in every way.

AFourth, there's little reason to think things will be better in the future than in the past. This is obvious from the proposals they are making, all of which are contrary to the agreement we made with them when we sent them our Sisters.<sup>6</sup> We read their letter, in which they complain that Mlle. Le Gras recalled a Sister who works in the pharmacy<sup>7</sup> without notifying them, and they claim you haven't sent them any money for the journey, even though it's stated in the contract that, when we withdraw a Sister, we'll provide whatever that requires and will inform them of it, and when they decide to send some of the Sisters back, then they, too, are obliged to pay the expenses of the journey.

Furthermore, they are complaining that we recalled this Sister before sending another with the same skills and experience in running a pharmacy they have set up, and they say they can't allow

her to return unless we send them someone else.

AThey also want to send back a Sister who is sick, because she's no longer strong enough to take care of the kitchen, where she has been working for quite some time. That's part of what they say; we'll study the letter; it will indicate the rest to us.@

Alit's true,@ said Mademoiselle, Athat I didn't think to send any money; but even if I had thought of it, they still owe us for the return journey of the Sisters they sent back to us about two years ago, for whom they gave nothing.<sup>8</sup> As for their complaint that I didn't write to them about recalling our Sister, I asked M. Truchart, the Sisters' spiritual director,<sup>9</sup> to inform them of that; so, in no way have we acted contrary to our obligations. They are just using that as a pretext to keep the Sister.@

AThat's obvious, for they don't want her to come back here. Let's see what you think of the reasons stated as to whether or not it's advisable to recall all of them, given the fact that those gentlemen aren't observing the articles agreed upon and are contesting the recall of someone, which is a real necessity, especially since the house will never be at peace as long as she's there. She's a person who upsets everything, is always challenging the Superior--the Sister Servant, that is--and is causing others to do the same, thereby preventing the means of running the house well.@

When Most Honored Father asked the opinion of the three Sisters, they said that, with regard to what His Charity had stated and the difficulty they have always had in adapting to the moods of those persons, they thought it would be right to recall our Sisters, but first we should offer them another Sister to replace the one we want to bring back, and if they are unwilling to agree to that, we could ask to withdraw.

Mademoiselle felt they should be recalled also, without offering to send them any other Sisters, since they would probably not accept this--unless it was to give them time to look for other Sisters to serve the patients in their hospital.

M. Portail also thought the Sisters should be recalled; but he tried to put things more gently, saying it might be well to try once more to please them, writing to explain why no money was sent to them, and offering them a Sister to replace the other one. Then, if that didn't satisfy them, they would be told that, since they are unwilling to come to an agreement, it would be well for us to recall all the Sisters.

M. Alméras, who had made the visitation there less than two years ago, and who used the occasion to get a clearer knowledge of those gentlemen in Nantes, as well as of the difficulties our Sisters were experiencing, said that he didn't think the means of coming to any agreement could ever be found. He added that, since he had been there, he had informed M. Vincent that the problems were worse then than they are now, but he had always felt that the Sisters couldn't stay in that place and that it was better to recall them right now rather than wait because that would only be to prolong the time. Nevertheless, his advice was that we should do what M. Portail had suggested.

Mademoiselle spoke after that, saying they would like nothing better than for us to make them all those offers, so they could gain time to carry out their plan and to complete the house that was being built, after which they themselves could inform us. She added that it would be more advisable to put an end to things immediately and that there was no better time to withdraw because our Sisters are closely united among themselves, and this will be good to avoid giving any cause for scandal to people outside.

After hearing all of the above, Most Honored Father said, AAll of you agree that our Sisters

should be recalled, and so do I. However, so that we don't overlook anything in such an important affair, I think it will be well to recommend it to God. And since we don't want to do anything not in conformity with His Holy Will, we must pray for inspiration in order to know it. I think it will be a good idea for you, Mademoiselle--and you, too, Sisters--to receive Holy Communion in order to obtain from Our Lord the graces we need for this. We'll also offer Holy Mass for that intention; it will also be well to make your prayer on it to reflect clearly on whether it's advisable, for the glory of God, to recall our Sisters; at the next meeting, each Sister can share her thoughts on this.@

### 168. - COUNCIL OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1655

On Wednesday, September 8, the little meeting was held in the parlor of Saint-Lazare, where our Most Honored Father had someone read what concerns the office of the Superioress of the Daughters of Charity and of the three other officers who had been elected at the last meeting, on August 8.<sup>1</sup> To begin, His Charity said that our Superioress Mlle. Le Gras, together with the Superior General, would be responsible for all the Sisters--that is, to place, recall or send them, not only to places where the Charity<sup>2</sup> is established, but wherever will be necessary. Furthermore, the Superioress would receive those who present themselves, if she and the said Superior General or his deputy considered them suitable, and would instruct them in everything they need to know in order to carry out their duties, as well as in what concerns virtue. And since the Superioress is the head or the soul that animates all the members of the Company, she's a living Rule and must give the example of what the others should do, instructing them more by her good example than by her words.

AThat suffices for Mademoiselle's office,@ said M. Vincent. AWe need not go any further, since, by the grace of God, she's doing--and has always done--what a good Superioress is supposed to do.

AThe duty of the Sister Assistant is to represent Mademoiselle in her absence, act as her Councillor, take care that everything goes well in the Community, especially in this house, watch over all the Sisters, and see that each performs her ministry well and that the Rules are observed exactly. She will be the first at all Community exercises if Mademoiselle is unable to be there due to business and her present state of infirmity. The Assistant must always be the first at prayer, the examinations of conscience, the two o'clock reading, and the other exercises. She will watch over the progress and instruction of the Sisters, and, in Mademoiselle's absence, will be obeyed by all the Sisters, just as Mademoiselle herself would be obeyed.

AThe third duty is that of the Treasurer. Together with Mademoiselle, she will keep the money in a strongbox with a double lock, of which she will have one key and Mademoiselle the other. Every month she will give an account to the Superioress, who will communicate it to the Superior General once a year in the presence of the three officers.

AThat's what must be done, and has been done already, Sisters, for it has been observed in that way, and you have only to continue to do it. You have a great advantage over many other Communities, who have written their Rules and had them approved after two or three years. Experience showed them afterward that there were things in them that were either impossible or shouldn't have been included, although at the time they thought they could be done.

ANow, Sisters, by the mercy of God, you haven't done that, since for more than eighteen years you've been practicing what is now written. You've acted like Our Lord, who taught by example before He began to preach what He wanted done. Oh! how fortunate you are! You must, however, continue as you began; otherwise, you'll perish. It's like a nerve of the body; when it fails through weakness or some other infirmity, the person can't go on; you see this in the sick and in paralyzed persons. In the same way, Sisters, the nerve of the Community is the small amount of material goods you possess; if it's lacking, you cannot subsist. That's why you must be very careful to manage these goods well, considering them as something Our Lord gives for the maintenance of His servants, both those who serve the poor in Paris as well as those who are sent and recalled from the places where they are serving persons who are poor. Until now, by the grace of God, Mademoiselle has managed affairs well--so well that I know of no Sisters' house in Paris in the condition in which you are. They are all complaining that they owe money, including the Visitation Nuns and several others. If I'm not mistaken, even the Filles-Dieu<sup>3</sup> told me that they were in debt. See how Our Lord has blessed the good management we've had. There are two or three houses of Sisters, who recently had to give up everything because they hadn't been careful about that, and perhaps they had more in reserve than you. You, however, haven't had a Superioress who has let the house fall apart; on the contrary, she has put aside enough to maintain it. You should really thank God for that, finding yourselves in such a good situation that I know of no Sisters' house so well provided for. No, I tell you, I know of none in Paris, and this is due, after God, to the good management of Mademoiselle.@

At these words, Mademoiselle, who felt she hadn't contributed to it in any way, said, AFather, you and our Sisters are well aware that if I have done anything, it has been on the orders you gave me.@

ASo, Sisters, here's what has to be done: change nothing without asking Mademoiselle, >Shall we do this or that?' If she's absent, and the matter is urgent, ask one another's opinion and tell her about it as soon as possible.

AI repeat that you must be very careful to preserve the little you have, which isn't very much. The revenue from the coaches given by the Duchesse d'Aiguillon<sup>4</sup> isn't very certain, nor what the King gives from the Gonesse property.<sup>5</sup> That's why we should pray that God will preserve the King. Your house isn't like others; they have resources elsewhere. Look at the Visitation Nuns; they don't take anyone who doesn't bring twelve or thirteen hundred livres with them, and all the other religious Orders receive large dowries. You, however, have nothing but your poor people and Divine Providence--which is a great deal. That's where you must place all your trust.

AThe fourth officer will take care of household expenses, and give a weekly account to the Treasurer. She, too, will represent the Superioress when the latter and the other two officers aren't here.

ASo much for what concerns your duties, Sisters. When Mademoiselle is present, all other authority ceases.

ALet's look now at the means that can help you to perform your duties well. The first one, dear Sisters, is to renounce the world, all the claims of your relatives, and all honors in order to give yourselves entirely to Our Lord.

AIN the second place, you must renounce yourself. It's not sufficient to have left the world; you also have to leave yourself and no longer be concerned about your reputation or what people think of you. This takes great humility and self-contempt in order to perform all your actions to please God and not the world; for as soon as an officer sets out to please others, all is lost. If, to

please this Sister or that, an officer were to act contrary to the orders of Superiors, she'd be very guilty; and I'll tell you what to do to avoid this evil: we mustn't go against our conscience in order to try to please the world or the Sisters. >Such a thing should be done this way,' someone may say. To settle the question, find out what Mademoiselle intends and comply with that, for it's the intention that should mainly be followed rather than the words. You must, however, be firm in this practice, and see that the others always carry out the intentions of Superiors. And while you must be kind to your Sisters, you should nevertheless be firm and even stern with the rebellious, when you judge it necessary.

AN addition, don't be too eager to please nor fearful of displeasing. Provided you carry out your ministry well, you need not worry. It's pride and self-love that make us so concerned about pleasing others. Yes, it is, because we're afraid they will complain about us, tell us we're putting on airs, and are not ourselves any more. That's why we try so hard to please others.

ANow, that's not what will cause people to say, with time, that you have been good servants, but rather whether you've been very careful to see that each Sister has done her duty. When, with all your compliance, you have satisfied people, but everything else isn't as it should be, it will be said, >Look at that poor Sister! She hasn't had the courage to overcome human respect for fear of what people will say of her!' That's what will be considered, and not whether you've satisfied everyone.

ANother thing that will help you is to be very zealous for the glory of God and for the salvation of the souls He sends to the Company to be perfected, and to work with all your might to teach them by example rather than words; for the officers should be the first to observe all the customs, and any harm done in the house can be attributed to them. I often tell the confreres in our house that I'm the cause of all the harm done there--or rather that I do it myself, for if I took the trouble to instruct and teach each one what he should be doing, he'd do it. That's why no one but myself should be blamed for all the harm done by the persons God has committed to my care.

ASo, dear Sisters, we can attribute to the officers all the harm done by the Daughters of Charity, and you and I will give an account to God for it. What shall we say to God? What shall I say, wretch that I am, when He says to me, >I expected you to raise the Company of the Mission to a certain degree of perfection by your care and good example; it's very far from that.' He would ask the same of you, if you were to fail in your duty. And who will suffer for it? Our poor souls; each will have to answer for itself. If you have performed your ministry poorly, I won't be excused for it either. That's why, Sisters, you must really give yourselves to God so that those who come after you can follow your example. What a happiness to have been chosen for such a holy work, and from its very beginning! For, if you do well, you'll share in all the good done by those who come after you; and even though a person can no longer earn merit after death--for the deceased no longer gain anything--you'll still receive an increase of merit as often as your Sisters perform a good action, continuing what you began.

AIf, however, you don't lay firm foundations by the practice of the virtues we mentioned--humility, disregard for self, zeal for the glory of God, contempt of the world, renunciation of relatives, good example, and all the rest--everything you do or that's done by those who come after you, will be futile. If those who come first don't do well, the next ones will do even worse and things will go from bad to worse, so important it is for the first Sisters to keep everything in good order both in spiritual as well as in temporal matters.

AI think it would be well for you to receive Holy Communion for that intention tomorrow or

Sunday to ask God for the graces that you need. Mademoiselle, do you think that's appropriate?@

AFather, I think we need God's powerful help in order to act in the way Your Charity has told us, and we have good reason to ask for His assistance before we begin.@

AVery well, then!@ said M. Vincent, AAll four of you do so tomorrow, please.@

When Mademoiselle saw that Most Honored Father was about to finish, she brought up the matter of our Sisters in Nantes and said, AThe Sisters told us that the gentlemen were all ready to send back Sister Marie, Sister Henriette, and Sister Renée,<sup>6</sup> but M. Truchart advised them to write us about it. Father, will Your Charity please see what should be done--shall we send them some other Sisters, or shall we await the return of those who are to come back?@

ASo then, we have to settle this question,@ said M. Vincent. AFirst, they are sending back three and asking for only one because they want no more than six Sisters, instead of the eight they now have. If we wait for the return of the others, those who remain will be overwhelmed with work.@

When Most Honored Father asked the opinion of Mademoiselle and of our Sisters, some said it would be well to await the return of the Sisters from Nantes so they could instruct the Sister who was to go there; but the others felt that the ones in Nantes would be too overworked. His Charity, however, said that the matter should be commended to God.

Since there was a new Sister at the meeting, Mademoiselle asked if it were not necessary to observe confidentiality when one had been called to Council. AYes,@ replied Most Honored Father, Aand I ask you, Mademoiselle, and all of you, Sisters, to allow me to repeat the request I made formerly, which is to ask you to bind yourself to keep secret everything that's said here. Not that I any reason to fear for Mlle. Le Gras, since she's one of the most prudent persons I know, but to serve as a directive for you, should some curious person try to learn from you what has been discussed.

AMademoiselle, do you promise before God to be faithful to all we've just said and to the practice of your Rules?@

AYes, Father.@

All the Sisters made the same promise. Then M. Vincent went on to say, AA man in Rome was summoned to a council where an important affair was to be discussed. When he returned home, his wife wanted to know what had been decided. He told her he wouldn't tell her, for that shouldn't be done. Nevertheless, she pressured him to find out; she insisted as much as she could and said she wouldn't leave him alone until he revealed to her what he had heard. What could he do to satisfy her? For he truly loved her very much and didn't want to annoy her; but he couldn't tell her what she wanted to know. He decided to think up some story or something trifling (I don't remember now what it was, but I know that it was some trifle) and told her that that's what had been decided. See, Sisters, how faithfully that man observed confidentiality; not even his love for his wife, nor all her pressure on him could cause him to fail in his obligation. That's how you must act; never speak, directly or indirectly, to any Sister about what we learn in this way. If someone were curious enough to ask, you should say to her: >Sister, what do you take me for, to ask me such a question? You don't have a very good opinion of me to imagine I'd be so imprudent as to tell you what it's not permissible to tell. You'd have good reason to look down on me, were I to commit that fault.' That, Sisters, is how you should get rid of such persons, and never tell them anything, either directly or indirectly, of what has been discussed.@

## 169. - COUNCIL OF FEBRUARY 19, 1656

On Saturday, February 19, 1656, the meeting was held at Saint-Lazare. Present were M. Vincent our Most Honored Father, Mademoiselle, two senior Sisters, and the three Sister officers. Three or four problems were submitted.

The first concerned the Administrators in Nantes,<sup>1</sup> who were asking for a Sister for the pharmacy and seemed to be insisting in their letters that she be sent full time for that duty, which would mean that we would be prevented from changing her when we thought it advisable. The decision was made to write to those good gentlemen, informing them clearly what they were to expect of a Sister, so that we would always be free to make changes, in accord with what is stated in the contract for their establishment.

The second question was to consider what to do with little Sister Marie de Persy, who had been in the house nearly a year. Some objected to giving her the habit for the following reasons: (1) because she had come to Paris to be a servant and, being unsuitable for the place to which she had been sent, she decided to become a Daughter of Charity; consequently, this didn't seem to be a true vocation; (2) she was quite short and not very strong; (3) she was childish, had poor judgment, and gave little indication of being suitable for the Company; and (4) she didn't seem to care whether she stayed or went back home. For all these reasons, it was decided that she should be dismissed, with the promise that, if she were to grow and still wanted to be a Daughter of Charity, she'd be accepted. It was also decided to pay the expenses of her trip home because her parents were poor.

The third question concerned a Sister who had already been accepted into the house, but it was doubtful that she was suited for the Company for the following reasons: (1) because she seemed to be flighty, and since she had said that she had had surgery on her skull, it was feared that this might have contributed to that and, in time, if something were to displease her or she became ill, this flightiness might grow worse; (2) one of her legs was out of joint, inconveniencing her to the point of not being able to sit on the floor; (3) she didn't like work--at least, she had shown little inclination for it the whole time she had been in the house--furthermore, she was not very exact to the Rules. For all these reasons, it was decided that she should be dismissed.

Most Honored Father then told us that it was very important to choose carefully the young women we might accept, making sure they had the physical and mental qualities necessary for Daughters of Charity. If, until now, we hadn't been wise, we should be so in the future and unless we were careful about that, we would turn the Daughters of Charity into an infirmary; and those Sisters would need other Daughters of Charity to take care of them, whereas they should be serving the poor.

## 170. - COUNCIL OF FEBRUARY 27, 1656

On Sunday, February 27, the meeting was held at Saint-Lazare because the preceding meeting<sup>1</sup> hadn't been completed, due to the arrival of a Bishop. The same persons were present, plus M. Portail.

After invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit, Most Honored Father asked Mademoiselle what was to be considered. She explained what she had tried to do to implement what had been decided regarding the dismissal of the Sister mentioned above, saying, AFather, in trying to do what Your Charity had ordered concerning the Sister to whom we were not giving the habit, it was discovered that she hadn't had any operation on her head--at least, she denied it. Since the decision to dismiss her was based principally on that, we've waited until now, in line with what you told Sister Julienne<sup>2</sup> when she asked you what we should do in this case.

ASince she heard the decision, she has been more attentive to her work, seems to have good will, and was even very shaken when told that she was not suitable for us. She acknowledged that she had a crippled leg and couldn't sit on it, but that didn't prevent her from walking. As for the frequent headaches she claimed to have, we haven't noticed her complaining of them since then, though she had done so formerly. The only thing is that she's still flighty on certain occasions. Now, Father, will Your Charity please allow our Sisters to tell you what they have remarked; they can express it better than I.@

When the Sisters were questioned by Most Honored Father, three of them said they had noticed a change in her, that she had applied herself willingly to all kinds of work and was more respectful toward the senior Sisters. They were afraid, however, that it was only for fear of being sent away, because this respect was not for all in general, and she seemed quite bold in speaking to the Sisters with whom she worked. Although she was working quite well, it was evident that she was forcing herself and still found it inconvenient. There seemed to be some duplicity in her speech, and perhaps she wouldn't do too much once she received the habit. This was greatly to be feared, since from the beginning she didn't seem to want to put herself out much. So, for all these reasons, they didn't think she was suitable.

Another Sister agreed, adding that, when she asked her why she hadn't received the habit, she replied that God didn't want it and that she had made the mistake of saying she had undergone a head operation. That was an indication of her insincerity, since she had said the opposite to Mademoiselle.

Another Sister said that she didn't like to think of dismissing her, because she had shown good will.

Mademoiselle said that her thought was to prefer mercy to justice in this instance and to give her the habit on condition that, if her infirmities didn't allow her to do the works the Daughters of Charity are obliged to do, she wouldn't take it badly if she were dismissed. AThat's how I feel, Father,@ said Mademoiselle, Aalthough I do fear that flightiness; for Sisters who are subject to it aren't fit for anything, and we dare not send them out on account of it. Now, she's a person who, when she was on her own, read a great deal from both the Old and New Testaments. She was always going to sermons and to church, and if she indulged in that, it's hard to believe that she did much work. She did without very little for her food. What makes us think that is that she saved no money at all for her clothing. She has only one dress, which is more suited to a lady than to a young woman of her class. That, to me, is a sure sign of flightiness.@

AMark you, Mademoiselle,@ said Most Honored Father, Ayou've never seen Sisters of this type who turned out well or were stable in their vocation. There's no reason to hope for anything from them. Sometimes they want it, and sometimes they don't.@

AFather,@ replied Mademoiselle, Awhat makes me wonder if this is a true vocation is that when I wanted to send her away, she betrayed her poverty by saying, 'What will become of me?' Now, if it was poverty that prompted her to join the Company, it's to be feared that she won't

persevere.@

AAh!@ said M. Vincent, AHow true it is that a person must be called by God in order to be stable in any vocation whatsoever; otherwise, there's nothing but wavering and inconstancy. This morning I saw a young cavalier who comes from Italy. He's the nephew of the Bishop of Geneva. >Monsieur,' he said to me, >when I see that I'm in danger, I tell myself that if I escape this time, I'll never place myself in such danger again. But once it has passed, I'm just as ready to return to it as ever because I'm strongly attracted to war.'

AI wanted to tell you that to show you that a call from God is necessary in order to persevere in any state whatsoever. That's why we must give ourselves to God to make a good choice of the persons who present themselves. He also told me that he lacked many necessities, slept on the ground, and ate only bread; yet, since he felt called by God to that vocation, he was not deterred by all these difficulties.

ASo then, firmness and a determination to persevere are necessary when a person has been called by God to a vocation. This is almost never seen in young women who are subject to flightiness. It takes nothing to make them change. What is your opinion, M. Portail?@

AMonsieur, for all the reasons stated, especially her physical problems, we should be wary because things like her free manner of speaking are habits that many persons bring with them when they come from the world. When they have been in the house for some time and are corrected, they improve; so this Sister might do the same. As for giving her the habit, it seems, as has been suggested, that we shouldn't do it because it would be too hard on her if she had to be sent home later on. We could wait awhile longer to see if she continues to do as well as she's doing now. And since spring is coming, when all infirmities usually reappear, we can see if she still gets those headaches.@

After M. Portail had spoken, Most Honored Father said: AAs for myself, I find it hard to support this Sister because of all that has been said. We have to recommend this matter to God. I'll say Holy Mass tomorrow for that intention, and I ask you, M. Portail, to do the same. In a few days, Mademoiselle, I'll let you know my humble thoughts.<sup>3</sup>

AI strongly hope that you will have as a maxim in your Company to be very particular in accepting those who present themselves and to make a good choice of persons who are suitable. Above all, be sure they are solid and well-balanced mentally, not flighty, and also that they are physically strong; otherwise, they can't be suitable, even though they have good will. If they don't have good health, they can't do the works of the Daughters of Charity. In every other Community they have to strip naked for Superiors, and they are very strict. If we were willing to accept all sorts of persons indiscriminately, what would become of the Company of Charity?

AA meeting once had to be held to try to find a way to prevent the spread of a certain religious Order, which, because of the large number of candidates accepted, was failing and falling off from regularity, for a true vocation is needed to do well in the place where you are. They found that the most advisable thing was to obtain a prohibition from the Holy Father against opening any new houses for the next twenty years. I'm telling you this to show you how you should fear burdening yourselves with persons who lack the qualities necessary for Daughters of Charity.

What else do we have to discuss, Mademoiselle?@

AFather, we have to send a Sister to Nantes. We wrote to them as Your Charity had wished. In their reply they asked that we send them one Sister, as we proposed. It remains for you to see whom you'd like to name, Father.@

AHave you thought of anyone, Mademoiselle?@

A Father, I thought of Sister Madeleine Raportebled,<sup>4</sup> Sister Étienne Dupuis,<sup>5</sup> and Sister Marguerite Chétif; but it will be difficult to withdraw the latter from the place where she now is. Perhaps our Sisters have thought of some others. @

The majority of votes went to Sister Madeleine Raportebled, although they had thought of naming Sister Marguerite Chétif. Some of the Sisters, however, said that, since she was an excellent Sister with a very engaging personality, they were afraid it would be quite difficult to withdraw her once those good gentlemen get to know her, and even that some Sisters would become attached to the Sister Servant, and others to her.

On this subject, Mademoiselle said that Sister Nicole Haran,<sup>6</sup> the Sister Servant in Nantes, had written her that things were still the same on the outside, but within the Community, they were living in peace. This being the case, it didn't seem necessary to send them someone who had so many excellent qualifications to be the Sister Servant, and that Sister Madeleine Raportebled was a very prudent Sister, possessing many fine qualities.

A To say that it takes only one troublesome person to upset an entire house is very true, @ replied Most Honored Father. A We see that in this instance. Therefore, it's unnecessary, as has been said, to send someone to act as a sort of second Sister Servant. No, that might cause a little rivalry between them. @<sup>7</sup>

After this, they discussed the question of a girl from the Foundlings whom people wanted to place in a religious Order for a very important reason. It was decided to speak to the Ladies about this and to explain the fault quite simply. A For, @ said Most Honored Father, A if someone tried to conceal that from one of those Ladies it would surely be discovered, and Mlle. Le Gras, whose actions should be as open and bright as the sun, would be accused of duplicity. Oh! that can't be. We must always act with the greatest possible simplicity.

A Well now, God be praised! I was saying to our priests the other day that we must give ourselves to God to love disregard for ourselves and for the Company and to be quite content when we're considered useless persons who do nothing worthwhile. I don't think there's any danger in telling you this. Love of contempt should be your principal virtue, especially for you, Sisters, who should give the example to others of being content when people underestimate you. You must, however, show this not only in word but in deed, so people may see that you seek contempt, are glad when it occurs, and that, far from looking for esteem and praise, you avoid them. @

This talk on disregard for self was given by Most Honored Father following the remark Mlle. Le Gras had made on how useful the Daughters of Charity were in teaching poor little girls, stating how admirable that was, considering that most of them knew practically nothing when they entered the Company. This shows clearly that God is blessing their work.

A As long as the Company preserves this spirit of humility and lowly sentiments of itself, it will continue, @ said M. Vincent, A but as soon as it tries to exalt itself, it will be lost, and God will no longer lavish His graces on it. That's why we must give ourselves to God to love contempt for ourselves, as I have told you, and for the Company. For it's not enough to accept humiliations involving each one of you personally; you must be content if the Company is despised, if people say that it's not worth much, that you don't take good care of the goods of the poor, that patients aren't well treated, or that the Daughters of Charity do nothing worthwhile. You must rejoice when the Company is underestimated; and when we don't have these opportunities, we should desire them and prepare for them by many interior acts. For, you see, it's the same with us as with nature, a characteristic of which is never to leave a vacuum without filling it, and

experience proves this in many ways. When people want to mine a city, they tunnel under it, and when the explosives are lit, the place blows up because of nature's eagerness to be filled. God acts the same way; He can't leave a vacuum. As we empty ourselves of self and of the desire to be noticed, esteemed, and respected, God will fill our souls with graces and blessings, giving to each according to the degree of perfection He demands of her, and to the Company in general for the accomplishment of His plans. Let's ask this of God for one another, dear Sisters.

*Benedictio Domini Nostri Jesu Christi. . . .*

### **171. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 25, 1656**

On April 25, 1656, feast of Saint Mark, the little meeting was held at Saint-Lazare. Present were Most Honored Father, M. Portail, Mlle. Le Gras, the three Sister officers, and two senior Sisters.

First, Most Honored Father asked a Sister to explain what had happened at the death of a little boy from the Foundlings, which was very extraordinary. After relating what took place, Mlle. Le Gras informed Most Honored Father of several requests for our Sisters to open new establishments. It was decided to wait awhile before giving a reply because few Sisters were available at present.

Since the Bishops of Cahors<sup>1</sup> and Agde<sup>2</sup> were very anxious to have Sisters, Providence inspired the proposal of opening a seminary or house like the one in Paris, from which Sisters could be sent to distant places and places near that neighborhood, and where they could also be received. Most Honored Father said we should think this over and that it seemed to be something necessary.

ASisters, that's what we're proposing, and it's of great importance for your Company. The reasons for this new establishment are: (1) the difficulty of sending Sisters such a distance on their own, and the dangers they may face on the way if they find themselves in bad company; (2) the great expense entailed on these long journeys, which the Company can't meet, if we had to continue to send Sisters to all the places where they are requested. For it costs at least a hundred francs to bring a Sister from those places and just as much to send her back, and that adds up to a great deal; (3) the Sisters have to be changed, as experience has previously shown us. Now, when they're so far away, we can't change them as often as necessary. This could be done much more easily if we had a house where we might do as is done in Paris; that is, to recall Sisters who needed to be changed and send others in their place. All this would be subject to the orders of Superiors in Paris. I think these are the reasons why it would be necessary to open such a house.

AOpposed to them is this: whether we might be trying to undertake too much, and whether by this means the Company will become too well known--as it is already. It would be desirable for it to be hidden from the eyes of everyone; yes, that would be desirable. And if you could assist the poor and perform all your actions to be seen by God alone, that would be the best thing for you. *Mais quoi!* that's not possible.

AHumble yourselves, Sisters, and fear that the esteem so many and such important persons have for you might be harmful to you. Both you and we should humble ourselves before God, even though He has chosen us for such great things: to serve Him in such distant places, to assist the poor, and to do all the good works the poor Company of the poor Daughters of Charity is

doing. Ah! who are we, you and I? Let's see, then, if it would be well for us to think about this seminary.@

For the reasons given, the Sisters thought it would be very necessary, on condition that the house would always be dependent on the Paris house.

Mlle. Le Gras' opinion was almost the same, with the following addition: Providence seems to be providing the means to make this establishment, Father. I think it would be very useful, provided it was in a place where there were Priests of the Mission.@

M. Portail also thought it very necessary, for all the above reasons. Furthermore, although there had been no precedent for it in the Company until now, it couldn't supply Sisters to go so far away without some place to help it, and every Community was doing that. AI think,@ he added, Athat it would be well to say some special prayers to ask God to make known His Will.@

ASeigneur Dieu!@ said Most Honored Father, AWe really have to recommend this matter to God. O Jésus! Yes, Mademoiselle, tell your Sisters to recommend an important matter to Our Lord.@

Then, correcting himself, His Charity said: ANo, no, don't say it like that; poor people like ourselves have no important affairs; but you can recommend that they pray for a special intention of the Company and to ask God to make known His Will with regard to something that concerns it. M. Portail, I think it would be well for you to say Mass for this intention, when our Sisters could attend it. I'll do the same, with the help of God.

AWell then, God be praised! Truly, Sisters, I don't know how we can sufficiently humble ourselves at the sight of so many graces bestowed by God on the Company. O Sauveur! Who could understand the height, the depth, the sublimity of the grace by which God renders a soul worthy of being used where and as He wishes! Oh! who could conceive of that! If only you felt as I do about it! Ah! if you don't, it's because you don't understand it. But you must say to God, >My God, permit us to ask you how you can be mindful of such poor creatures as we are.' O Sisters, we must ask the Blessed Virgin to humble herself before her Son on our behalf; otherwise, we couldn't do it properly. Yet, the only thing that will keep you in profound humility is to love contempt; to be glad when you're esteemed as nothing, not only to love contempt and humiliation for ourselves but to love it for the Company, and to rejoice when people say that it's good for nothing and filled with sickly and imperfect subjects. That, Sisters, is what Daughters of Charity should do if they want God to continue to bestow His blessings upon them and their Company.@

Mademoiselle proposed to Most Honored Father sending two Sisters to Angers, one of them to be the Sister Servant.<sup>3</sup> Sister Chétif was thought to possess enough good qualities for that office, but, since she was in a parish where some people were hard to deal with and where a Sister of her type was needed, and since she had been there only a short time, it was decided not to withdraw her. The choice of a Sister to be Sister Servant was deferred, and the other Sister was named.<sup>4</sup>

Mademoiselle told Most Honored Father that the Sister who had previously been discussed hadn't corrected her little defects. In line with this and similar remarks made by all the Sisters, it was decided that she should be dismissed.

AYou see,@ said Most Honored Father, Ait's God who gave you the idea of waiting to give her the habit, since that made it clear that she's unsuitable and should be dismissed, no matter what resistance she may put up. If she says she won't go, as some of them do, you must stand fast. One day at Sainte-Marie there was a young woman who was not suitable. Now, when they were

about to send her away, she resisted and said she wouldn't go and would rather die at the door. God permitted this to try the fidelity of those good Sisters; for, seeing that they couldn't make her leave otherwise, they carried her to the door and put her out. That's how you must act when you know that someone is unsuitable.@

That same day, they presented to Most Honored Father several young women who were asking to be admitted to the Company.

### **172. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 27, 1656**

The following Thursday, April 27, M. Vincent called a second meeting to finish what hadn't been decided the last time. After a few remarks, His Charity said, AI was telling you the other day, Sisters, that the Company must be disposed to love contempt.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle to Most Honored Father, AI had been thinking of asking Your Charity to give us some concrete means of acquiring this virtue.@

AThere's no other than to humble ourselves,@ said he. AThe art of loving God is to love Him; likewise, the art of acquiring humility is to humble ourselves, and the more we advance in this practice, the more we will resemble Our Lord. Yes, Sisters, it's certain that the more we're poor, humble, and scorned, the closer we will resemble the Son of God, who so loved contempt and poverty that He had no home of His own when He was in the world.<sup>1</sup> Now, if we can't imitate Him in that, we should at least try to resemble Him in having only what is necessary.@

On this topic, Mademoiselle pointed out to His Charity that the house of the Daughters of Charity was in need of repairs, adding that she had always thought it necessary to preserve that spirit in the Company, and, were it possible to use blackened stones to keep the building from looking new, it should be done.<sup>2</sup>

Alt's true,@ said Most Honored Father, Athat, if we could, we should want to leave to posterity some signs of the love of poverty. Lieutenant . . . is always quarreling with me when he comes here because I won't have our house renovated. When he says that to me, I laugh along with him, without telling him why I won't do it, but the real reason is this: I want the Company to be established on this foundation of humility and to be conformed as closely as possible to the manner of life of the Son of God. Now, I greatly fear that if you were to have a beautiful house, it might attract upper class people, and that would be objectionable.@

### **173. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 29, 1656**

On Saturday, April 29, Most Honored Father sent for the officers of the Charity to discuss again the proposals made to him to send some Sisters to distant dioceses.<sup>1</sup> He was so good as to tell them that he had spoken to Mme. Fouquet<sup>2</sup> about a house that would be a kind of seminary to receive or change the Sisters, when needed. She said she would mention this to her son the Bishop of Agde, but that he was taken up with other business. In his kindness he stated it as follows:

ASisters, that good gentleman, so desirous of doing good, is planning to reform a hospital

because its resources haven't always been well distributed, and he's determined to put things in order there. Some good people have suggested putting religious in charge, but because more of them would be needed than there would Daughters of Charity, he's afraid this may use up most of the revenue of the hospital, and he thinks that, for the welfare of the poor, it would be advisable to place two Daughters of Charity there. Let's see the reasons for and against this proposal.

I'm reducing this to three questions dealing with the substance of the matter, namely: (1) Should we consent to this proposal and satisfy that good Bishop? (2) If we decide to send Sisters for this work, are there any who are suited for it? (3) Should we wait until the seminary house is opened, and should we still consider it? There's a fourth question, one of the most important that will ever be discussed in your Company, and that is whether or not we should negotiate with them in such a way that we can recall the Sisters if they fail to keep to what is agreed upon or demand something contrary to their Rules and manner of life; and, if the Daughters of Charity don't perform their duty well or serve the poor well, they may likewise be free to send them back. @

The reply to the first question was that, if God was calling us to serve poor persons in those places, it didn't seem right to refuse this ministry, and if, after reflecting on it, we recognized that it was God's Will, then we felt we should follow it.

As to the second--that there were not many Sisters and it would be difficult to obtain some--it was thought that, since they were asking for only a few, it wouldn't be impossible, provided we were not pressured to supply Sisters so promptly for other places where people were asking for them.

The reply to the third question was that it would be well to know the decision of those good people.

To the fourth, it was replied that it was absolutely necessary to continue the practice existing in the Company, namely, that the Sisters could be recalled, if necessary, and they could send them all back if they didn't live as Daughters of Charity are obliged to do.

AYou all agree, then, @ said Most Honored Father, Athat it's right for them to dismiss the Daughters of Charity if they become lax, and you're correct; for it would be better if there were only a few--even none at all--than to see them act contrary to what their vocation requires of them.

AWhen Mademoiselle is in heaven, she won't claim any bad Daughters who do nothing but squander the goods of the poor and give bad example to those who see them. Saint Francis preferred to have no religious in his Order rather than to have those who didn't live according to their Institute; for, since he was united to God, he hated whatever was contrary to Him.

AWhen Saint Benedict thought about the disorders that might arise among his religious after his death, he was very distressed; when someone asked him why, and pointed out to him that he should rejoice at seeing his Order so flourishing, he said, >It's true that we have fine houses and many religious, but the day will come when all that will decline.' When this great saint foresaw that so many beautiful Rules and so many practices of humility and of the other virtues would be forgotten, he was grieved. And wishing to find the means of strengthening his Order and his religious in the manner of life God was asking of them, he wrote at the end of his Constitutions that he was entreating heaven and earth to bring about their ruin if they should deviate from the right path. He asked the *seigneurs*, the nobility, and even the peasants to go after them and drive them out as soon as they should fail in their duty. Ah! the holy thoughts by which this good saint

showed how much he desired that God's Will be accomplished by his religious!@

#### 174. - COUNCIL OF JUNE 25, 1656

On Sunday, June 25, at the request of M. Vincent, Mlle. Le Gras and the three Sister officers<sup>1</sup> met at Saint-Lazare. God had inspired him with the thought of the graces that He in His goodness was granting the Company and with the desire that it not render itself unworthy of the blessings God was showering upon it. And to make the meeting more solemn, Most Honored Father in his charity sent for M. Portail and M. Alméras and began by saying, ASisters, in view of the Company's obligation to be faithful to God in order to render itself worthy of serving Him in all the places where you're being asked for, He gave me the idea of calling you together to find the proper means for that end. We're obliged, as far as possible, to see that this beautiful Company does not decline by being ungrateful and disloyal to Our Lord.

ASaint John says that three things contribute to the loss of souls, namely, concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, and pride of life.<sup>2</sup> Let's see what means could be used to assure that the Company avoid these three evils in the future.

AYou know what pride of life means. We see it clearly in the world in the manner of dress, luxury, and all the rest. As for the first mentioned, by God's mercy you have no part in that, since you've left everything to give yourselves to God. Concupiscence of the flesh includes all forbidden satisfactions and pleasures in which people indulge. It is to be hoped that you aren't among them--which you've made clear enough by your choice of a Company in which not only pleasures contrary to the Commandments of God are forbidden, but in which the members even deprive themselves voluntarily of what would be permissible. As for eating and drinking, you lead a very frugal life in which there is no great sensuality. With regard to marriage, it's wrong for you even to speak of it among yourselves; you should never discuss it. That being the case, you can protect yourself from falling into this vice.

AConcupiscence of the eyes is nothing other than the desire to possess riches, to be well taken care of, well housed, etc. That shouldn't affect you any more than the other two vices, since most of you are poor women; or if you've lived neither in great poverty nor in affluence, you left the little you had in order to follow Our Lord in a Company composed of poor women. To make sure, however, that this covetousness doesn't worm its way into the Company in the future, Sisters, you must take every possible precaution to prevent it. You'll do so by desiring only what is necessary in food and in clothing, in accord with your primitive customs; above all, take care that poverty is always evident in your houses, being on your guard against putting up splendid and superfluous buildings, for that would lead to the loss of the spirit of your Company, which must be only poverty, simplicity, and humility in all things.<sup>3</sup>

Alt seems to me that two things are important in order to preserve this spirit and to keep the Company in good order. One concerns temporal goods, whereby covetousness can enter the Company; the other concerns purity, which, as you know, Sisters, is so important, and which, by the grace of God, I don't think I have to recommend to you. Nevertheless, even though it's found among you, it's very important to establish the Company in this virtue for the future by the means God will make known to us, and which we must fervently ask of Him. Not only is this purity necessary for the preservation of the Company, but all Communities must use every

possible precaution to avoid anything contrary to it.

AAnd to show you that I'm not telling you this without good reason, I have an amazing example to give you in strictest confidence of a person in a certain Company--which I shall not name--who put herself carelessly in the greatest danger of losing this precious treasure. That's why no practice should seem too difficult when it can serve for the preservation of this virtue. Lately I've thought seriously about this matter, and it's been constantly on my mind. I think, therefore, that we really must find a means of always maintaining the Company in purity.

AMlle. Le Gras, you're also obliged to this. What can be done about it? There are several articles in the Rules: modesty--so highly recommended--and the advice given about not allowing anyone, particularly men, to enter the rooms in any place whatsoever. These should be sufficiently powerful means, but weak will power and the strength of temptations call for more frequent warnings. I think I heard about a certain kind of door that's already being used in some parishes.@

AYes, Monsieur,@ replied M. Portail, Athat's being done in several parishes. They are double doors that are divided, and the Sisters open only the top part when persons come who shouldn't enter.@

ALet's see if there's any other means, and whether it's a good idea to proceed with that one.@

M. Vincent our Most Honored Father then began to question the Sisters. The first said she had heard that some Sisters had a problem observing this Rule of not letting men enter the rooms. When Most Honored Father asked what these difficulties were, the Sister replied that they were saying it was contrary to the respect due to priests to speak to them at the door, and that once the confessor had come in, it didn't seem right to make him go outside to speak to him on the doorstep.

Another difficulty is that, when the doctor comes to write out the prescriptions for the sick, of necessity he has to come into the bedroom, and since people are easily allowed to come into the house of the Superioress,<sup>4</sup> it doesn't seem right to have to do something in the parishes that's not done there.

When Most Honored Father had listened to everyone's opinion concerning these difficulties, he replied that they were not too serious, and that the Sisters could speak to the confessors at the church or have a bell at the door. That would allow the Sisters to come down to speak with people and, if that were the case, there would be no need to go upstairs into the bedrooms.

As for what had been said about the house of the Superioress, it was stated that circumstances were different in the parishes, where ordinarily there were only two Sisters, and that, since many people had business with Mlle. Le Gras regarding the works of charity she performed for the neighbor, the Sisters shouldn't use this pretext not to observe that point.

### **175. - COUNCIL OF JULY 27, 1656**

On July 27, 1656, a meeting was held at Saint-Lazare to address certain needs of the Company. Present were M. Vincent, M. Portail, Mlle. Le Gras, and four or five Sisters.

When Most Honored Father asked Mademoiselle what was to be discussed, she replied: AFather, we'd like to know what to do about M. Tholard's<sup>1</sup> sister Mme. Auclerc and her daughter, who came to Paris planning to enter the Company. At your request we accepted them for a trial; but since they're still not sure whether they will stay, the mother is getting bored.@

AWhat's preventing their admission, Mademoiselle?@

AFather, the only problem with the mother is that she has considerable difficulty with her sense of smell. Her daughter has poor eyesight. The result is that it's greatly to be feared that they can't do the works of the Daughters of Charity. The mother doesn't want to be separated from her daughter. She's offering to pay her room and board, if we accept her.@

Alf appears,@ said M. Vincent, A[the daughter] has no vocation, for when God calls someone to a Company, He gives her the necessary graces of both body and mind. Now, she doesn't have the qualities required to be a Daughter of Charity. She's in danger of going blind and of being unable to fulfill the duties they have to do. Neither is it right to let her pay board. The house mustn't be burdened with persons of this sort. I know of a religious house that accepted a young woman, not to become a nun but as a benefactress, and she donated thirty thousand livres. Now, however, they wish they could do things differently. She's a paralytic. Something like that may seem very advantageous, but a person in Community who can't follow the common way creates many problems.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, AI'm really distressed that we can't do anything for them because they do have good will, and also for the sake of M. Tholard. If Your Charity thinks we should accept them for these reasons, even though they don't have the necessary qualifications, I'll willingly do so.@<sup>2</sup>

AOh no, Mademoiselle! we must do nothing contrary to our obligations. We must go straight to God. I know M. Tholard would like this as something good for his sister, but it will be easy to convince him of the reasons we have for sending them home. Since the daughter isn't at all suitable, what would she do in her present state if her mother were to leave her? And if the mother has no consideration for her own daughter, for whom will she have any? Personally, I'd be unwilling to advise the mother to leave her, given her infirmity.@

The second matter proposed was whether or not to permit Sister Marie Joly<sup>3</sup> to return, considering the length of time she had been out of the house. She had served poor persons in Sedan for fourteen years, but had a difficult time adapting to the practices of the Community; when Mme. de Bouillon,<sup>4</sup> to whom she was obligated, urged her to leave to serve poor persons outside the Company, she gave in and agreed to this. Having recognized her fault, however, and having regretted it the very day she left, she's pleading with us now to have the charity to take her back.<sup>5</sup>

ALet's consider the reasons that seem to oblige us to act like the father of the prodigal in the Gospel, since God is giving us the means for this,@ said Most Honored Father. A(1) She's a person who has strayed from the right path, and it's a charity to lift up those who have fallen; (2) she's contrite, and it seems that she ought to be forgiven, since she's sorry for her fault; (3) she has been a member of the Company for a long time and has worked very hard for those who are poor. During the siege of Sedan, she suffered a great deal; (4) it's to be feared that many of our Sisters may be greatly saddened if we don't take her back.

AOn the other hand, she's somewhat accustomed to following her own will because she hasn't been close to Superiors. It's to be feared, then, that she might cause trouble and not fall into line very easily with the required observances. This is what may prevent us from taking her back: the fear that she may have developed the habit of doing as she pleases. Some persons--and I think I'm one of them--consider only their own likes and dislikes in everything they do, and act very unreasonably.@

Most Honored Father then asked the opinion of M. Portail, Mademoiselle, and the Sisters. For all the above reasons, but mainly because of the pain it might cause our Sisters, who would think

there is no security in the Company, they felt that she should be readmitted.

AI agree with you,@ said M. Vincent, Abut not because of what the senior Sisters will say; for the Daughters of Charity aren't here to please one another but to seek to please God in all things. We must never pay attention to what people will say. Ah! that's why vice is so often approved and virtue despised! Ah! What will people say? That wretched >what will people say?' How often has it made people disdain those who do good, and misinterpret their best actions! So, it isn't because of what the senior Sisters will say that we should do it.

AAAs long as the Church strictly observed its rule of not tolerating those who had fallen into error, its great fervor was preserved, and there were as many saints in it as there were Christians, all having the same spirit. That continued as long as it remained strict about removing offenders, but as soon as it began to relax and to tolerate the sins of those who were regretting this, it fell from its first fervor and reached the state in which we now see it.

ASo, as long as discipline is observed in a house, everything will go well; but as soon as those responsible for its government grow lax, we can say good-bye to the Charity!

Alf we don't take her back, after she left of her own accord and, what is more, with a very pious lady who urged her to leave only in order to serve the poor persons on her estate,<sup>6</sup> what might people say about that? The senior Sisters, who are faithful to God, will say they are blessed in having persons who keep a watchful eye over them and over the whole Company. Those outside will say that things go well with it, since it doesn't tolerate wrongdoing. You see, you must stand firm if you want God to preserve the Company of Charity; otherwise, what would happen if these faults went unpunished? God ordered Moses to put to death all those who were gathering wood on the Sabbath, and that was carried out exactly.<sup>7</sup> In the Old Law we have the example of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who were swallowed up alive for having murmured against Moses.<sup>8</sup> His own sister was struck with leprosy for finding fault with what he was doing.<sup>9</sup> In the New Testament, for having lied to Saint Peter, Ananias and Sapphira fell dead at his feet.<sup>10</sup> Again, it is said of Saint Paul that he excommunicated a wicked young man for having mistreated a woman. Saint Paul cut him off from the faithful; that is, he handed his soul over to the devil, in order that he might amend. The priests themselves were banished when they had committed some notable fault. The Apostles or the Church used this rigorous treatment in dealing with bad priests, but, since that time, indulgence, compassion, and softness have taken possession of the hearts of those who governed the Church, and that's why it's in its present state. To recall the lives of the first Christians in some way, Saint Augustine in his day established groups of priests who lived the common life, and women who placed all their possessions in the hands of a Superioress, keeping nothing for themselves. And even when something was brought for one person in particular, it was not given to that person but to those who had the greatest need, according to the rule established by the same saint. That's what Saint Augustine did to imitate somewhat the manner of life of the early Christians. So then, stand firm so that good order will be maintained, and cut out the infected part, for fear that it may poison all the rest. It's a decayed member; it must be removed. >Ah! but she's a senior Sister. If we refuse her, several others will follow her example and ruin their lives.'

ANo matter; do what has to be done, even if some take offense at it. Those who have the right spirit will say, 'I must be discreet and do my duty well.' They will praise God that disorder isn't tolerated in the Company. And rest assured that no one will ever leave without others coming to take her place. You send away a Sister who was harmful to the others, and three, four, five will enter to reward what you've done.

*AQuoi!* It might be said that, for fear of displeasing the older Sisters, you would tolerate a member who is harming the others, or who might harm them! What a miserable surgeon would he be, who, seeing a gangrenous arm or foot, wouldn't have the courage to cut it off because it hurts! And what would the other members of the body say, if they could speak? And if the senior Sisters see that we're tolerating someone who is doing harm, what will they say? They will want to do the same. >If you keep her, you'll lose several others.' That's why the older Sisters shouldn't object if those who have done some wrong are not easily readmitted. Should you act otherwise, you'd be doing an injustice to the newcomers, who think they will find good example. And isn't it a terrible thing to demand of the young what isn't done by the senior Sisters? You want them to be faithful to the Rules, and you aren't faithful to them yourselves! That's impossible, for the older Sisters must give newcomers the example of what they expect of them. Consequently, I'm not in favor of taking her back simply because of what the senior Sisters will say, because Superiors must hold fast to the things of God. Just as the compass of a storm-tossed ship doesn't fail to guide it, so Superiors, though buffeted by the winds of conflicting opinions, must not fail to govern as God inspires them to do.@

#### **176. - COUNCIL OF AUGUST 13, 1656**

On Sunday, August 13, 1656, Most Honored Father had Mlle.. Le Gras and three or four Sisters meet with him in the parlor of Saint-Lazare. His Charity asked the Sister in charge at the Foundlings if she would soon be able to present some of the older girls from that house to become Daughters of Charity. The Sister answered that some of them were old enough, but she felt that, if the dress of the Daughters of Charity were given to young women who had been foundlings, that might cause pain to our Sisters and could lead people to conclude that all the Daughters of Charity were foundlings.

After the Sister had spoken, Most Honored Father recalled the vision Saint Peter had when he was presented with a canvas filled with all sorts of animals to be eaten,<sup>1</sup> adding that there was no harm in seeing whether someone might be suitable, without giving her the habit. This could be a test; like all other matters, it would be done confidentially, since there was no guarantee that it would work.

#### **177. - COUNCIL OF DECEMBER 26, 1656**

On December 26, 1656, the little meeting began with the decision to be taken regarding the departure of a Sister.

The first point proposed was the dismissal of that Sister and the reason why they were thinking of removing her from the Company. After that M. Vincent said, AHappy are those whom God has endowed with a good spirit, which easily inclines to what is good. So, now we have to see whether we should dismiss her or keep her.

AThe reasons why it seems we should continue to put up with her are:

(1) Spiritual persons should bear with the weaknesses of those who are imperfect; and among the spiritual persons, Sisters should bear with their Sisters.

(2) There's no Company in which there's not something to be endured. There were faults to be borne with in that of Our Lord Himself--not only the unfortunate Judas committed faults, but the others as well; and Saint Peter, after all his protestations of fidelity, denied his good Master.<sup>1</sup>This, then, obliges us to continue to bear with her, since no place is so holy as not always to have some kill-joy in it.

(3) You might lose the merit you'd gain by putting up with her and enduring the trouble she gives you, which is, perhaps, great.

A(4) The Sisters may be saddened at seeing that a Sister who has been so long in the Company is being dismissed. We can respond to that by saying that she can't get along with others, has faults that can't be tolerated any longer, and that we've borne with her for fourteen years, always hoping she'd amend. But that won't prevent them from saying, >If, with all her faults, she was kept all that time, why not continue to bear with her?'

AThose are the reasons why it seems we should continue to bear with this Sister in her imperfections in order to try to help her.

AOn the other hand, one principle that should be observed inviolably is that of keeping the Company free of persons who give scandal. Oh! it's impossible for her not to give great scandal to the children who see how she acts and to the Sisters there. It's to be feared that her companions or the children may take the liberty of imitating her, throwing off all restraint and saying, >They put up with everything from her and nothing is ever said to her. Why shouldn't we do the same? If there were any harm in it, it wouldn't be tolerated.'

ANext, there's nothing to hope for from that person. If everything possible has been done to correct her for fourteen or fifteen years and there's no improvement after that, there's no reason to believe she'll change. If she had been in the house for only six months, or if she were a young person, that would be different; but at her age and after such a long time, it's unlikely that she'll change.

AFurthermore, if we let her remain in the Company, it will cause people to say that we care little about maintaining discipline, since we keep such a person; or that if, in fourteen years we haven't been able to correct her faults, then those who govern the Company aren't very careful about the perfection of the persons under their guidance. That's what people outside the Community will say.

ABesides, those good souls who really love their Rules are very upset when they see persons ignoring them. Oh! that's really painful for them.

AThose, then, are the reasons causing us to think she shouldn't be tolerated any longer. Lastly, she's not working out her salvation here; living as she does, she can't do so. Perhaps, once she has left, the trouble she'll have will cause her to reflect more on that. >Affliction,' says Holy Scripture, >brings understanding.'<sup>2</sup> When she sees that she's poverty-stricken and will have to answer to others if she goes into service--which is quite probable, since she has no relatives--that will make her recognize her fault and correct herself.@

All agreed that she should be dismissed for the above reasons.

It remains to be seen,@ said Most Honored Father, Ahow to go about this.@

AFather,@ said Mademoiselle, AI think Your Charity should take the trouble to speak with her.@

AI shall do so, God willing. Have her come to see me, Mademoiselle.@

Since it was getting late, nothing further was discussed.

## 178. - COUNCIL OF JULY 21, 1657

M. Vincent our Most Honored Father assembled the senior Sisters to see what had to be done to remedy the difficulties our Sisters were having in Chars concerning their spiritual direction and manner of serving poor persons and instructing children, which differed greatly from their ordinary conduct and was causing us to fear some unfavorable result in the future.<sup>1</sup>

At the question, @ said His Charity, Ais to decide what we have to do to withdraw our Sisters from Chars. For a long time they have been enduring many contradictions because of some disagreement between the Pastor and the confessor they had,<sup>2</sup> whom the Pastor had approved as his substitute.

At the first reason in favor of their withdrawal is that, from the time they've been there, we've always had a great deal of trouble changing them, as it's the custom of the Company to do from time to time. Another reason is the fear we must have of those new opinions<sup>3</sup> because of the way they upset people. That good Pastor wants our Sisters to go to confession only once a week, although they receive Communion more often when there are feast days, and during Advent and Lent, when you're accustomed to go to Communion and confession. Now, that's the opinion of all those gentlemen who are teaching this new doctrine, which is very dangerous and contrary to what the Holy Spirit has said in Holy Scripture: >Though your sins be forgiven, don't be without fear.<sup>4</sup> They claim it's useless to confess sins already pardoned by a good confession. That contradicts David's words in regard to past sins, *Lord, wash me yet more from my iniquity.*<sup>5</sup> Now, David knew well that God had pardoned him because the prophet had assured him of it; yet, he asked to be cleansed once again.<sup>6</sup>

Aspeaking of the Sacrament of Penance, Saint Thomas Aquinas states that confession and contrition for having offended God constitute the proximate matter for absolution. Now, because they feel that the sins of the Daughters of Charity are only venial, they don't approve of their confessing so often. Contrary to that opinion, the holy Council of Trent says that, even though we're obliged to confess only mortal sins, nevertheless it recommends the confession of venial sins for greater purity.

AA third reason is the conduct of the Pastor in regard to the school children, since he wanted a little girl to be whipped in his presence.

At those are the reasons in favor of withdrawing the Sisters; let's look at the reasons against it.

At the first is that we have reason to believe that this establishment was made by the order of Providence. If that's the case, it's very important not to do away with it, unless that, too, appears to be by this same order.

AA another reason is that, since the wife of President de Herse<sup>7</sup> founded this establishment, it's to be feared that she'll be displeased with us, especially if we leave without her knowledge.

At the third reason is the fear of scandal; we don't want persons outside the Community to say that the Daughters of Charity are quarrelsome, hard to please, and not dependable. @

When Most Honored Father asked for the Sisters' opinion, one said that there had always been great difficulty in maintaining Sisters there. Sometimes it was feared that those Sisters who were intelligent and inclined to listen to their maxims might become attached to them, and that others, less capable and mentally slower, might lack the discretion to uphold the principles of the Company and the warnings given them on that subject. For want of this, they might cause some

disorder, as happened recently, obliging us to change them frequently.

On the second reason for recalling them, it was stated that the mere consideration and fear of these new opinions should move us to withdraw our Sisters, out of respect for the authority of the Church and the obligation we have to maintain that authority. In so doing, we would give edification rather than bad example.

Most Honored Father inquired whether any of the Sisters had suffered from the Pastor's conduct and whether people had noticed such a state of affairs. He was then briefly informed of several things that had occurred, greatly disturbing the parishioners, and which would have caused even more of a stir had there not been in the parish a good priest who didn't share his views and was the confessor of most of the people. To tell the truth, the first few years he was Pastor--since he's a good man by nature, gentle, and easy to get along with--our Sisters were not worried about that and were living peacefully enough, until he got involved with the Oratorians of the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, who tried to take over and sent one of their men there, who took complete charge. Together they really gave our Sisters a hard time, trying to have absolute authority over their conduct, telling them they had to obey only their Pastor. In this way they troubled them, sometimes in their principles of conscience, sometimes in the manner of carrying out their functions, going so far as entering the Sisters' room and staying there as long as they pleased.

One day, as some of our Sisters were strenuously defending the regulations of the Company on this point, the priests reacted so violently that the noise could be heard in the streets; consequently, although the Sisters may have been somewhat at fault by their indiscretion, public opinion laid the blame on the priests. That's what caused the said gentlemen to complain, and our Sisters to desire their recall from that place.

That, said Most Honored Father, is indiscreet zeal, although those priests mean well. I think that as long as they're in Chars, nothing else can be hoped for, and it's to be feared that they may win over some of our Sisters to their opinions. That's why they must be prepared to leave that place.<sup>8</sup>

### **179. - COUNCIL OF FEBRUARY 29, 1658<sup>1</sup>**

On February 29, 1658, Most Honored Father did us the charity to assemble us, namely, M. Portail and our three Sister officers.<sup>2</sup> M. Vincent had already informed us that ordinarily this number would suffice, and not to summon either those who had just completed their term of office or the senior Sisters, except for extraordinary matters and when the Superior General deemed it necessary.

We first gave an account, without having asked permission, of the thoughts God had given us concerning the grace His Goodness had granted us of preserving Most Honored Father from a serious accident when he fell from his carriage, from which he couldn't have escaped without at least some serious injury. We then remarked that God had used this means to make us realize that we hadn't made good use of the graces God had given our Little Company in his charitable guidance, his admirable concern, and his instructions on our obligations, given so often with such praiseworthy forbearance and gentleness. Although we didn't go into great detail, we were obliged to stop speaking, after saying, nevertheless, that we had all resolved, with God's grace, to

be more attentive to the privilege we had of hearing Most Honored Father's word as the word of God pointing out His Will to us, and to be more faithful in putting it in practice.

Most Honored Father in his great humility was very surprised at this; in his usual manner he began to speak in terms of very great disregard for himself, saying, AI'm a miserable sinner who only spoils everything. If there's any fault in the Company, I'm the cause of it.@ Then he became very quiet, and his silence and recollection made us clearly understand that we had greatly embarrassed him. But, as usual, his forbearance kept him from reproving us for it.

Next, moved by the convictions of our obligations, we added that the Epistle of the feast had taught us clearly the duty Companies have of heeding their Founder and of making use of his instructions, as the Apostles had done while Our Lord was with them. When they no longer had Him present, and the question of replacing Judas arose, they didn't want to do anything on their own; but having witnessed their Master's constant recourse to prayer, they did likewise. Since Our Lord had said that He came not to destroy the law of Moses but to fulfill it,<sup>3</sup> so did they, finding in the prophecies that another was to fill Judas' place.<sup>4</sup> I beg Our Lord to grant the entire Company, which our Most Honored Founder has established by God's Will, the grace of a similar fidelity.

The first topic for discussion concerned our indecision with regard to dismissing a young woman who had come to us from Troyes on the recommendation of a good nun; we were not sure whether to send her home or to give her the habit. The reasons for dismissal were that, since her arrival, she had shown great flightiness, was very curious, wanting to know everything; she was also rather obstinate, little inclined to submission, and had several other little habits contrary to the maxims of the Company. The only reasons for retaining her seemed to be that she had a certain amount of knowledge, no dangerous tendencies, and, though flighty, was very simple, and that perhaps she could be formed, after many corrections.

ASisters,@ said Most Honored Father, Abefore proceeding, I want to remind you of the need to accept in Companies only those who have a vocation; otherwise, those Companies couldn't subsist. How could someone not called by God do any good? That's why special attention must be paid to clearly discerning a vocation. Not that all vocations are alike. God uses different means to call persons to His service. Sometimes even the trials and aversions of the world make people want to leave it. And when, in those cases, candidates have the right dispositions, that's a good sign of a true vocation.

AOthers are called in a more direct manner, actuated only by the desire to serve God and to work out their salvation. This vocation is clearer, but still needs to be tested at times. And, although these callings are different, God still draws glory from them, making them true vocations. When, however, they are led by self-interest alone, and the young women are seeking only their security, it's very difficult for them to succeed. They're always wavering and indecisive, and in the end they don't turn out well. That's why, dear Sisters, it's very important to try out vocations and even to put them to the test.

ASo, tell me, Sister, what you think of this good young woman,@ said Most Honored Father to the Sister who was to speak first.

AI't seems to me, Monsieur, that all that was said of her disposition is true; but since she's very young, maybe, with correction, she could be formed.@

ABut do you think we should keep her, Sister?@

Our Sister, who had never been called to Council before, said, AI'm not able to make a judgment on this, Monsieur; that's for Your Charity to decide.@

APerhaps, Sister, you'll feel more at ease after hearing what the others have to say; and, when you've heard them, you must give your own opinion freely, saying, >For the reasons stated, I think such and such,' or you may present other reasons if they occur to you, such as, >she's not suitable,' or >she'll do well if she stays.'

AAnd what do you think, Sister?@

AFather, she's so far removed from the dispositions Daughters of Charity should have that I don't think she can ever persevere. That makes me say that we shouldn't keep her any longer.@

AAnd you, Sister?@

AMonsieur, I think that everything that has been remarked concerning this good young woman is true. She completely disregards what is said to her, and continues to do as she pleases. That makes me think that there's no hope of her changing, and therefore she should be dismissed.@

AAnd what do you think, Mademoiselle?@

AFather, the importance Your Charity has shown us of not admitting every kind of young woman into the Company, the knowledge we had or have obtained from our Sisters about her, along with the lack of solid judgment apparent in this young woman, cause me to believe that she couldn't change, no matter how hard we tried with her. Not that she isn't a good young woman--she seems to have a gentle disposition. Nevertheless, I don't think she is in any way called to the Company nor can become suitable for it, because her judgment doesn't seem strong enough to help her rid herself of her bad habits and inclinations.@

AAnd you, M. Portail?@

AI don't think I know her, Monsieur, but, from our Sisters' report, I think that the sooner we can send her home, the better.@

AI agree with you, dear Sisters,@ said M. Vincent, Aboth because she seems to have no vocation and because of this tendency to flightiness that you've noted. It's impossible to lay solid foundations on sand, as Our Lord teaches,<sup>5</sup> and this is universally understood. If people want to construct a solid edifice, they make sure it has a sturdy foundation; otherwise, the building will soon fall into ruin, and it's the same in the spiritual life. If someone is flighty, her resolutions will lack firmness. Such persons are always vacillating; sometimes they want one thing, sometimes another, so there's no stability. You'll do well to dismiss her as soon as possible. You have to be very careful, Sisters, about what sort of person is admitted to the Company, so that it won't be burdened with unfit subjects.@

AWe also have a young woman from Montmirail, who is so petty and childish that we didn't think it appropriate to give her the simple dress of the Daughters of Charity, since it also seemed that she didn't have a vocation. Since she has been with us, we've learned that her father, a widower, had forced her to come. She's witty and seems happy in the house; however, she's still a child, and amuses herself as much as she can by playing. She likes to flatter the Sisters and tell them stories--even tales that upset certain ones, causing them some uneasiness about their vocation. I think it will be very difficult for her to change in the house, since she doesn't seem to want to do so.@

After finding out how long she had been in the house and inquiring about her father and relatives, Most Honored Father wanted to take the vote. The Sister who was supposed to answer first said, AWhat Mlle.. Le Gras said seems true, Monsieur.@ Thinking that this good Sister, who had seldom assisted at Council, wanted her opinion to be in line with the opinion of the person holding the place of Superioress, Mademoiselle interrupted and said to her, ASister, please say

what you've noticed and what you think.@ And turning to Most Honored Father, she said, AIt has occurred to me that our Sisters might hesitate to state their opinion frankly, thinking that they always had to accept the opinion of Superiors.@

But this dear Father said, AO my dear Sisters, that's not how it is. What Mademoiselle is saying to you is to help you understand that you're free to express your own thoughts and to follow the inspirations Our Lord will give you on the topics proposed, disregarding what you think she might favor. Otherwise, this wouldn't be a Council whose members are assembled in the name of Our Lord. And that's why officers are appointed in Companies; God gives them the grace to assist in the government of the Community by their advice. That's why, when the need arises, you are obliged to state your opinion with great simplicity, even should your suggestions not always be followed--which may occur for reasons that can sometimes be stated, and at other times not be advisable to give.@

### 180. - COUNCIL OF FEBRUARY 9, 1659

At the short meeting held at Saint-Lazare on Sunday, February 9, 1659, three topics were discussed: the first concerned a Sister who was seeking advice because her brothers were asking her to give them the house adjoining theirs, which belonged to her; the second was what to do for a new Sister in the Company, whose health was very frail; and the third was how to instruct persons who present themselves for that purpose.

Mlle.. Le Gras informed M. Vincent that the Sister whose brothers were asking for her house was leaving that up to them and, since she knew little about business affairs, she was asking what she should do. ASo,@ said His Charity, Athe question is to know whether our Sister should give them this house, and if so, should she give it during her lifetime or bequeath it in her will, because there's this difference: something given *inter vivos* is completely transferred, so she couldn't return to that house. If she were in need, it would be useless for her to have recourse to the law because once something has been given in this way, the donor loses all rights to it. When, however, property is transferred by will, it isn't the same; if the person doesn't wish it, there's no obligation to hold to that during one's lifetime.@

All the Sisters agreed that the Sister in question should, in no way, transfer her property to her brothers, for the following reasons: first, she hadn't been in the Company very long; second, she seemed to be rather flighty, which might give cause to doubt her stability; and, if she were to leave, she'd be glad to have it.

Mlle.. Le Gras was of the same opinion for the above reasons, adding that she didn't know if we could keep her, since she was sickly when she entered the Company and now had several ailments that might necessitate her recall from her present house to the Motherhouse.

M. Portail said that it was not a good idea for the Daughters of Charity to give away their possessions, because it's not the same for them as for persons who enter a religious Order and take perpetual vows.

M. Vincent said that he agreed and that the Company should hold to the policy of never advising the Sisters to dispose of their goods because of the many inconveniences involved and that, after the Sister's death, the house would still be there, and the men would lose nothing.

With regard to the sick Sister, Mademoiselle remarked that she was a very gentle, quiet person,

who apparently had good qualities suitable for a Daughter of Charity, but her physical strength didn't correspond to her disposition. She was quite sickly, so much so that she didn't observe her Rules, and, when told that she had to exert herself a little to test her strength, she said she couldn't do it. She was then informed that if she was always in that condition, she was not suitable for the Company. She gave as an excuse that she had been told that sickly Sisters were never sent away.

After M. Vincent had asked each one's opinion, it was unanimously decided to dismiss her for the following reasons: first, she was sickly when she entered the Company and had nearly always been ill back home, as was affirmed by a companion who had lived with her formerly; second, she herself saw clearly that she didn't have sufficient strength to perform the ministries of a Daughter of Charity and said that she'd go home as soon as she had regained a little of her strength.

AI agree,@ said Most Honored Father,@ and since she's disposed to go, I think it's an act of charity for us to send her away. Perhaps the air of her native region might cure her. As for what she said about our never sending the sick away, that's to be understood only in regard to those who have become ill after wearing themselves out in the service of the poor; it doesn't apply to those who were sickly before entering.@

Mademoiselle spoke to M. Vincent about the instruction of older girls and even of women, remarking that Providence had presented an opportunity for that work. His Charity approved of this zeal, adding that they should be taught not only doctrinal matters, but also good manners and the duties of a good Christian.

Here are his very words: ATeach them how they ought to start the day. When dressing, they should ask God to clothe them in the robe of innocence and, once they have arisen, to recommend themselves to Our Lord and to offer their actions to Him. Teach them how to take their meals, how a child should act toward its parents and the parents toward their children, the wife toward her husband and vice-versa; how they should act toward their neighbors, and everything else regarding good manners. Teach them the proper observance of Sundays and holy days, that they must hear Holy Mass with attention and devotion, and listen to the sermon.@

Here we noted that one of the maxims of Most Honored Father is to praise and esteem the practices of others, stating that the Daughters of the Cross<sup>1</sup> had been greatly blessed by God in their teaching and that it would be well to find out how they do it.

Alt wouldn't be appropriate to go there,@ said His Charity, Abut we could get information from some Ladies who have been there; for example, Mme. de Mirepoix,<sup>2</sup> sister of the Bishop of Pamiers.@<sup>3</sup>

### **181. - COUNCIL OF MARCH 23, 1659**

At the little meeting that took place on March 23, 1659, M. Vincent our Most Honored Father told us he had summoned us to see what we had to reply to our Sisters in Poland.

Alt's about a very important question that hasn't been discussed yet, Sisters, namely, that the Queen wants to keep Sister Marguerite Moreau<sup>1</sup> with her to use her for the charitable works she is having done. M. [Desdames] has written to me about this and tells me that it seems fitting for all three of our Sisters to wear coifs and kerchiefs for two reasons: one is based on necessity, the

other on propriety because it's bitter cold there in winter and extremely hot in summer. For the sake of their health, then, the Sisters should be permitted to have their head and neck more covered than if they were here. The other reason is that women and girls in Poland don't have their necks uncovered. They wear something that goes around their neck, and our Sisters are the only ones who don't. Now, to settle this matter, we can reduce it to several questions.

AFirst, find out whether it's right to grant the Queen's request. Here are the reasons against it: first, the fear of putting our Sister in danger of losing her vocation. How do we know that God will grant her the same grace as He did when the Queen made a similar proposal to her when the Sisters first arrived, and all she could do was cry?<sup>2</sup> True, when Her Majesty saw the pain this caused her, she never mentioned it again, but how do we know whether she can preserve the grace of her vocation if she has to mingle with people in high society?

AThen we have the scandal this could cause to the Company. *Quoi!* What will the others say when they see that a Daughter of Charity is staying with the Queen? That would give them bad example. So, Sisters, it seems that there's a drawback in permitting what has never been done before.

AContrary to what I have just said, we have to see what can prompt us to give the Queen this satisfaction. First, it seems that by acceding to the Queen's wishes our Sister wouldn't be doing anything contrary to the profession of Daughters of Charity; on the contrary, it would simply be a means of living our vocation in a more noble manner. It's like someone who would look for sixty sous in one silver écu, which is the same thing, only the écu is of a nobler material. In the same way, you've given yourselves to God to serve the poor. It's to be believed that the Queen wants to have our Sister only to continue through her to do the works of charity that good Mme. de Villers<sup>3</sup> used to do on her orders, and which were a great consolation to her, and that she sees no one else in whom she has greater confidence. For that reason, it doesn't seem like we can deny the Queen this satisfaction, especially since she has supreme authority and could, if she wished, take her without asking our opinion. Furthermore, it's to be feared that she might become angry if we didn't accede to her request, since it seems so pious, as, in fact, it is.

AThe second reason why it seems it should be done is that we don't know God's plan, and perhaps He wants to take this opportunity to use the Company in a more important way than He has done until now. If we resist, what will happen? What will God say if we refuse to cooperate? He'll have good reason to reproach us: >Come now! You are stupid creatures, you don't understand my ways. I wanted to make use of you, but you were unwilling.' So, there's reason to fear that we might be hindering God's plans for the Company.

AThird, it seems we should respect a Rule Saint Ignatius has given to all Jesuits, among the others they observe. It states that, on entering the Society, they must give themselves to God to be ready to serve Him in the way He will indicate as being most conducive to His glory. For example, they easily change their habit when necessary; as when they go to the Indies and other places where Christians aren't tolerated, they dress like courtiers. Now, in line with this Rule, it seems fitting not to refuse this opportunity to serve God, since the habit doesn't make the monk. It remains to be seen whether we should grant the Queen what she wishes.@

Mlle.. Le Gras proposed to Most Honored Father that the letter of our Sister be reread because it seemed that the only thing stated in it was that the Queen wanted our Sister to accompany her when she was traveling.

Here are the very words of the letter: AI was greatly surprised when the Queen told me she wanted me to accompany her when she went on long journeys. I didn't know what to reply to

Her Majesty other than that I thought she wasn't going to be making such long journeys. Nevertheless, people are talking of her taking a trip of around one hundred leagues. She had someone tell me that she really hoped that I'd wear a coif and a kerchief, and would do what she could to get me to put them on. This same person asked me if we took vows, and this really worried me for fear that, if I were to change my way of dressing and reside at the court, that might cause me to lose my vocation. How do I know that God, who once gave me the grace to overcome all the difficulties I had in leaving the world, will do the same now? If it were up to me, I'd much prefer that God might permit that I become seriously ill rather than to put me in such danger. Nevertheless, please discuss this with M. Vincent in the hope that obedience, to which I submit myself, will give me strength.@

In this letter were two little samples of camelotine, <sup>4</sup> and she told us that this past summer the Queen had suggested their wearing clothing made of this fabric because of the oppressive heat.

Most Honored Father, in his great charity, wishing to take the vote, said: ALet's hear your opinion, Sisters. The question is whether to allow her to accompany the Queen either on her journeys, or to stay with her always. What do you think, Sister?@

Our Sister had a hard time answering because she couldn't understand how the Sister could live in the world and remain a Daughter of Charity.

AThat's not without precedent in your Company,@ replied M. Vincent. AThe Queen of France asked for Sisters to serve her in various places, and God blessed their charity for the poor persons they served.@

On hearing this, our Sister acquiesced, provided it be only for the journeys.

Most Honored Father continued to take the vote; after several Sisters had spoken, it was finally agreed that our Sister Marguerite would follow the Queen's wishes with regard to journeys. Mlle.. Le Gras added that, in line with the reasons given by Most Honored Father, they couldn't refuse what Her Majesty desired, especially since it was very virtuous of her to propose it when she could have done it on her own authority, particularly regarding the journey. It seemed that they should acquiesce<sup>5</sup> because, up to the present, our Sisters hadn't mentioned a longer stay, although it's greatly to be feared that the Queen might broach that subject, since there were few French persons in her court who could satisfy her in place of the late Mme. de Villers.

AAnd what about that coif and kerchief, dear Sisters?@ continued M. Vincent. To which they replied that with the clothing our Sisters wear it was ridiculous. His Charity then asked for an explanation. A Sister put a coif on her head, and demonstrated how the kerchief could be worn underneath, and in this way they would be dressed for the cold weather, and that, for modesty's sake, instead of the coif, they could wear a linen cornette with the same effect.

As for the samples of camelotine, it was decided to tell them that this was not at all suitable and was worn here by the most fashionable people, but we could send a sample of a lighter fabric than that usually worn by our Sisters, but of the same type.

*God be praised!*

## 182. - COUNCIL OF APRIL 25, 1659

Mlle.. Le Gras spoke to Most Honored Father concerning the readmission of a certain Sister who had left the Company and was asking to return. After His Charity had heard her reason for

leaving and that she was rough and apparently indifferent regarding the practice of good, even for the correction of her faults, he spoke as follows:

ASisters, one of the things you must stress and hold as a maxim in the Company is that the young women you accept should show gentleness and humility. I mean these should even be natural qualities; for they are a grace, although founded on nature. You must consider them dispositions essential for becoming Daughters of Charity, who should be so humble that there's no place lowly enough for them because, since there's no Company more sought after than yours, there is likewise no one more obliged to practice virtue than the Daughters of Charity. The Archbishop of Narbonne<sup>1</sup> is pressuring us to send him Sisters. Now that he has become Archbishop, Mademoiselle, he'll give you no respite, for since he had asked for some for [Agde],<sup>2</sup> he'll claim that he should be given preference.

*God be praised!*

### **183. - COUNCIL OF JULY 31, 1659**

On July 31, 1659, the admission of two young women from Serqueux was discussed at the little meeting; one was about thirty years of age, the other a little over sixteen.

Mademoiselle told M. Vincent the qualities of each; then they were brought in so His Charity could observe them. The elder had been very infirm since the age of twelve or thirteen with a swelling in her thigh, which prevented her from kneeling, except on one knee. Her father had first proposed that she stay with our Sisters in her native region and teach school there, promising to give her an income of fifty livres during his lifetime. With the younger one, there seemed to be no problem; she was from a wealthy family and rather stout for her age.

M. Vincent reduced matters to two questions, namely, whether the young woman with the infirmity should be received into the Company or be accepted as a boarder. When he asked for opinions, the Sisters stated that, given her infirmities, she was in no way suitable for the Company and would often need a Sister to take care of her. Besides, all she could do was teach because she knew how to read and write. If Most Honored Father thought it appropriate to take her as a boarder, that would be an act of charity, but it was to be feared that if she were always with our Sisters, she might find the dispositions of some disagreeable and cause her to mention outside the little differences they might have, which would certainly give bad example.

Mademoiselle said that the young woman belonged to one of the prominent families of Serqueux, who were very devoted to our Sisters; and, since they needed someone who supported them in that place, it seemed that this should be taken into consideration. The young woman was an excellent person with a gentle disposition. It would be a great charity to do something for her, since she had no one but her father, and he was about to dispense with his servants. She could be admitted as a boarder, and was qualified to instruct children; however, there was already a third Sister in that place who was very sickly.

M. Portail's opinion was that this young woman could be left with our Sisters for a year's trial, and a decision could be made after that.

M. Vincent didn't see how this young woman could be suitable in any way for the Company. If God had sent her such an infirmity, there was reason to believe He was not calling her to be a Daughter of Charity since she lacked the necessary qualities, and that being devout, she could

very well work out her salvation at home. As for the suggestion to accept her as a boarder, they knew how reluctant the Company had always been to burden itself with boarders, and he thought that this stance should be maintained. If the Company did assume responsibility for her, she'd be as much of a hindrance as a help to some poor Sister. It was also to be feared that, being constantly in that place, she might set herself up as the senior member and lay down the law to the others who would be sent there from time to time. This would cause so much dissension that it would be difficult to provide Sisters for that place. To prevent all these inconveniences, His Charity determined that she should be dismissed.

When M. Vincent was informed about the younger applicant, all agreed that there was no problem admitting her. However, Mademoiselle asked that, if she stayed, she should ask her parents to pay more than the customary amount given for her first habit because they were very wealthy and, up to the present, no one had been asked to give anything beyond the cost of the first habit.

Before any decision was to be made, M. Vincent wanted to know the thinking of the Company. He asked first if it was fitting to want rich persons to enter the Company; second, if any did enter, whether it was desirable for them to bring their possessions with them, on the claim that nuns brought their dowry to a religious Order. Since this property was theirs, it was just that they enjoy the use of it, and that no houses, not only houses of nuns but of communities, accepted persons without money--even houses of men observed this.

It was unanimously agreed that admitting rich persons into the Company was not to be desired and that the advice of Most Honored Father taught us that.

Mademoiselle said that this had been the practice of the Company until the present time, and that Providence had never yet failed it. She also believed that, as long as the Company acted in this way, God would bless it.

One of the Sisters asked permission to speak and said that the charitable practice of accepting young women without money was highly praised by the world, and that a person of rank had recently remarked this to her.

M. Portail was of the same opinion, confirming it by quoting the words of Our Lord, ASeek first the kingdom of God, etc. . . .@<sup>1</sup>

Most Honored Father, moved by on the above, seemed greatly consoled to see that the entire Company felt the same way, namely, to prefer poverty to riches, poor persons to rich persons, and Divine Providence to human prudence. He remarked that, since Jesus Christ had been the only one to do that, those who imitated Him had to be animated with His Spirit and we had to pray that all those in the Company, as well as those who would govern it in the future, should recommend this holy practice. If they acted otherwise, it was to be feared that there might happen to it what Saint Francis feared would happen to his Order. AFrancis,@ the devil said to him, Ayou rejoice now, but the day will come when I will overthrow your Order; I will place rich and learned men among your friars, and by this means I will ruin it.@

Most Honored Father gave us this example to make us see how the Company should fear the entrance of rich persons into it, adding that those who brought possessions with them seem always to be preferred to the others. That was seen every day among nuns: AWe have to bear with her a little;@ they said, Ashe brought a large dowry.@ This is a great obstacle to the uniformity that should be among us. He added that, wherever there are rich persons, they feel that everything should be done on a grand scale and nothing should be lacking.

His Charity highly praised the good management of Mlle.. Le Gras, saying that he knew of no

Sisters' houses in Paris that were at the point where he saw the Company, which, by the grace of God and the vigilance of the person who was directing it, had little or no debt, even though she had recently had a new house built.<sup>2</sup> Mademoiselle, however, unable to allow the praises bestowed upon her, attributed everything to the glory of God, saying that she felt obliged to declare that she had contributed nothing to the present state of affairs and didn't know where the money came from to pay for the new building because it had been started before the funds were collected, and Providence had taken such care of everything that they hardly noticed this.

M. Vincent also took this opportunity to praise the charity of the Sisters who bring their surplus money, saving what they can to help with the support of their Sisters at the Motherhouse. He stated that, after God and the good management of Mademoiselle, they were the ones who were greatly contributing to the maintenance of the Company, as the accounts proved. He felt that God was very pleased with this and that it was a means of sanctifying themselves and of drawing down God's special blessings on themselves and the Company.

Wanting to inculcate in them an ever greater love of poverty and the abandonment to Providence in which the Company had always lived from its origin, His Charity told us that a nobleman, congratulating him on the blessings God had showered on the Congregation of the Mission, attributed this in part to the fact that few rich persons entered it. In fact, he knew of only two or three who had brought any money with them, one of them being a certain Brother, whom he named, who had brought four or five pistoles with him.

Mademoiselle then explained to M. Vincent what one of the Sisters on mission in the country had written about her companion, whom she was supposed to send here on her return from a short journey she had made there four or five months ago. During that time she hadn't written again, but about a month or three weeks ago, she told Mlle.. Le Gras that the lady who was maintaining them was in the area and had requested that the companion not be changed while she was there.

M. Vincent reduced that to two questions; namely, whether the Sister Servant had done the right thing to delay her Sister's return, in accord with the lady's wish; and second, whether it would be well to act this way in similar circumstances. He gave as a reason that he thought prudence seemed to dictate such a course of action on this occasion because the lady who had them brought there and will perhaps be the foundress should have special consideration over the others and that, from all times, founders have had privileges, which even the Church had granted them.

When the votes were taken, it was unanimously decided that the Sister Servant had failed by not sending her companion back as ordered, as soon as she had come home. They felt, however, that she was in a certain sense excusable because of the disposition of her Sister. Most Honored Father also said that she was wrong, that even though she had found her companion reluctant, she should have made her obey, and that, if there had been some reluctance on the part of her Sister, she should have informed Mlle.. Le Gras. A Daughter of Charity should never delay her Sister's departure, once she had received the order of Superiors.

#### **184. - COUNCIL OF NOVEMBER 27, 1659**

At the short meeting of November 27, 1659, where the senior Sisters had assembled, one topic

discussed was the admission into the Company of a young woman whom certain persons who didn't know her very well sent to us to be instructed. She said she wanted to remain with us or to go into domestic service. Most Honored Father decided that she should go into service because there are too many problems involved in taking young women into the Company without being given any assurance of their conduct.

The next question concerned the admission of a young woman who was presenting herself. After having asked the Sisters' opinion, M. Vincent said, ADo as you think best, Mademoiselle, since she seems to be suitable.@

Another matter proposed pertained to our Sisters in a small parish in Paris, who didn't have enough patients to keep them busy. Was it all right for them to launder the church linens for their parish, as they had already been doing until now? It had been remarked, however, that this was allowing too much familiarity with the priests and their male servants. That's why our Superiors had judged it proper to do away with this practice.

With regard to the procedure to be followed, Most Honored Father in his charity gave some reasons against this. AThe first reason, Sisters, for not permitting our Sisters to launder the linens that way is that it may allow too much familiarity with the priests and their houseboys, if they have any. Another reason is that, in the houses of the wealthy, there are usually unfortunate consequences for the persons who do the laundry, unless they are really God-fearing persons. There are always valets around. It's not a good idea.

AOn the other hand, the items our Sisters are laundering are church linens destined for the service of God. For this reason it seems that our Sisters, who have dedicated themselves to God, should do them. Another reason is that, in that small parish, where they don't have enough to do, it seems they ought to take care of them. It remains to be seen how they should go about it.@

Then, His Charity turned our Sisters and said, ASisters, what do you do in the country?@

AFather, we launder the church linens in several places.@

ASister, do the priests come to the Sisters' house? Do you know anything about that?@

AFather, since the time Your Charity made such strong recommendations on that point, I don't think they do.@

Another Sister said, AFather, in one place we used to launder the church linens, as well as the priests' surplices and rabats. Mademoiselle gave permission for that because the priests were poor. But they never came to our house; we used to take the linen back to the church in the morning or send it with some of the school children.@

AThat's a good arrangement, my daughter. Let's see if they can do the same in that parish.@

When he asked the opinion of everyone present, they all agreed to it. In the end Most Honored Father determined what the Sisters of that parish and everywhere else should do when they had permission to launder the church linens, namely, not to take the personal linen of the priests, but only the corporals and purificators;<sup>1</sup> they should receive the soiled linen at the sacristy door, without going inside, and return it in the morning on their way to Mass, handing it to the sacristan at the door of the sacristy.

## PART V

## DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THE LADIES OF CHARITY

### 185. - VISITING THE SICK

@HEAD4 ‘ Conference given on charity toward the sick; importance of personal visits to the patients; manner; means.

#### *Importance*

(1) Our Lord is deprived of the glory He receives on earth from visits to the sick. This glory consists in:

[1] The obedience we render Him;

[2] The fact that, through our goodness, He reveals His own goodness to persons who are poor;

[3] Poor persons know and love Him better as a result of this.

(2) You deprive yourselves of:

[1] Temporal advantages and blessings on your possessions;

[2] The graces God gives in visits to the sick;

[3] You place yourselves in danger of losing glory. God takes it away from those who have received a certain talent just as He does from those who have committed mortal sin.

(3) Poor persons are deprived of the consolation you bring to them by your visits.

They are deprived of the knowledge of God and of God’s love, of which they become aware by your presence.

It may also happen that, being deprived of the consolation you could give them, they will also be deprived of paradise.

#### *Manner*

(1) Visiting them in the spirit in which you would like someone to visit you if you were in their place.

(2) Visiting them in the faith with which you visit Our Lord, which is in the spirit Saint Louis used to visit and serve poor persons.

#### *Means*

(1) Ask God for this grace.

(2) Retire early the preceding evening and do some profitable reading.

(3) Make your morning prayer on the subject of that reading; hear Mass afterward.

(4) Keep yourself more recollected on that day.

## 186. - PREPARING THE SICK OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU FOR GENERAL CONFESSION<sup>1</sup>

(1636)<sup>2</sup>

For the Ladies of the Company of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu who are to prepare poor women to make a confession<sup>3</sup> of their past life.

The Company of Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, of whom you, Ladies, are among the most fervent, was instituted to assist the patients materially and spiritually. The first has been accomplished rather successfully, by the grace of God; there now remains the second--spiritual assistance--which consists in seeing that those poor persons make a general confession of their past life so that, by this means, you may assist those who are dying to have a happy death, and those who will recover to take the resolution never more to offend God.

Now, Ladies, after the officers had reflected many times on the means to ensure that all those poor persons make their general confession, they decided in the end to designate thirteen or fourteen of the most intelligent and pious<sup>4</sup> women to work in pairs each day to do their utmost to prepare only the women patients for a general confession--because God has been pleased to incline a few charitable men of rank to work with the men and to encourage them to make a general confession. Now, Ladies, you are the ones the officers thought of to do this; but from all eternity, you are the ones God chose for it. Oh! how blessed you are to have merited by your good lives that God should choose you for the things for which the Ladies have named you. Let's say a few words about:

- (1) The excellence of this ministry;
- (2) The motives you should use to persuade those poor persons to make a general confession;
- (3) The way you should act.

[1] The excellence of this ministry is obvious because you are to serve as God's instrument in having these poor creatures render Him by penance the honor they have taken from Him by sin;

[2] By their penance you restore to Him the sovereign possession of those poor souls, from which those wretched creatures had been removed and subjected to the power of the devil by sin;

[3] Henceforth, every thought, word, and deed of those poor women will honor God, where previously they honored the devil;

[4] You will delight the angels and cause the whole heavenly court to rejoice at the penance of sinners; *>the angels rejoice over one repentant sinner;*<sup>5</sup>

[5] You snatch those poor souls from hell and restore to them the right to enter paradise;

[6] You practice what widows of the primitive Church<sup>6</sup> did, namely, to meet the material needs of the poor as they did, and even the spiritual needs of persons of their own sex, as they did. In this you will be released, as it were, from the prohibition placed upon you by Saint Paul in 1 Cor 14, *>Women should keep silent in the churches; nor are they permitted to speak.*' Then he adds, *>For it is a disgrace for women to speak in church.*<sup>7</sup> And in 1 Tm 2, *>I do not permit a woman to act as a teacher,*' adding as the reason that, *'Adam was created first; Eve afterward,'* and *>It was not Adam who was deceived but the woman. It was she who was led astray.*<sup>8</sup>

Let's move on to the second point, namely, the motives prompting you to do your utmost to help those poor people to make their general confession and also to help you to encourage those

poor people to do so:

[1] Because won't no assurance that the priests to whom they made their confession had the authority of the Pope, the Bishop, or the Pastor of the parish to hear their confession;<sup>9</sup>

[2] Because won't no guarantee that they had sufficient knowledge;

[3] Because four things are necessary in order to make ordinary confessions as they should be made, and we don't know if they have observed these four things, the first of which is the examination of conscience, and the second, regret for having offended God.

Some motives you should use in encouraging those poor people to make a general confession:

[1] That they confess to a priest who has this power from the Pope, the Bishop, or the local Pastor;

[2] That they must confess to competent confessors;

[3] That they must examine their conscience before going to confession;

[4] That they must regret having offended God;

[5] That they must tell all their sins and not hold any back;

[6] That they must resolve not to offend God again, to perform the penance, to avoid the occasions of sin, and to make restitution.

ANow, they must be asked whether they did all of the above when they made their confession. Doubtless, they will answer >no.' So, what should be told them as the remedy for that? The remedy, Ladies, is general confession, in which they confess all the sins of their past life, whether they have already confessed them or not.

ALet's speak now about your little Regulations, in line with which you should act.@

### *Regulations for the Ladies*

(1) The Ladies destined for this holy work will remember and often reflect that the end--or to put it better, the plan--Our Lord has for this good work is for them to prepare the poor women patients to make a general confession of their whole past life, so that they may better assist those who are dying to have a happy death, and help those who will recover to take the resolution never more to offend God.

(2) These Ladies, both widows and married women, will be fourteen in number and will be chosen by the officers of the said Company, under whose direction they will remain. Accordingly, they will hold this responsibility for six months, if the said officers agree and they can do so conveniently.

(3) They will receive Communion on the days they devote themselves to this good work, that God Himself may be pleased to speak to those poor people by their mouths.

(4) They will be engaged in this good work two by two each day, going to the Hôtel-Dieu for this purpose at two in the afternoon. After adoring the Blessed Sacrament there and offering God the work they are about to do, they will ask Him for the grace of telling the sick poor what He wants said to them on His behalf for their salvation.<sup>10</sup>

(5) When that has been done, they will go separately to the women's wards, and each will always minister in the section that will fall to her lot the first time, until they have done all they can to prepare those poor persons for general confession. When this has been done, they will leave, after adoring the Blessed Sacrament, thanking God for the grace He has granted them of making use of them in the salvation of those poor persons, and asking Him to grant the latter the grace of making a good confession.

(6) If they find some poor creature who is living in sin and wants to be freed of it, they will notify the Superioress so that she may do her utmost to take care of that.

(7) If one of the Ladies falls ill or goes to the country, she will inform the Superioress so that she may make provision for that.<sup>11</sup>

## 187. - WHY THE LADIES SHOULD MEET FROM TIME TO TIME

[Around 1636]<sup>1</sup>

It's important for the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu to meet from time to time:

(1) Because Our Lord is pleased with these meetings, and to encourage Christians to attend them He promises that, when they meet in His name, He will be in their midst and will grant them what they ask of Him by common accord. *>Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in their midst.*<sup>2</sup> *>If two or three join their voices, etc.,*<sup>3</sup>

(2) Because it's useful. And the usefulness is obvious in that:

[1] Things that must be done are being taught; otherwise, many faults are committed;

[2] There is mutual encouragement and animation during the meetings; if not, people lose their enthusiasm;

[3] The usefulness is also obvious because, by this means, all the shortcomings are remedied;

[4] New proposals are presented for the good and for more perfect unity;

[5] The Company becomes stronger in resisting difficulties and in persevering, for Our Lord's intention is that *>you bear fruit and your fruit must endure.*<sup>4</sup>

(3) Because it's pleasing:

[1] Since you get to know one another more personally;

[2] You develop mutual charity among yourselves;

[3] You learn about the good things being done by the Company.

Will you not be consoled, Ladies, when you hear me say what you know perhaps better than I:

[1] That the nuns<sup>5</sup> seem very satisfied with the Company and are more and more attached to their own vocation;

[2] That several hundred sick poor persons have made their general confession;

[3] That several Huguenots have been converted;

[4] That several young women have been withdrawn from sin;

[5] That several have been preserved in purity;

[6] That things seem to be going better at the Hôtel-Dieu.

(4) Because Our Lord acted that way in instituting the Church. He sent His disciples two by two to the country, then recalled and reassembled them on the mountain and discussed with them all that had been done and remained to be done. Then He sent them off with new instructions. The Apostles acted the same way, and the Church still acts the same through universal Councils, provincial Councils, and Synods.

Let's see what we have to deal with at present.

(1) We have to give you an account of the extraordinary visits that are made;

(2) To ask the Company if it agrees that the said visits be continued;

(3) To see that the Ladies making the extraordinary visit have this responsibility for only three

months, from one set of Ember Days to the next;

(4) To have each of them choose members of the Company whom they judge suitable to succeed them, and submit their names to the Servant of the Company before mentioning it to them;

(5) To have those who have found some need to be remedied and good to be done meet every Sunday in the women's hall with the officers to notify them of this;

(6) If they think it's inappropriate for one of the members of the Company to remind the nuns of any failings they see, then the Servant of the Poor should do it;

(7) How to go about visiting the Ladies of the Company who are ill;

(8) That henceforth Mass be celebrated at the Blessed Virgin's altar at exactly ten o'clock on the Ember Day on which they receive Communion;

(9) That the officers are requested to continue, namely, the Supervisor of Furnishings until Pentecost, and each of the others for up to six months;

(10) That each of them send her alms to Mlle. Poulaillon<sup>6</sup> on the first of the month; those who forget should take the responsibility to do so on the day they meet at the Hôtel-Dieu, giving them to Mlle. Le Gras, who will give them to the Treasurer;

(11) To be ready and willing to go to the meetings and to inform the absentees of what has been decided;

(12) To let them know that the meeting of the Ladies designated for the extraordinary visit will be held here on the day after Christmas to give them their instructions.@

## 188. - MEETINGS AND WORKS OF THE COMPANY

[1638 or 1639]<sup>1</sup>

### *Meetings at the Hôtel-Dieu.*

- (1) The importance of coming to the meetings.
- (2) The spirit with which they must attend them.
- (3) What will be discussed there.

### *Two types of meetings.*

AThe importance is obvious:

[1] Because Our Lord recommends them and promises to be in their midst. >*Where two or three are gathered,*' etc. And in another place: >*If two or three join their voices, I will give them whatever they ask.*<sup>2</sup>

[2] Because He Himself had these two kinds of meetings: the full one, when He chose His disciples; and the smaller one, when He assembled Peter, James, and John on Mount Tabor.

AThere was another full one, when He met with His disciples on the mountain, when they returned from their mission. There was also another smaller one, at which He brought together Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Olives. The Apostles did the same. They called two councils or general meetings: one for the election of Saint Mathias to replace Judas<sup>3</sup> and another concerning circumcision.<sup>4</sup>

ALater, the Church did the same to discuss problems that had arisen, and what was decided at the first four Councils was accepted even by heretics as the word of God. The Council pronounced, >*It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and ours as well.*<sup>5</sup> The Church continued them from time to time, the last being the Council of Trent.<sup>6</sup>

Aln the second place, you must be faithful in attending the meetings because that's where you get to know one another. Just as several glowing coals that are separated give off greater heat when placed together, so several Ladies of Charity, who are separated but sometimes join together, share with one another the warmth of the love of God.

[3] Because it's a way of finding a solution to the problems that may arise in the Company and, by this means, to unite it and, consequently, to help it to survive.

[4] So that it may be informed of what is going on, enlightened concerning difficulties that individuals may encounter, and [be in a position to] give an explanation to those who might have something to complain about.@

ANow, let's look at what is happening:

(1) The light meal is still being served, except for about twenty days, when the Sisters were forced to leave their house because of contagion from the plague.<sup>7</sup>

(2) Although the light meal isn't as copious as in the beginning, it still does much good, and the patients are just as satisfied with it as in the beginning because the pears and bread--no longer being served--were for the convalescents, who sometimes threw the pears on the floor. As for the bread, the house provides them with that.

(3) What is good about this light meal is that it gives the Ladies an opening into the Hôtel-Dieu, where they themselves benefit greatly, as do the sick poor, and is an encouragement to the nuns.

(4) This has given you reason to think of the foundlings. I must tell you about their situation, namely, that none of them has been taken in for some time now because many of them have died. Only four have escaped death; we fear the reason for this is that the place is unsanitary, etc.

Invitations will be sent to visit the foundlings.@

ALet's look now at the spiritual benefit:

(1) Most of the patients, especially the dying, make a general confession to your two priests.

(2) Heretics: there have been two hundred of them since your priests have been there. All have been converted, except for six who died in their error, and around twenty-five who returned home cured while remaining heretics.

(3) The chaplains who hear confessions at the door send to those two priests the difficult penitents who haven't been to confession for a long time.

(4) They reconcile the sick poor who quarrel with one another--which occurs frequently.

(5) They have the dying make acts of faith, hope, love, and trust in God.

(6) They go ahead of the priest who is going to administer the holy sacraments, to prepare them to make a good Communion and thanksgiving.

(7) Sometimes they go through the wards during High Mass to exhort the patients to join their will and acts of devotion to those of the Church, and to assist at it in spirit by their prayers.@

#### *A few recommendations*

Seven Ladies will suffice for the instruction, instead of fourteen.

(1) Bequests left to the Hôtel-Dieu for linen are given to the Administrators--as they should be-

-and not to the nuns. I say this so that the Ladies will no longer complain to the Sisters that the patients aren't kept very clean--which should come as no surprise, since 750 sheets a day are needed.

(2) People are complaining that they don't see the same Sisters. We have to change them because in the course of time they catch serious illnesses there and die.

(3) Some Ladies are giving light meals to all the poor persons, contrary to the order that they are to be given only to the most seriously ill. In addition, they distribute them on the run. It is to be hoped that this will be done with greater devotion.

(4) The nuns are asking for brass crosses as a help to those who are dying.

(5) Some Ladies are saying that the light meal serves no purpose. The nuns say the contrary, as do some persons who have been visiting the hospital for twenty years.

(6) The Ladies should refrain from telling the nuns of any shortcomings they see among the patients, addressing their comments instead to one of the officers.

*The second priest*

(1) The poor persons don't make a good confession at the door.<sup>8</sup>

(2) Many women have two husbands; others are slaves to evil; and others are actually in a bad situation and have never made a good confession, but are determined to do the right thing.

(3) Some young women between twenty and twenty-five years of age have been living in sin, but are promising rather to die than to offend God.

(4) There are some young children five years of age who have never received Communion but have been instructed.

(5) They console the sick and resign them to dying.

(6) Prepare them for death.

**188a. - WILL OF MADAME GOUSSAULT<sup>1</sup>**

February 16, 1639

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I, the undersigned, Geneviève Fayet, widow of the late M. Antoine Goussault, *Seigneur des Souvignes*, Councillor of the King in his State Councils, and President in his *Chambre des Comptes* in Paris, have made and do now make my testament as follows:

I, though unworthy, after having received this day in Holy Communion the Precious Body of my Savior to prepare me for death, wish, first of all, by the grace of God and the assistance of my good mistress the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, to die as a true Christian and daughter of the Roman, Apostolic, Catholic Church. I invoke her for that purpose, and I pray and invoke my Guardian Angel; my patroness Saint Genevieve; Saint Joseph, to whom I have special devotion; my holy patron for this month Saint John the Evangelist; Saint Mary Magdalen; and all the holy men and women in paradise, to kindly intercede this day for me, a sinner.

With all my heart, I ask pardon of God for my many grievous sins and for the poor use I have made of His graces and inspirations.

I most humbly ask pardon of my good mother for the offenses I have committed against her

and for my acts of disobedience and wicked words.

I also ask pardon of my brother and all my relatives on the late M. Goussault's side and my own for any displeasure I have given them during my whole life and for failing in respect toward them.

I ask pardon of my children and servants for the little care I have taken of them, both during their illnesses and on other occasions, and for the bad example I have given them by my words and impatience. Lastly, I most humbly ask pardon on my knees, with hands joined, of all those whom I have offended by my anger, pride, contempt, disparaging remarks, or thoughtlessness. I beg them to treat me with mercy, which I am also hoping from God, who will grant it to them in return.

I await death joyfully, hoping in the infinite mercy of God, the effects of which I have so often and so greatly experienced. I ask God with all my heart by this, my last will and testament, to be the Master and sole Possessor of my soul, my life, and my liberty, by the merits of the Precious Blood and Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I give and consecrate myself entirely to Him.

I desire that my body be buried at Saint-Gervais with that of the late M. Goussault my dearest and beloved husband. I most humbly ask my relatives to agree to my not having a lead coffin. I have made too much of my body during life; I desire that it be interred without any honors.

As far as in me lies, I forbid any funeral hangings or useless expense to be made, but ask that the service be held with the body present, if won't a means of doing so, without too many candles or formalities.

I desire that one hundred Masses be said as soon as possible to obtain from God the deliverance of my poor soul, and that the same number be said by the Priests of the Mission, to whom the sum of one hundred livres will be given for that purpose. I hope that M. Caniet will be willing to say my anniversary Mass, for which he will be given eighty écus. I ask him to choose a convenient time for this so that some of my children may always be able to attend.

I recommend to all my children, my sons and my daughter, to have the fear of God and to love one another. I ask my eldest son to be careful to show good example to the others, that they may live together as good brothers and sister and true Christians.

I ask them with all my might never to speak ill of others and never to lie knowingly, and they will see that God will protect them as His children. Amen.

I ask the relatives of my underage children to name as their honorary guardian my brother M. Fayet and my son-in-law M. Lotin,<sup>2</sup> and, as paid guardian, M. du Fresne, secretary of the Duc de Retz.<sup>3</sup> They may give him a high salary and wages for this, as they deem appropriate. I ask the said Messrs. Fayet, Lotin, and du Fresne not to refuse my children this charity.

I ask him also to see that M. Le Houx remain with my children as long as he can. I sincerely hope that their natural goodness will always make them consider him their special friend, given them by God to help them to save themselves.

I give and bequeath to the four elderly Mendicants one hundred fifty livres apiece, to be used for the needs of poor novices for items such as shoes, linen, and other necessities, which my daughter or M. Le Houx will take the trouble to distribute to them, and not in money. I am not asking my brother to do this because I am well aware that it would be too much work for him.

I leave to the Sisters at the Madeleine,<sup>4</sup> near the Temple, the sum of three hundred livres.

I leave to the repentant Sisters three hundred livres.

I leave to the Ave Maria Sisters three hundred livres.

I leave six hundred livres to be used for the food and maintenance of one or several priests of

the Community of Saint-Nicolas du Chardonnet,<sup>5</sup> who do the charity, according to their establishment, of instructing those aspiring to the priesthood, or who are already studying for it, to become capable of this dignity for the glory of God and the instruction of the common people. I ask my brother, executor of this testament of mine, to take the trouble to distribute the said sum of six hundred livres to the said priests of the Community whenever occasions that will call forth this charity present themselves. I desire that it be given only to those already in Holy Orders up to the day of their ordination to priesthood, asking them to pray for me at their first Mass. If my children's servant wishes to become a priest, he should be preferred to any others.

I leave three hundred livres to be distributed by my daughter and Mlle. Le Gras to bashful poor persons of good reputation, in this city or in the rural areas, especially those who are ill, workers, or persons who have worked for me.

So that the money will be used in the best way, they should be in no hurry to distribute it; it will suffice that they complete this in a year's time.

I leave to the bashful poor of the parish the sum of one hundred livres. The Pastor of Saint-Gervais will say to whom the money should be entrusted, either to Mme. Chanevas<sup>6</sup> or someone else.

I leave six hundred livres to the prisoners. I ask my daughter or M. Le Houx to distribute the money, always by order of my brother and to relieve him. It should be used either for the release of some, or for those things that are most necessary, such as linen, coal, and other essentials.

The sum of one hundred livres will be placed in the hands of the Reverend Mother Prioress of the Hôtel-Dieu to be used for bed linens for the patients or for something else for their community.

I give and bequeath to each poor student of the collège in Montaigu, called Capette, the sum of six livres to be used for books, clothing, shoes, or food, depending on their greatest need, to be distributed by M. Le Houx.

I leave three hundred livres to be given to Mlle. Le Gras or whomever else M. Vincent, Superior of the Priests of the Mission, may choose to name, to be used for books, rosaries, holy pictures, and other small presents, as I have been accustomed to do in the villages when I go to visit the Confraternities.<sup>7</sup>

If, at the time of my death, the Ladies of the Company of the Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu continue to do good for the patients, I leave five hundred livres to be used there. This sum of six hundred livres [*sic*] will be placed in the hands of the Treasurer, with the consent of the other officers.

I give and bequeath for the region of Anjou the sum of one thousand livres to be distributed by M. Le Houx or someone else whom my brother knows and will send expressly for this purpose, and not otherwise, for my children's needy relatives, if there be any; the poor tenant farmers on their estates; as well as all the prisoners with offensive diseases, always giving preference to members of the parish over others.<sup>8</sup>

I give and bequeath to M. Le Houx, even if he should be with my children no longer, the sum of four hundred livres to be used for some vestments for his use, as he so chooses.

I leave to Remy Grandnom<sup>9</sup> the sum of six hundred livres only, since he has already received other benefits from me; and, if he remains with my children, I ask them to love him and reward him well; he has been very faithful.

If, at the time of my death, I have a handmaid, I leave her one hundred livres.

I leave to Catherine Joly six hundred livres, if she is still in my service at that time.

I leave to Barbe Macaire four hundred livres, if she is still in my service at that time.<sup>10</sup>

I leave to my kitchen maid two hundred livres.

I leave to my coachman one hundred livres.

I leave to my cook two hundred livres.

I leave to my footman two hundred livres.

I leave to the each of the wet nurses of my sons Jacques and Nicolas Goussault twelve livres a year during their lifetime; and to the wet nurse who finished feeding my deceased little daughter Geneviève, I leave fifty livres to help her provide for her daughter Louise.

I give and bequeath to the Confraternity of Charity of Grolet the sum of forty livres, on condition that they have a Mass said for my soul, and I ask the Sisters who are able, to be present and to receive Communion at it.

And to execute and carry out this last will and testament of mine, I name and choose my brother M. Fayet, Counselor in the Parlement, to whom I give authority and power to do so, and to increase rather than diminish what is ordered. I relinquish into his hands each and every one of my moveable and immoveable goods in entire fulfillment of it.

Drawn up at La Chapelle, near Paris, in the house of Mlle. Le Gras and the Daughters of Charity, February 16, 1639. Written and signed by my hand.

GENEVIEVE FAYET

Following this the notary added:

Today there appeared before the undersigned notaries at the Châtelet of Paris M. Nicolas Fayet, Councillor of the King in his Parlement court, in the name and as executor of the last will and testament of the said Lady Geneviève Fayet, his sister, now deceased. He has given into the hands of Groyn, one of the said undersigned notaries, the testament of the said Lady, written above on four sheets of paper, including this one. On the back of the third sheet two articles have been crossed out, and on the front page of this sheet two articles have also been crossed out, as from the present testament, to be retained in the minutes and annexed to that of the codicil which she had the said Groyn and his fellow notary write on the eighth of this month of September. This has been done today, September 27, 1639.

GUYON

FAYET  
GROYN

*Codicil*

September 8

Present in person was Mme. Geneviève Fayet, widow of the late M. Antoine Goussault, during his lifetime *seigneur* des Souvignes, Councillor of the King in his State and Privy Councils, President of the *Chambre des Comptes*. Living in Paris, rue du Roi-de-Sicile, Saint-Gervais parish, she is now bedridden and physically ill, but sound in mind, memory, and understanding, as is obvious to the undersigned notaries. She has stated and declared that she previously made her testament, written and signed in her hand, which she wishes to be executed point by point according to its form and contents, and, by adding to it in the form of a codicil, she has done,

said, and appointed the following to the said notaries:

Be it known that she gives and bequeaths to the Sisters of Mlle. Le Gras, committed to serving the poor, the sum of one thousand livres, payable in a lump sum, so that they will pray for the said Lady, who asks them to do so.

There has been left and bequeathed to the Reverend Fathers and the Superior of the Mission the sum of one thousand livres, also to be given in a lump sum, to be used in the preparation and decoration of the painting and altar being placed in the chapel of the Collège des Bons-Enfants, near the porte Saint-Victor.

There has been left and bequeathed to M. Coquerel, Principal of the Collège des Grassins, the sum of three hundred livres, to be given in a lump sum, to help with the building he is having erected at the said Collège des Grassins.

There has been left and bequeathed to Jeanne Pint, one of her servants, the sum of one hundred livres as wages.

There has been left and bequeathed to David . . . (the last name has been left blank), one of her servants, a similar sum of one hundred livres, also as wages.

And to execute the present codicil, she has named the same person she chose for her said testament, whom she asks once again to take the trouble to do so.

This was done, dictated, and appointed by the said Lady to the said notaries, reread to her by one of them, in the presence of the other, in the room where she lies ill, on the afternoon of September 8, 1639, and which she has signed.

GENEVIEVE FAYET

THUAULT

GROYN

### 189. - THE WORK OF THE FOUNDLINGS

(January 12, 1640)<sup>1</sup>

#### *The Foundlings.*

AAAnd all the kings of the earth will adore him; all people will serve him, for he shall rescue the poor man when he cries out.@<sup>2</sup>

- (1) Motives for undertaking this work.
- (2) Manner.
- (3) Means.

#### *Motives*

[1] The praises of your little children are pleasing to God. A*Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings you have fashioned praise.*@<sup>3</sup>

[2] They are in extreme need, and those who are aware of this are obliged to do something about it, under pain of damnation. A*You have not fed them, you have killed them.*@ Their need is extreme because they have been abandoned by father and mother, and if the people take care of

them, they will still be in similar extreme need:

(1) Because, not having sufficient funds for their maintenance, one is obliged to give them to the first person to come along, who causes them to die of hunger or illness;

(2) Because they all die;

(3) Because this is a disgrace here in Paris, which we condemn in the Turks, namely, to sell human beings like animals; for they sell these children for thirty livres to anyone who wants them;

(4) Because this is to deliver them over to the same cruelty exercised by Herod on the Holy Innocents, for they are using the same cruelty with those little creatures, since they give them to miserable creatures who cause them to die, some from starvation, and others by having their arms and legs broken;

(5) Because Our Lord willed that it be said of Him that He came into the world *Ato rescue the poor man when he cried out, and the afflicted when he had no one to help him.*@<sup>4</sup> Job relates that the men who were sold to him by the people came from the fact that they *Arescued the poor man who cried out for help and the afflicted when he had no one to help him.*@<sup>5</sup>

### *Objections*

[1] This is an affair for the High Court Judges and not for private individuals, especially women.

This is true. But what shall we do? That would mean going to court. Who will take it on? Meanwhile those poor little creatures are dying.

[2] God has damned many of those little creatures because of their birth; perhaps that's why He doesn't allow these matters to be set right.

I have two things to say in reply to that:

(1) It's because we were cursed by God on account of Adam's sin that Our Lord became man and died; and to take care of these poor creatures--even though they may be cursed by God--is to do a work of Jesus Christ.

(2) Perhaps some among them will become important persons and great saints. Romulus and Remus<sup>6</sup> were foundlings and were suckled by a wolf. According to Saint Paul, Melchizedek the priest had no genealogy, that is, no father and mother,<sup>7</sup> which means he was a foundling. Moses was a baby found by Pharaoh's sister.<sup>8</sup>

(3) Here is a third objection--and the most difficult one--namely, that this work is very costly and we have little money.

It's true, for 550 livres are required to maintain six or seven infants. Now, suppose, as is said, that there are 200 or 300 hundred of them yearly; see how many times 550 livres are needed. Even if we took in only fifty of them annually, and this number remained stable each year, 4,000 livres would be needed, besides the rent on the house, and the following year it would be that much again, that is, 8,000; the same for the third year (12,000), the fourth (16,000), the fifth (20,000), and the tenth (40,000). The solution is to take on what we can do.

People ask if it wouldn't be better for the Ladies to go right now to the Foundlings. For the Ladies to be able to take care of matters, it would seem expedient for them to go in pairs every day, as at the Hôtel-Dieu, and do what they can to see that the children are fed and cared for a little better.

On the other hand, if they go there it will be either to take responsibility for the entire expense

and care or just go there and leave things in the state they are now.

If you take on the whole work, they will oblige you to accept everything, and you won't have sufficient funds.

Second, if you go there without its depending on you, you won't be able to establish the necessary order there, and you'll either have to see those children lost before your eyes, or donate enough money to feed them.

Third, for the 1,200 livres needed to found this work, should you go there with your hands tied and not be able to do what should be done?

### *Manner*

Assuming that we do take on what we can, it will be well to honor the abandonment the Eternal Father makes of His Son to the mercy of the world and Herod's persecution of His Child for this reason.

### *Purpose*

To honor the love Our Lord has for little children who have neither father nor mother; and, for this purpose, let us help those poor foundlings save their lives and try to have them brought up in the fear of God.

The Company of the Ladies of Charity for the Foundlings will be composed of a fixed number of Ladies, who will elect three of their members by a plurality of votes, one of whom will be the Servant of the Poor, another the Treasurer, and the other will take care of the furnishings.

### *Means*

Find out if this Company should unite with the one at the Hôtel-Dieu. Have a few of the Ladies go to the Chief Justice to see whether the foundlings can be placed in some hospital.

Find some way to keep the poor people from sending their children there, even though they may not be foundlings.

See if it's a good idea to unite the Company of Ladies for the Foundlings with the one at the Hôtel-Dieu.

This seems appropriate because:

- (1) Most of the Ladies for the Foundlings also go to the Hôtel-Dieu.
- (2) It's difficult to find as many people as needed who have the skills and the time to direct the two Companies.
- (3) It's to be feared that there might be some rivalry between the two Companies.

On the other hand:

- (1) There may be someone who can give to the Hôtel-Dieu but can't do the same for the Foundlings.

The reply is that the way this union is understood leaves each one the liberty to give or not to give, for the union will be understood only:

[1] With regard to the officers, unless won't a separate Treasurer for the Foundlings.

[2] With regard to Communion at the time of the Ember Days.

[3] With regard to prayers and Communion for the Ladies who are ill and those who have

died; with regard to meetings when they will be held.

[4] As for contributions, however, that will be optional. Those who want to give to the Hôtel-Dieu only will do so; those who are devoted to the Foundlings will give to the Foundlings; and those who want and can give to both will do so.

(2) Someone may visit the Hôtel-Dieu and not the Foundlings, and vice-versa.

My reply is that this would be optional for a certain time, until it's clear later what is most advisable.

(3) The officers will be overburdened if they are responsible for both.

My reply is that this is true at the beginning, but it won't be so difficult for them once the order is established.

### **189a. - CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH THE LADIES OF CHARITY ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FOUNDLINGS**

[Before March 1640]

*Conditions agreed to by the Ladies of Charity on undertaking the care of the foundlings*

The Ladies of Charity will take responsibility for a trial period for the foundlings at La Couche<sup>1</sup> as they are doing with the children they have in their foundling home in the faubourg Saint-Victor, where they are having them brought up and are directing this work for the better. It will be on condition that the Deputy of the High Court Judges will entrust to the Treasurer of the Charity of the said Ladies designated for the said Foundlings the income provided by the said High Court Justices. She will give him an account of the said income only, and not of what comes in from collections taken up by the Ladies. It will also be on condition that, from time to time, they will inform the said Deputy of the state of this good work. Furthermore, the said High Court Judges will be at liberty to withdraw from the said Ladies of Charity the direction of the said Foundlings when it pleases them, and the said Ladies will also be at liberty to withdraw from it when they deem it advisable.

### **190. - THE WORKS OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU AND OF THE FOUNDLINGS**

(April 1640)<sup>1</sup>

*General meeting at the Hôtel-Dieu*

There are three points to the agenda:

- (1) A report will be given on the situation at the Hôtel-Dieu and at the Foundlings.
- (2) Reasons will be given why the Company should be devoted to these two good works and should attend the meetings.
- (3) A few problems will be presented for the advice of the Company.

*The situation at the Hôtel-Dieu and at the Foundlings*

(1) The situation of the Hôtel-Dieu remains the same. Distribution of the light meal has continued without interruption.

(2) The fourteen Ladies who give the instruction have done their duty.

(3) The priests have also done their duty very well: five heretics have been converted, three of whom died afterward. They have the patients make a general confession, and go before the Blessed Sacrament to encourage the patients to lift their hearts to God and make worthy Communions; they help the dying to make acts of faith, hope, and charity, and they have those who recover take the resolution not to offend God again. Holy Mass is celebrated daily in the Legate.<sup>2</sup>

(4) Nothing has been changed for the distribution of the light meal, which is sufficient to achieve their goal, namely, to instruct the patients and have them make a general confession, which is what they seeking, and the expense is in line with the money that comes in.

### *The Foundlings*

(1) They have taken on the responsibility for them, in accord with the decision of the Company three weeks ago, on March 30. They were unable to do so sooner because of many problems which arose.

(2) They are in the house of your<sup>3</sup> Daughters of Charity, where Mlle. Le Gras is looking after them.

(3) There are . . . of them; twenty are out with wet nurses, and the rest are in the said house<sup>4</sup> and in the one in the faubourg Saint-Victor.<sup>5</sup>

(4) Not a day goes by that one of them is not brought in, and yesterday there were three of them. The reason there are more of them than there are days is that we've taken in those whom the Directress of La Couche had given to the city.

(5) Five have died within the last three weeks.

(6) When we farmed out these babies, the wet nurses were told that we would no longer give them any money unless they brought a certificate from the local Pastor stating that the infant was still alive.

(7) When the time come when they are in the country, the Ladies are asked to go to visit them. It has also been suggested that we send a devout young man to those places from time to time to check on the state of those infants.

(8) The Ladies are urged to go in pairs on their appointed day to visit the ones in this city, according to the notice that will be sent to them about this.

### *Motives for being devoted to this good work*

(1) That, in visiting the poor persons of the Hôtel-Dieu and those poor [infants], you visit God Himself in them; and the service you render them is rendered to God Himself. *Al am with him in his distress.*@<sup>6</sup>

(2) That you cause the goodness of God to be seen and felt through your own goodness to those poor persons, and have God glorified. That's why God recommends that you visit the poor *Aso that they may give praise to your Father.*@<sup>7</sup>

(3) You cooperate with Jesus Christ in the salvation of those poor souls, seeing that they are instructed, make a general confession, and either depart this world in a good state or leave the

Hôtel-Dieu recovered and in a good state.

(4) You edify the whole Church, which sees you devoting yourselves so compassionately to the assistance of persons who are poor.

(5) In visiting those poor persons, you edify one another and become disenchanted with the world and more closely united with God, acknowledging thereby your obligation to God, who has delivered you from the wretchedness of those poor persons.

(6) You wipe out your past and present sins and, in a certain sense, any future sins; the first two by the remission God grants you from them; the last mentioned by visiting the sick, where we receive the graces that preserve us from sin. *AJust as water quenches a flaming fire, so do alms atone for sin.*@<sup>8</sup>

(7) You go on gaining the merit of a good death. *I read, reread, and read carefully, and never saw . . . the evils of death.* And Mme. Goussault is the witness to this.

(8) You put yourself in the position of going before God at judgment with your head held high. *AWell for the man who is gracious and lends and conducts his affairs with justice.*@<sup>9</sup>

(9) Do you still have needs or temporal concerns? *AThe one who gives to the poor suffers no want.*@<sup>10</sup>

(10) Do you want your family to be blessed with glory and riches? *AHis posterity shall be mighty upon the earth; the upright shall be blessed. Wealth and riches shall be in his house.*@<sup>11</sup>

All these considerations should prompt you to assist the sick poor and the foundlings. Here, however, are some that apply particularly to the foundlings:

### *The Foundlings*

(1) You practice in their regard the seven corporal works of mercy,<sup>12</sup> and, in a certain sense, the spiritual works of mercy;<sup>13</sup> consequently, you merit all the graces God has attached to each of the seven works, of which visiting the sick of the Hôtel-Dieu is only one. You feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, etc.

(2) They are in extreme--or almost extreme--need, and each of us is obliged to come to their aid. It's obvious that it's extreme since, without your help, they will all die. They have been abandoned by their fathers and mothers and everyone else. So what can be the solution? Their death.

(3) They are the image of Jesus Christ in a special way:

[1] Our Lord was born without a human father, and these poor children have been disowned by their father and their mother.

[2] In His mother's womb Our Lord suffered on the journey the Blessed Virgin made when she was about to give birth; and these poor children suffer when their mothers strike their bellies, and from pressure and medicines.

[3] From the time Our Lord was born until His death, He was persecuted by His enemy Herod; and these babies are abandoned to death by their fathers and mothers, who, so as to escape punishment, did not themselves cause them to die.

[4] Our Lord fled into Egypt and found a refuge there; and these poor creatures find their safety among strangers, who are nothing to them.

[5] Our Lord suffered poverty, wretchedness, calumny, and persecution for the sins of His children, and these infants suffer because of the sins of their mother.

[6] Lastly, Our Lord was made a curse and sin for His children; and these are suffering for evil

of which they are not guilty. The difference is that the first is the child of God, and the other is a child of men and women; the first is a child of grace and the other is a child of sin.

(4) These children can become great servants of God. Melchizedek had neither father nor mother, says Holy Scripture; Moses was a foundling; Saint John was like a foundling in the desert; nevertheless, all of them were legitimate. Romulus and Remus, the founders of Rome, were also foundlings.

(5) It is said in Holy Scripture that God blessed the midwives of Egypt because they didn't allow the male children of their people to die, even though the King had told them to do so. Alas, Ladies! what blessing should you expect, not only for not allowing these poor children to die, but for giving them life and preserving it!

Pharaoh's daughter, an idolatress, adopted Moses, the baby found in the water; all the more reason why you, Ladies, who are Christians, should adopt these little ones as your own.

The last reason I place before you for being faithful to your two good works is that God has granted you the grace to respond to the inspiration He gave you to embrace this good work; consequently, you are obliged to make use of this grace, under pain of having Him take it away and give it to someone else.

### *Objections*

ABut, Monsieur, what can we do if there are so many foundlings? Just look! We get one a day; we're just beginning to do some good, and about one-third of them have died. I calculate that two-thirds, or 200 of them, will live. If it costs 200 livres for each of them, that will come to 12,000 livres.<sup>@14</sup>

I have two answers to that: one is that we must trust in God and do what we can; the other is that we've agreed only to try this out and, if the burden is too great, we'll ask to be released from it. Now, it seems appropriate to take up a collection for that. If, for the past ten months, six of you Ladies, with 2,500 livres a month, have saved the lives of 2,500 poor persons who, until now, were dying in Lorraine, what should you not hope from God's goodness? And if one Lady of the Company,<sup>15</sup> by her charity and through her influence, organized help for the present need of the men and women religious of Lorraine, what should you not hope from the goodness of God in the present situation?

### *Attendance at the meetings is required for several reasons:*

- (1) Because the Rule obliges this.
- (2) Because the meeting is held to deal with the affairs of God.
- (3) Because the work can't survive otherwise.
- (4) Because in so doing you practice several virtues:
  - [1] Patience in bearing with the miserable person who is speaking to you.
  - [2] Good example.
  - [3] Avoiding an occasion of wasting time.
  - [4] Faith, hope, charity, etc.
- [5] Because you will receive a greater abundance of grace than you would elsewhere, in the same way as the Apostles received the Holy Spirit together.

## 190a. - VISITING THE SICK

[1638-42]<sup>1</sup>

### *Conference for AThe Fourteen@ of the Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu<sup>2</sup>*

(1) *Reasons they have for taking up this holy practice.*

(2) *What should be done before the visit.*

(3) *What should be done during it.*

(4) *What should be done after it.*

[1] First motive: God has called and chosen you for it by the order of Providence.

[2] By this good work, souls are removed from the sovereignty of the devil and reestablished in that of God. Think what a consolation it would be for a Prince who has been banished from his principality to see himself reestablished in it.

[3] It's because of you that sinners who die after having been instructed and made a general confession go straight to paradise, and that those who are restored to health will lead a good life.

[4] You assure your own salvation while saving your souls.

### *What is to be done beforehand*

[1] As soon as you awaken on the morning of the day it is your turn to serve the patients, offer all your thoughts to God that He might grant you the grace of performing this good work well.

[2] Receive Holy Communion either sacramentally or spiritually on that day for this intention.

[3] Humble yourself before God for your own poverty in such a great work.

### *What is to be done during your ministry*

[1] Prepare their minds by greeting them graciously and saying, AWell, my child, who do you think sent you the illness you have? It was God. And why? To draw you to Himself or to help you to lead a better life.@

[2] Tell them that, in order to benefit from their illness, they must do two things: (1) be instructed in the things necessary for salvation, based on the following, AEternal life is this: to know you, the true God, and your Son whom you have sent.@<sup>3</sup> Now, for salvation it's necessary to know that won't one God in three Persons.

[3] Tell them that they have to make a general confession, the reason being that we know that by Baptism we became children of God, and when we offend His Divine Majesty, we become children of the devil, but the means of restoring the dignity of a child of God is a good confession. I say Agood@ because those that aren't good don't have this result, since there are four conditions for a good confession: (1) a careful examination of conscience, etc. And because won't no assurance that our past confessions have been good, nor, consequently, that we've been restored to the grace of God, we must make a general confession, which is made just like the others except that in it we accuse ourselves only of past sins, etc.

### *What is to be done afterward*

[1] On leaving, thank God for what you have done.

[2] On your way home, reflect on the way you devoted yourself to this good work and the means of correcting any failings.

[3] If you've found some aid to be given to help a person overcome sin, see to it as soon as possible.

## 191. - WORKS OF CHARITY

[1638 or after]<sup>1</sup>

*For the general meeting of the Ladies of Charity*

To be more and more devoted to the practice of charity toward all kinds of needy persons.

(1) *Motives.*

(2) *In what it consists.*

(3) *Means.*

[1] *AThe one who perseveres to the end. . . .*<sup>2</sup> *ANo one who puts a hand to the plow . . . is fit for the kingdom of God.*<sup>3</sup>

*ACursed is the one who does the work of God negligently.*<sup>4</sup> How much more those who abandon it entirely!

*AWhat he first takes up he never quits.*<sup>5</sup>

[2] The second motive is the excellence of the work, in which it's question of giving spiritual and physical life to little children abandoned by their own mothers and fathers; *AOf all divine endeavors the most divine is cooperation with God for the salvation of souls;*<sup>6</sup> to help poor galley convicts, the scum and malice of the kingdom, to be reconciled to Our Lord; to help the sick poor who are restored to health to lead a new life if they are healed, and those who are near death to die well, honoring by this means the childhood of Our Lord in that of those little creatures, His life of penance in that of the convicts, and His blessed death by helping patients at the Hôtel-Dieu to have a happy death. In so doing, you make yourself a perfect imitator of J[esus] C[hrist].

[3] The advantages are: (1) pleasure, (2) sincerity, (3) usefulness.

(1) *Pleasure: AWell for the person who is gracious and lends.*<sup>7</sup>

(2) *AAnd all nations shall worship him, for he rescued the poor from the powerful, and the orphan who had no one to help him.*<sup>8</sup>

(3) *Usefulness: AThe one who gives to the poor suffers no want.*<sup>9</sup>

*In what it consists*

In two things: to become more faithful to visiting the sick poor because perhaps one of them may die and you may lose the saving of a soul and of some grace God had destined for you if you had visited the patient that day; to make yourself poor for persons who are poor and to ask for the Afive sous,<sup>10</sup> without lessening the amount you've been accustomed to give.

*Means*

- (1) Ask it of God.
  - (2) On these first days of the year, offer this good will to God.
  - (3) Impose some penance on yourself when you fail to do so.
- Don't notify the nuns nor the priests; tell the officers, who are there every day.  
From now on, the sisters will start at two o'clock.

**192. - PERSEVERANCE IN GOOD WORKS - I**

(December 22, 1645)

For the general meeting of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, December 22, 1645

*Reasons and means*

The great evil it would be if you allowed this work to die out. Comparison of a disgraced priest.

The serious consequences that might ensue if the Ladies should allow this good work to die out in their hands, and some means to remedy this.

(1) It would be a sign of doubting the salvation of those by whose fault this misfortune would occur. *ANo one who puts a hand to the plow, but keeps looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.*@<sup>1</sup>

(2) *AA crown is promised to those who do good, but is given only to those who persevere.*@

(3) *AThey begin to jeer him, saying, >that man began to build and he could not finish.'* @<sup>2</sup>

(4) We would deprive ourselves of the beatitude, *ABlessed is the one who has regard for the lowly and the poor.*@<sup>3</sup>

(5) And of this one, *ABlessed are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.*@<sup>4</sup>

(6) We can lose paradise by omission as well as by commission; and it's because of failing to assist the poor that it will be said, *AGo, you condemned.*@<sup>5</sup>

We deprive ourselves of the happiness of fulfilling the law of God, which is always done by charity toward the neighbor. *AThe one who loves the neighbor has fulfilled the law.*@<sup>6</sup>

We deprive ourselves of the consolation to be found in doing acts of charity in this world and of the assistance of God at judgment. *AHappy the man who shows mercy and lends.*@<sup>7</sup>

We provide our family with temporal goods. *AThe one who gives to the poor suffers no want.*@<sup>8</sup> We would deprive ourselves of a happy death. *AI never saw the evils of death,*@ and we would deprive 10,000 souls of the spiritual assistance they receive at the Hôtel-Dieu from the priests the Company maintains there, and the souls the Ladies of *AThe Fourteen*@ instruct.

Likewise for the convicts, etc., the foundlings, etc.

We deprive God of the glory He draws from the Company, and the Church is deprived of its edification and merit.

We delight hell and the wicked of the world.

The means of preventing the fall is to have recourse to God by prayer; renewing your charitable ministrations; the *Afive sous*@ collection; a general collection in the neighborhood

following the recommendations of the preachers; having the preachers announce from the pulpit that those who have any good advice regarding this good work should go to the women's hall at the Hôtel-Dieu on Saturday at two o'clock or to Mme. de Lamoignon; and if any member of the Company has some advice right now, she should mention it.

### 193. - PERSEVERANCE IN GOOD WORKS - II

(December 22 1645)<sup>1</sup>

*For the meeting of the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, December 22, 1645*

The obligation for the Ladies to give themselves to God to support the work so that it may not perish in their hands because of disadvantages that might arise from this.

(1) *Disadvantages.*

(2) *Means.*

[1] The first difficulty involves the Ladies; the second involves the work.

[2] For the Ladies it involves either the soul or the body or property or honor or pleasure.

[3] The disadvantage regarding property, honor, or pleasures is that they would deprive themselves of the effects of God's promise to charitable persons: *AThe one who gives to the poor suffers no want.* @<sup>2</sup> And that extends even to children: *ANor have I seen a just man forsaken nor his descendants begging for bread.* @<sup>3</sup> On this point it should be remarked that no matter how rich a family may be, it is subject to this disadvantage. We've seen great Princesses in our day reduced to selling their clothing and living on borrowed items.

[4] Regarding soul and body: *AAnd all people will adore him because he gave life to the poor.* @ The person must be considered either as sick or as healthy. If sick: *AShare your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless.* @<sup>4</sup> *AThe Lord will preserve him and give him life.* @<sup>5</sup> If healthy: *AWell for the person who is gracious and lends.* @<sup>6</sup>

Regarding the soul. Charity toward those who are poor adorns the soul with Christian virtues: *AHe scattered abroad and gave to the poor; his justice endures forever;* @<sup>7</sup> *AThe one who loves the neighbor has fulfilled the law.* @<sup>8</sup>

Regarding happiness even in this world: *AHappy the man who has regard for the lowly and the poor;* @<sup>9</sup> *ABlessed are they who show mercy; mercy shall be theirs.* @<sup>10</sup>

Regarding pleasures and death: *AI reread, and read carefully, and I never saw anyone who practiced the works of mercy die unhappy.* @

Regarding what takes place after death, we'll no longer have to wait for *ACome, you blessed . . .* @<sup>11</sup> but neither should we fear the curse, nor expect these words, *Ahe shall order his words with judgment.* @<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, regarding the crown, which is given only to those who persevere.

*Regarding the ministry*

(1) You deprive ten thousand souls of the spiritual assistance you and your priests give them at the Hôtel-Dieu.

(2) You deprive the convicts of the same assistance here.

(3) You deprive the foundlings of life and Baptism, of which most of them were previously deprived.

(4) You deprive those in the priestly state of the assistance you render them by your Communion.

(5) You deprive the public of the edification you give them; and, instead of that, you run the risk of the mocking words of the Gospel: *They begin to jeer him, saying, >that man began to build and he could not finish.* @<sup>13</sup>

### *Means*

- (1) Ask God for the grace to be able to maintain the work.
- (2) Continue the Afive sous@ collection.
- (3) Have one general collection in the city during Lent.
- (4) Have the preachers announce that, if anyone has some good advice to give regarding that, he should go to the women's hall on Saturdays at two o'clock, or even right now.

## **194. - PERSEVERANCE IN GOOD WORKS**

(April 6, 1647)

*For the general meeting of April 6, 1647*

(1) The reasons the Ladies have to see that the Company of the Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu is maintained and to perfect it more and more.

(2) The means to do so.

### *Reasons*

(1) I'm going to proceed here differently than I did in the past. Previously I spoke to you about the advantages; now I'm going to speak to you of the disadvantages that might arise if it were to fail, and in that I'll act like Moses, who told the people the advantages they might have if they kept the Commandments of God, and the misfortunes if they didn't observe them.

Alf you keep my Commandments,@ said God, AI will bless you in your body and in your possessions, in the house and outdoors; if not, I will curse you in your body and in your possessions, etc.@

Four things oblige us to embrace a good work and persevere in it:

[1] The authority of its author.

[2] Because we've been invited to it so graciously.

[3] The goodness of the work.

[4] Because we see God's blessing on it.

Now, God is the author of this good work; it should be noted that there are three ways a man can be the author of a good work.

(1) By ordering it. Thus, the person who has a house built can be said to be its author by means of what he gives to the workers and the purchase of the materials.

(2) Or as the worker who builds the house.

(3) Or by ordering and building the house himself and ordering his children and servants to work along with him.

God is the author of this good work:

[1] Because He orders men and women to help the sick poor spiritually and materially and to take care of poor children abandoned by their fathers and mothers, etc.

[2] He's also the author because, when He was on earth, He Himself did this work with His own hands.

[3] Because we see that He inspired those who were responsible for this good work and who, in fact, were the first to make the proposals. In addition, He has also made known to you, Ladies, that He desired this and has given you the grace not only *to desire but also to do the work*,<sup>1</sup> and to have supported it until now.

If you abandon it, you'll ruin God's work and will have reason to fear, Ladies, that there may be applied to you the judgment of the Gospel stating that whoever has put a hand to God's work and abandons it isn't fit for the kingdom of God.

The second reason is that of the call. A calling is a choice God makes of some souls to use them for a certain good work. He then enlightens their understanding, causing them to discern His plan and moving the will to take on this good work. If they consent, God destines them for glory, then justifies and glorifies them when they leave this life. Now, Ladies, all this has happened in your case, for God inspired you<sup>2</sup> to take on this good work, and touched your hearts to espouse it, and you've done so. God doubtless then predestined and justified you, intending to glorify you one day. He has acted as He did with the Blessed Virgin, to whom He made Himself known by the angel, and she answered by saying, *A Be it done to me according to your word.*<sup>3</sup> Immediately afterward, the Holy Spirit descended upon her, formed the body of Our Lord, and created a soul, which He infused into this blessed body, sanctifying and divinizing in a certain sense the Blessed Virgin. And because she persevered amid all the difficulties that presented themselves during the life and even to the death of Our Lord, she was glorified above the angels. It was otherwise for Eve, our first mother, for, after having been chosen by God and already given original justice, she was banished from paradise for not having resisted temptation. And, Ladies, if we don't do all we can to see that this good work is maintained, we certainly have reason to fear that God will take from us the grace of this work and at the same time all those women He involves in it, and may cast us far from before His face and paradise.

*The goodness of the work.* A work is good and sound if it's for the glory of God, the benefit of poor orphan children, the sick, and poor slaves, the salvation of all of them, and the sanctification of our own soul.

Well, it's clear that all that is for the glory of God, since it's He who orders all these things and it's His glory that we obey Him. On the contrary, to do nothing about it is, in a certain sense, to disdain His Divine Majesty.

Now, it's clear that He orders us to do all that: (1) in commanding us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Now, when He commands us to love our neighbor, He commands us to perform all the acts of love we can render Him, and there are fourteen of them: seven corporal and seven spiritual. The corporal ones, which concern the body are: feed the hungry and give drink to the thirsty, and that's what you're doing for the sick poor and the children. O Ladies! What honor you give to God in so doing! But what dishonor if you don't!

He recommends that to us again when He reminds us that He will ask us on Judgment Day if

we've given food and drink to others, etc. O Ladies, how happy you will be for having acted in that way! And how wretched, if we act otherwise!

Furthermore, can you imagine anything more holy than to visit the sick, to take care of orphans, and to bring all of them to the knowledge of God, since that is doing what Our Lord did in this world!<sup>4</sup>

Moreover, each of you personally benefits from this by putting in practice the virtues of faith, hope, charity, justice, prudence, temperance, fortitude, mortification, humility, and the other virtues. In a word, as long as you persevere in the Company and its practices, you are in a position to face Judgment Day with your head held high. *AHe conducts his affairs in justice.*<sup>5</sup> If you leave it and allow the Company to die out, all those benefits will vanish.

### *On the part of God*

If this good work is abandoned, God won't be known by those poor people to whom you're making Him known; those souls will never be reconciled to Him, as they now are by means of a good general confession; and those who die or who recover their health in the Hôtel-Dieu will no longer experience the effects of the goodness of God through the ministry of your Company. Many children will die in original sin for want of being baptized and will have come into the world without experiencing in it the effects of the goodness of God. And God, who has willed in this age to make use of the ministry of persons of your sex to do the incomparable good that's being done in your Company, will be frustrated in this.

If you abandon this work, what will the faithful say? They will certainly quote the words of the Gospel regarding those who begin good works and then leave them when difficulties arise. *AThis man began to build but was unable to finish.*<sup>6</sup>

And there's more; it is to be feared that you may fall into the misfortune of those of whom Our Lord speaks, saying, *AWhoever puts his hand to the plow but keeps looking back is unfit for the kingdom of God,*<sup>7</sup> and what Saint Paul utters against those who have been enlightened by God and have tasted the happiness of being employed in God's service, of whom it is said that it's impossible for them to be saved.<sup>8</sup>

But, in fact, what is the means of keeping it going? I'll repeat to you what Saint Paul said: Have you given something beyond what is superfluous? Have you done as much for those children as the women of the people of God did? Have you resisted to the point of blood?

It may seem that the care of foundlings is a work for men and not for women. Reply to this that God makes use of whomever He pleases. Judith defied Holofernes and his army; Esther gave life to all the Jews; Saphira led and judged the people of God; the widows mentioned by Saint Paul upheld the Church in its beginnings; Saint Genevieve provided Paris with wheat during a famine, and a widow drove the Germans from this kingdom.

Supposing that all these reasons prompt you to continue, what should you do?

- (1) Pray fervently.
- (2) Give yourselves to God to live as true Ladies of Charity, which is to say, as Ladies who love God and the neighbor.
- (3) Be faithful to visiting the Hôtel-Dieu and the children; the sight of their misery will induce you to help them.

Another good practice is sometimes to ask yourself--after Communion, for example--AWhy am I a Lady of Charity? To procure as much good as I can for the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu and at

the Foundling Home.@

## 195. - THE WORK OF THE FOUNDLINGS

[Between 1640 and 1650]<sup>1</sup>

*For the general meeting of the Ladies for the Foundlings*

Recently I spoke to you only briefly about your foundlings because we had several other matters to treat, and it seemed that the officers could meet their needs without mentioning them to the Company. Because, however, experience has shown that this was not the case, we'll speak to you about them today. I can tell you that they are in great need and there's only enough food for them for six weeks, and the means must be found to provide for their needs:

(1) Because they are in extreme want; in which case you are obliged to provide for that. A You did not feed them, [and so] you killed them.@ A child can be killed in two ways: either by a violent death, or by refusing to feed him.

(2) Because Our Lord has called you to be their mothers; and here is the sequence followed for that: [1] for two or three years He had the priests at Notre-Dame seek you out; [2] you held various meetings for this purpose; [3] you prayed fervently to God concerning it; [4] you sought the advice of wise persons; [5] You gave it a try; [6] and, in the end, you made the decision to accept it.

And here are the motives that prompted you to do so:

(1) You were informed that those poor little creatures were receiving very little assistance--one wet nurse for four or five babies!

(2) They were being sold for eight sous apiece to beggars who would break their arms and legs to arouse pity so the people would give them alms, and they let them die of hunger;

(3) Women who had no children by their own husbands or by wretched persons who supported them, would take some and pass them off as their own. In fact, we've found three or four of these in the past two years;

(4) They were given laudanum--which is a poison--to make them sleep; and all that resulted from that.

(5) In fifty years, not one of them has lived--unless it has recently been discovered that one of those fraudulently substituted children has survived.

(6) Lastly--and the worst of all the evils--many were dying without being baptized.

Those are the motives that moved you to take on the work. Providence, then, has made you the adoptive mothers of these children. Note that I said Adoptive mothers. This is a bond you've contracted with them; consequently, if these poor children are abandoned by you, they will, of necessity, die. Who is going to prevent them? Until now, the police have been unable to do so. If you can't, who will? No one, to be sure. And therefore, Ladies, you are obliged in conscience to assist them for two reasons:

(1) Because the need is extreme;

(2) Because you are their mothers.

Means

[1] Pray for that;  
[2] Receive Communion once for that intention;  
[3] Speak to your relatives and friends about it;  
[4] Speak to the preachers through the Pastors;  
[5] Lastly, decide whether we should leave them, or whether we should exert ourselves and make an effort for this year.

- (1) If you abandon them, what will God say, since He has called you to do that?
- (2) What will the King and the Magistrate say, since by verified letters patent he entrusted to you the care of these poor children?
- (3) What will the people say, since they have acclaimed you and blessed you for the care you take of them?
- (4) What will those little creatures say? AAlas, dear mothers, you are abandoning us! It's enough that our own mothers have abandoned us; all right, they are bad; but for you to do so--you who are good, is like saying that God has abandoned us and that He's not our God.@
- (5) Lastly, what will you say at the hour of death, when God will ask you why you have abandoned those little creatures? All of the above, Ladies, seems to demand that you make this effort.

#### Objections

(1) AThe need in our times, which is impoverishing everyone, with the result that we can only live simply from hand to mouth.@ My reply to this, Ladies, is that you won't be inconvenienced.@He who gives to the poor will suffer no want;@<sup>2</sup> *Ahe who has compassion on the poor, lends to the Lord.*@<sup>3</sup>

(2) *There are one hundred of you.* If each one would make the effort to give one hundred livres, that's more than needed. If fifty did so, and the others gave something, that would suffice with what we already have.

(3) AI have no money.@ Alas! how many useless trinkets are there at home! O Ladies, how far removed we are from the piety of the children of Israel, whose women gave their jewels to make a golden calf.

AThen that will go on forever and everyone will abandon their children.@ The reply to that is Ano.@ A few days ago a Lady gave all her jewels for this purpose. Five or six Ladies are feeding a province.

AThis poverty will overwhelm the Company in the future as well as in the present.@ We're working on two important matters that will save us from that misfortune.

#### 196. - THE WORK OF THE FOUNDLINGS

[1647]<sup>1</sup>

M. Vincent asks himself the question: AShould the Ladies of Charity continue or abandon the work of the Foundlings?@ He studies the pros and cons and reminds the Ladies of the good they

have done until then: five or six hundred children snatched from death and raised in a Christian manner; the older ones placed as apprentices, or on the point of being so. If these are the beginnings, what promise may not the future hold? Then, raising his voice, he concludes with the following:

Well then, Ladies, compassion and charity have led you to adopt these little creatures as your own children; you have been their mothers according to grace since the time their mothers according to nature abandoned them. See now whether you, too, want to abandon them. Stop being their mothers to be their judges at present; their life and death are in your hands. I'm going to take the vote; it's time to pass sentence on them and to find out whether you are no longer willing to have pity on them. If you continue to take charitable care of them, they will live; if, on the contrary, you abandon them, they will most certainly perish and die; experience does not allow you to doubt that.

## **197. - REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE FOUNDLINGS** [1647]<sup>1</sup>

The meeting has three aims:

- (1) To give the Company an account of the state of its affairs.
- (2) To discuss whether it's expedient to continue the care of the poor persons at the Hôtel-Dieu and at the Foundlings, and, if so, the means to be taken to maintain the work.
- (3) To proceed to the election of a Treasurer for the children.

### **FIRST POINT**

There are 820 foundlings, 250<sup>2</sup> of whom have been weaned and the others placed with wet nurses.<sup>3</sup> This year, . . . was spent at the Hôtel-Dieu, and we still owe around 4,000 livres. For the children, about 35,000 livres have been spent, of which we still have. . . .

It has pleased the Queen to give the Château de Bicêtre as housing for the children until the State needs the building for something more important.

### **SECOND POINT**

There are four reasons why it seems the Company should abandon the work of the Foundlings:<sup>4</sup>

- (1) Because next year perhaps 40,000 livres will be needed, and the children have only about 13,000.
- (2) Because it's wartime<sup>5</sup> and, with people in financial straits, alms are rare.
- (3) Because it's better to leave the work voluntarily than to wait until necessity obliges us to do so.
- (4) This does not seem to be a work for women.

Here is the response to those three [*sic*] reasons:<sup>6</sup> as to the first, until now God has assisted the Company; consequently, Divine Providence has provided for this work up to the present, and we've not been particularly in debt. Can we then, in conscience, lack trust in God's Providence, since it hasn't failed us up to now?

As to the second point, this good work began and continued during the war, and we have reason to hope that the God of peace will give us peace and continue His Providence for us during the war.

As to the third point--which is to leave willingly--alas, Ladies, can we do so in conscience while God is assisting the work by His Providence, which this year has given it housing that cost 200,000 livres? Then, too, to whom will we repay it? To those who gave it to you? In which case, you see clearly where that will lead. As for the Hôtel-Dieu, they will claim that it isn't their business.

As to this not being a work for women, Ladies, you may be assured that God has used persons of your sex to do the greatest things ever done in this world. What men have ever done what Judith did, what Esther did, what the Maid of Orléans<sup>7</sup> did in this kingdom, what Saint Genevieve did in providing Paris with food during a famine? And lastly. . . .<sup>8</sup>

### **198. - REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE WORKS**

(July 11, 1657)<sup>1</sup>

ALadies, this meeting has three aims: the first is to proceed to a new election of officers, if it's judged advisable; the second is to give the Company information concerning the works God has granted it the grace to undertake; and the third is to consider the reasons you have, Ladies, to give yourselves to His Divine Goodness that He may be pleased to grant you the grace to support and continue those works already begun.

AWe spoke about the election last Friday at the regular meeting, composed of the officers and a few other Ladies. The officers urged us to elect new ones, and the others felt that we should ask them to continue their responsibilities until Easter. And because you, Ladies, have a deliberative voice in this matter, we'll vote at the end of this meeting to see whether the officers should continue, or whether you'll proceed to a new election.

AAAs for the state of affairs, we'll begin, please, with the Hôtel-Dieu, which was responsible for the birth of the Company. It's the foundation on which God has been pleased to establish the other works the Company has undertaken, and it's the source of the other good works it has done.@

M. Vincent then read to the assembly the report of receipts and expenditures. Since the last general meeting--that is, since about a year ago--5,000 livres had been spent for the light meal for the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu and 3,500 livres were received for this purpose, so there was a deficit of 1,500 livres.

After making this observation, he continued:

AThat may have occurred because a number of Ladies who belonged to the group have died and haven't been replaced by others. That's why, Ladies, a group of you have been called together to see how to maintain this good work, begun and continued for so many years through ways imperceptible to anyone else but God, and with such blessings from Him that there is great reason to thank Him for it.

AO Ladies, how you should thank God for the attention He has had you give to meeting the

needs of those poor sick persons; for corporal assistance to them has produced this effect of grace, namely, of making you think of their salvation at such an opportune time that most of them never had any other to prepare themselves for death. In addition, those who recover from their illness would scarcely think of changing their lives without the good dispositions into which you try to put them.@

M. Vincent next read the list of expenditures made by the Company for Champagne and Picardy, adding:

ASince July 15, 1650, until the day of the last general meeting, 348,000 livres have been sent and distributed to impoverished persons; and 19,500 livres since the last general meeting until today, which is more or less the same as previous years. These sums have been used to feed the sick poor and to rescue and maintain about 800 orphan boys and girls from ruined villages, whom we've placed in trades or in domestic service, after having instructed and clothed them. The money has also been used to support a number of Pastors in their ruined parishes, who would have been forced to abandon their parishioners because they couldn't live among them without this assistance. Lastly, it has been used for minor repairs to a few churches, which were in such a pitiful state that it's impossible to speak about it without shuddering with horror.

AThe places where the money has been distributed are the towns and surrounding areas of Reims, Rethel, Laon, Saint-Quentin, Ham, Marle, Sedan, and Arras. This doesn't include clothing, sheets, blankets, shirts, albs, chasubles, missals, ciboria, etc., which would amount to a considerable sum of money, if it were calculated.

ACertainly, Ladies, we can have nothing but admiration when we consider the large quantity of clothing for men, women, and children, and for priests as well, or the various furnishings for churches that have been divested of them and reduced to such a state of poverty that it can be said that the celebration of the Holy Mysteries had been prohibited in them, and without this charity these sacred places would have served only for profane uses. If you had been in the homes of the Ladies responsible for those items of clothing, you would have seen that their houses were like warehouses and the shops of wholesale merchants.

AGod be praised, Ladies, for granting you the grace of clothing Our Lord in His poor members, most of whom had nothing but rags to cover them, and several children were as naked as the back of my hand! The nudity of girls and married women was even so great that a man with the slightest sense of modesty would not dare to look at them, and everyone was on the verge of dying of cold in the harsh winter weather. Oh! how indebted you are to God for having given you the inspiration and the means of meeting these great needs! How many patients whose lives you've saved! For they were abandoned by everyone, lying on the ground, exposed to the elements, and reduced to the last extremity by the soldiers and the high price of grain. In truth, several years ago their wretched state was worse than it is right now, and at that time people were sending up to 16,000 livres a month. They felt driven to give when they saw that the poor were in danger of dying if they were not helped promptly, and they encouraged one another in charity to assist them. For the past year or two, however, when the weather has been a little better, the alms have greatly decreased. Yet, there are still almost 80 churches in ruins, and the poor people are obliged to go a long way to find a Mass. You see in what a situation we are. By the Providence God has for the Company, we've begun to do something about it.

ANow, Ladies, doesn't the recital of these facts soften your hearts? Are you not moved by gratitude for God's goodness to you and to those poor people in distress? Don't you think it's novel and unusual that Providence has turned to some Parisian Ladies to assist two devastated

provinces? History doesn't relate anything similar happening with the ladies of Spain, Italy, or some other country. That was reserved for you who are here, Ladies, and for a few others who are now with God, where they have found a bountiful reward for such perfect charity.

AEight members of your Company have died within the year. Speaking of those deceased Ladies, *O Sauveur!* who could have told them the last time they met that God would call them before the next meeting? What reflections would they have made on the shortness of this life and the importance of living it well! How they would have appreciated the practice of good works! What resolutions would they not have taken to give themselves more fully than ever to the love of God and the neighbor, with greater fervor and better results! Let's give ourselves to God to enter into these sentiments. There's good reason to hope that those Ladies are now enjoying glory. They are experiencing how good it is to serve God and to assist the poor, and at Judgment they will hear these pleasing words of the Son of God, ACome, you beloved of my Father, possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was naked and you clothed me; I was ill and you visited and comforted me, etc.@<sup>2</sup> What a beautiful practice, Ladies, to offer yourselves to God--and me along with you--to render ourselves worthy, while we have the opportunity, of being one day in that fortunate number and to propose to ourselves the good we would like to do if we thought that perhaps this was the last meeting at which we would be together! Eight deaths in one year! Take away as many for each of the past years and you'll find the number of members in the Company greatly reduced. There were two to three hundred in the beginning, and now the number is down to fifty. I recommend those dear departed ones to your prayers.

AThat brings us to the foundlings, whose care your Company has undertaken. We see from Mme. de Bragelonne's accounts that the receipts for last year come to 16,248 livres, and expenses come to 17,221 livres.@

After going over the list of babies who had been weaned or were with wet nurses, and of the older children placed as apprentices or servants or remaining at the hospice, M. Vincent noted that there were 395 of them, adding:

AlIt has been remarked that the number of those placed at risk annually is almost always the same, and there are as many of them as there are days in the year. Please note the order in this disorder and the great good you're doing, Ladies, in taking care of those little creatures, abandoned by their own mothers, and in seeing that they are raised, instructed, and enabled to earn their living and to be saved. Before taking responsibility for them, you were pressured for two years to do so by the Canons of Notre-Dame. Since it was such a major undertaking, you wanted to think it over, and in the end you consented, believing that it was pleasing to God, as He has made clear since then. Until that time, for fifty years no one had heard it said that a single foundling had survived; all of them died in one way or another. It was to you, Ladies, that God had reserved the grace of keeping alive such a great number of them and of helping them to live well.

AWhen they learn to talk, they also learn to pray and are gradually given an occupation, according to the aptitudes and ability of each. A watchful eye is kept on them to regulate carefully their little ways of acting and to correct their bad inclinations at an early age. They are fortunate to have fallen into your hands and would be wretched in the hands of their parents, who ordinarily are poor people or given over to vice. One has only to look at their daily program to appreciate the results of this good work, which is so important that you have every reason in the world, Ladies, to thank God for having entrusted it to you.

AlT now remains to tell you some motives that oblige the Company to renew its devotion for these various works of charity, which the mercy of God has brought to the point we've just heard and whose results will only be seen perfectly in heaven. These are works that oblige you, I repeat--all of you who meet one another here, enrolled in this holy militia--to renew and increase your first fervor. They also oblige those who do not yet belong to the Company to contribute what they can to sustain and expand those works that are so closely related to the ones Our Lord did and recommended on behalf of poor persons.

AThe first motive is that your Company is a work of God and not a human work. I have said this before; human persons would be unable to achieve it, so God Himself became involved in it. Every good action comes from God; He is the author of every holy work. Everything must be referred to the God of virtues and the Father of mercies; for to whom should the light of the stars be referred except the sun, which is its origin? And to whom should the plan for the Company be referred except the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who has chosen you as persons of consolation or mercy? God never calls anyone to do some task unless He sees in her the appropriate qualities to carry it out, or which He plans to give her. Therefore, it is He, by His grace, who has called and united you. His inspiration must have prompted you to these three types of good works. It isn't your own will that caused you to embrace them, but the goodness that God has placed in you. That well merits our activating the spirit of charity among ourselves in all these ways. *Quoi!* God is the one who did me the honor of calling me, so I must heed His voice; God is the one who destined me for these charitable acts, so I must apply myself to them. He did not will, Ladies, that your eyes should see the Savior, as with Saint Simeon; but He does will that you should heed His voice to go where He is calling you--if not blindly like Saint Paul, at least with joy and tenderness--for to hear Him and not to respond would be to make yourselves unworthy of the grace of your calling. I saw the work come into being, I saw that God blessed it, I saw it start out with a simple light meal that was brought to the patients, and now I see the consequences of it--consequences so profitable to His glory and the welfare of persons who are poor! Ah, then! I must commit myself to it. What hardness of heart should there be anyone who might fail to contribute to the operation of such great good works as those!

AThe second motive is the fear you should have that those works may fail and die in your hands. That would doubtless be a great misfortune, Ladies, and even greater, since the grace God has given you of engaging you in them is so rare and extraordinary. For eight hundred years or so, women have had no public role in the Church; in the past there were some called Deaconesses, who were responsible for seating the women in the churches and teaching them the rubrics then in use. About the time of Charlemagne,<sup>3</sup> however, by a discreet working of Divine Providence, this practice came to an end; persons of your sex were deprived of any role and haven't had any since then. And now that same Providence is turning today to some of you to supply what was lacking to the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu. They corresponded to God's plan, and soon after, when others joined the first ones, God established them as the mothers of abandoned children, made them the heads of their hospital and the distributors of alms from Paris for the provinces, principally for those in distress. Those good souls have responded to all that with zeal and firmness, by the grace of God.

AAh, Ladies! If all those good works should crumble in your hands, it would be a subject of great sorrow. Oh! What desolation! What a disgrace! But could we even conceive of such a state of confusion? And what would be the source of it? What would be the reason for it? Let each of you ask herself right now, AAm I the one who is contributing to the downfall of this holy work?

What is there in me that makes me unworthy of supporting it? Am I the reason why God is closing His hand on His graces?@ Doubtless, Ladies, if we examine ourselves closely, we would fear not having done all we could have done for the progress of this work. If you really reflect on its importance, you'll cherish it as the apple of your eye and the instrument of your salvation. Taking an interest in its advancement and perfection, according to God, you'll bring it to the attention of the ladies you know; otherwise, people will apply to you the reproach the Gospel makes to a man who began to erect a building but did not finish it: *AYou laid the foundations of a work, and then left it at that.*@<sup>4</sup> This is undoubtedly an urgent matter, especially if you add that your edifice is an adornment to the Church and a shelter for the destitute. So, if it should perish through your fault, you'll deprive the people of a subject of great edification, and persons who are poor, of great relief.

AThe Brother<sup>5</sup> we assigned to distribute your charitable offerings used to say to me, >The grain that was sent to the border areas, Monsieur, has given life to a large number of families; they didn't have a single seed to sow; no one was willing to lend them any; the earth was lying fallow, and those areas were becoming deserted because of the deaths and departure of the inhabitants.' We spent up to 22,000 livres on seed in one year, keeping them busy in the summer and feeding them in the winter. See, Ladies, by the good works you've done, what a great misfortune it would be if these should be taken from them!

AThe third motive you have to continue these holy works is the honor Our Lord draws from them. Why is that? Because we honor Him when we espouse His concerns, value them highly, do what He did, and carry out what He has ordained. Now, His main concern was the care of poor persons in order to heal them, console them, help them, and respect them; that was His aim. And He Himself willed to be born poor, to welcome poor persons into His company, to serve those who were poor, to put Himself in their place, even going so far as to say that the good and the harm we do to those who are poor He will consider as done to His Divine Person. What more tender love could He show for persons who were poor! And, I ask you, what love can we have for Him if we don't love what He loved! That being the case, Ladies, loving those who are poor is to love Him in that way; serving poor persons well is to serve Him well; and imitating Him is to honor Him as we should. Since that is so, oh! what good reason we have to be spurred on to continue those good works and to say right now in the depths of our hearts, >Yes,' I give myself to God to take care of those who are poor and to maintain the works of charity on their behalf. I will help, love, and respect them, and, after the example of Our Lord, I will love those who console them and show respect to those who visit them and bring them relief.' Now, if this kind Savior is honored by this imitation, how much more should we consider it a great honor to make ourselves like Him in that! Don't you think, Ladies, that this is a very powerful motive for renewing in you your first fervor? For my part, I think we should offer ourselves today to His Divine Majesty, that He may be pleased to animate us with His charity so that it can henceforth be said of all of you that it's the charity of Jesus Christ that urges you on.

AThose are sufficient motives for souls who love God. I think you're also saying to me, >Monsieur, all of us are convinced that it's important to continue the good works that have begun, that only the end crowns the work, and that, not only must we serve God and bring relief to poor persons, but we must also strive to do it well. All that remains is for us to give ourselves the means to do so because, thank God, we're determined and disposed to use them to see that the works survive and to continue to hold our meetings.'

ASo then, the first means I present to you, Ladies, is to be interiorly and continually devoted to

working at your spiritual advancement and to live as perfectly as you can, always keeping the lamp within you lighted--I mean a cordial, ardent, and persevering desire to please and obey God--in a word, to live as true servants of God. Those of you who have these dispositions surely draw the graces of God and Our Lord Himself into their hearts and actions. Living in that way, you'll obtain perseverance in good works because the Lord of mercies will dwell in you. And, since the maxims of the world are not in harmony with that, and nothing deprives us so much of the spirit of God than to live in a worldly way in society, and since the closer we are to splendor, the more unworthy we make ourselves of possessing Jesus Christ, then the Ladies of Charity must distance themselves from this spirit of the world as they would from air that's contaminated. They must declare themselves to be on the side of God and of charity. I mean *entirely*, for anyone who would wish to support in the slightest way the contrary side would spoil everything because God cannot tolerate a divided heart. He wants it whole and entire; yes, whole and entire. I have the consolation of speaking to souls who belong entirely to Him, far removed from anything that can make them displeasing in His eyes. In the past, among those who presented themselves to become members of the Company, the choice was made of persons who didn't gamble, nor go to the theater, nor participate in other dangerous pastimes, nor act vain by trying to pretend they were devout. We must, then, believe that God sheds His grace only on those who separate themselves from the high life, who are close to God and who recollect themselves in order to be united to Him by desires, prayers, and holy occupations in such a way that everyone knows they profess to serve God.

*AO Seigneur!* Will many people be saved? There are two gates by which to enter the other life, one narrow, the other wide; there are few who pass through the former, and many through the latter. The saints understand by the wide gate the liberty of worldly persons who, giving themselves free rein, follow their immoderate cravings. Their only portion is the anger and curse of God, in conformity with what Saint Paul says, >If you live according to the flesh, you will die.<sup>6</sup> *O Sauveur!* What a threat! We have reason to fear that we may be in that great number heading for perdition; yes, we will, if we don't walk on the narrow path.

AThe Ladies who will give themselves to God to live as true Christians, by observing the Commandments of God and carrying out the rules of justice--married women, by obeying their husbands; widows, by living as widows; mothers, by taking care of their children; and women in charge of households, of their servants--and who, in a word, will add to these duties what the blessed Bishop of Geneva advises them to do: to enter Companies and Confraternities that make special profession of the practice of virtue and which, recommending some exterior practice of piety or mercy, encourage them also to mortification of the passions and love of God; those Ladies will walk on the right path that leads to life. So, Ladies, those of you who are not yet enrolled, enter this Company or Confraternity, since its principal aim is to have no heart except for God, nor any will except to love Him, nor any time except to serve Him. If you are kind to your husband, it's for God; if you look after your children, it's for God; if you take care of business, it's for God. That's how we pass through the narrow gate of salvation and save ourselves.

AOur Lord had to deal with three types of persons: the Apostles, the disciples, and the people. The people followed Him for a time, but, after tasting His words of life, they left. This obliged Our Lord to say to His disciples: ADo you want to leave me, too?@<sup>7</sup> There are some people, Ladies, who, when they see several of you following Our Lord constantly on the narrow path of the practice of love of God and the neighbor, would really like to do the same. That seems

beautiful to them. Finding it difficult, however, they don't remain.

Among those who were steadfast in following Our Lord, there were women as well as men, who followed Him even to the Cross. These women were not Apostles, but they formed a middle state, in which their duty was to feed the Apostles and contribute to their holy ministry. It is to be hoped that the Ladies of Charity may look upon those devout women as their models. No situation in the world is so close to their state as yours. They went from one place to another to meet the needs, not only of the Church workers, but of the faithful who were in distress.

So those are your duties, that's your lot. Praise God for having called you to this blessed state, and live like those holy women. Have a loving devotion for blessed Joanna the wife of Chuza and the others mentioned in Saint Luke. By so doing, you'll pass through the narrow gate that leads to life; and, in the words of Saint Thomas, you'll all be saved because, as he says, no one can be lost in the practice of charity. Let's then envelop ourselves within this virtue; let us remain at the feet of Our Lord and ask Him to lavish more and more light, inspiration, and warmth on your spirit in order to continue to the end what you've begun, for not to do tomorrow the same as you're doing today would be to fall back. We must always advance in the spiritual life, and we advance when we do not neglect good practices. May God be pleased to preserve you in yours and to help you to live as true mothers, who never abandon their children! Now, you are the mothers of those who are poor, obliged to act like Our Lord, who is their Father, who made Himself like them and who came to teach, relieve, and recommend them to us. Do likewise, visit the holy places--which is what hospitals are--and virtuous persons, such as are the members of your Company. That will be a sign of your predestination; it will be a means of advancing in virtue, a good means of attracting others to it, and the most excellent means of preserving and helping the Company to flourish for the glory of God and the edification of the people.

Another means of preserving your Company is to moderate these practices; for, according to the proverb, >Whoever embraces too much, loses his grip.' It has happened to other Companies or Confraternities, to several Communities, and even to entire religious Orders that, because they took on things beyond their strength, they collapsed under the burden. Virtue is found between two opposing vices, which are default and excess. For example, anyone who, under pretext of charity, would try to take on all the needs of others, omitting none of the good he might see to be done, would fall into one vice; in the same way, the person who wouldn't want to practice any virtue, nor perform any acts of charity, would fall into another. Theologians find that going to excess in the practice of virtue is as dangerous an evil as failing in it. In addition, the devil usually tempts very charitable persons to overtax themselves in their good works, knowing that sooner or later they will succumb. Haven't you ever seen men who, being overburdened, or in too much of a hurry to leave, collapse under their burdens? It could happen that, if the Company took on too much, it might also succumb under its burden.

We already recognize this in the work of the fourteen Ladies of the Company, who go to the Hôtel-Dieu twice a day to visit and console the sick poor. They do a great deal of good there. While others serve little refreshments to the sick poor every day, they divide up to go to console and instruct the poor sick women and girls lying in their beds. It's already very painful for them to support this undertaking and bear with the difficulties involved in it; and because of this overwhelming pressure, few persons are found who are willing to devote themselves to it.

The aid being given in the border towns and devastated provinces is immense. It's something almost without precedent to see ladies come together to assist provinces reduced to extreme

need, sending huge sums of money there and the wherewithal needed for feeding and clothing countless poor persons of every social status, age, and sex. It has never been heard that persons such as you, Ladies, have banded together and, spontaneously, have done something like that.

ASo then, it is to be feared that, by overburdening yourselves even more with new works, you may allow the most useful ones to die out and, in the end, all of them will perish. That's what someone said to me recently. God is omnipotent, but we are weak. We compose virtue where there is none; it cannot be found in excess. The Son of God did only little; the Apostles did more. Saint Peter converted 5000 persons with one sermon, and Our Lord preached several times without perhaps converting anyone. He even said that those who would believe in Him would do more than He had done. He wanted to be more humble by taking on less. A full stomach doesn't digest well. A porter is used to lifting up his burden before shouldering it and, if it's too heavy for him, he doesn't overload himself with it. We must ask God to be pleased to bear our burden Himself; for, in that case, if our strength fails us, He'll help us to carry it. May He grant the Company the grace of being very prudent and not take on anything that doesn't come from Him. How much time passed before it took on the care of the foundlings! How many appeals did it endure for that! How many prayers, pilgrimages, and Communion did it offer to settle that question! You know this, Ladies, and you also know that it's always a good thing to act likewise with new proposals so as not to commit yourselves to any of them through imprudent zeal. When you see that you're carrying out well the matters God has entrusted to you, be courageous, praise His infinite goodness for it, and give yourselves to Him to continue; but don't presume that you can do more.

AProviding the light meal and the instruction of the poor persons in the Hôtel-Dieu, feeding and educating the foundlings, taking care to provide for the spiritual and material needs of criminals condemned to the galleys, assistance to the border towns and devastated provinces, contributions to Missions of the East, the North, and the South--these are the works of your Company, Ladies. *Quoi!* Ladies are doing all that! Yes, for twenty years God has granted you the grace to undertake and support them. So, from now on, let's do nothing more without weighing it seriously, but let's do it well, and better and better, for that's what God is asking of us.

AA third means of maintaining the Company is to do your part to fill it with other devout, virtuous Ladies. For, if you don't encourage other persons to join, it will be short of members and, with dwindling numbers, will be too weak to carry these pressing burdens any further. That's why it was suggested in the past that the Ladies who were close to death should prepare in advance a daughter, a sister, or a friend to join the Company; but perhaps you don't recall that. Oh! What a good means it would be, Ladies, if each of you were convinced of the great benefits there are, in this world and in the next, for souls who practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy in so many ways, as you are doing! That doubtless prompts you more and more to prepare others to join you in this holy practice of charity, by the consideration of that good. This conviction will impassion you first of all among yourselves, like burning coals that are united together, and then you'll impassion others by your words and example. Allow me, Ladies, to ask what you think. A

Turning toward Mme. de Nemours,<sup>8</sup> M. Vincent said to her, AHave you thought of any good means, Madame?@ And the same question was asked of the other Ladies at the meeting. Some observed:

(1) That it might be a good idea to encourage those persons ready to appear before God to make some pious bequests on behalf of the poor persons for whom the Company is caring.

ASuggesting that thought to wealthy persons when you visit them in their illnesses is an important means,@ remarked M. Vincent.

(2) Being exact to the practices would be very beneficial to the Company.

ABeing exact,@ he replied, Ais very good advice to attract others to doing some good, and a holy life is also a great means of appealing to them.@

(3) Each Lady should contribute as far as she is able to the expenses and work of the Company.

AWell now, Ladies,@ added M. Vincent, AGod be praised! It now remains to see if you agree that the present officers should continue; if you don't agree, we'll vote on it.@

Since it was unanimous that the officers should continue, M. Vincent concluded with the following:

AVery well, Ladies, let's thank God for this meeting. Let's ask Him to accept the new offering we're going to make Him on our knees, by giving ourselves to His Divine Majesty with all our hearts to receive from His infinite goodness the spirit of charity. Let's also ask Him to grant us the grace of corresponding in this spirit to the plans He has for each of us in particular and for the Company in general, and to inspire everywhere this spirit of fervor for the charity of Jesus Christ, in order to merit that He may shed it abundantly on us and, by helping us to produce the effects of it in this world, may make us eternally pleasing to God His Father in the next. Amen.@

## **199. - REGULATIONS FOR THE LADIES OF CHARITY AT THE COURT**

[Between 1640 and 1649]<sup>1</sup>

The Company of the Ladies of Charity will be instituted to honor that of Our Lord and His Holy Mother and the women who followed Him, furnishing what was necessary for Him, His company, sometimes the crowds that followed Him, and poor persons. It will do so by being a patron of and assisting the Companies of the Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, the Foundlings, the convicts, the little girls of Mesdemoiselles Poulailon and de Lestang,<sup>2</sup> the poor young women serving in the Charities of the parishes, the women at the Madeleine, and all the good works instituted by women in this century.

(1) It will be composed of the sacred person of the Queen and a specific, limited, small number of Ladies it will please her to choose for this purpose. They will be designated three by three to look after each of the said Companies, and will report to the said Company their situation and needs to decide, by a plurality of votes, how to meet the needs they discover; the votes will be collected and the decision made by Her Majesty. They will carry out these ministries for the space of one year, at the end of which they will change them by drawing lots; and the Queen will have the perpetual direction of the said Company.

(2) The said Ladies will strive to acquire Christian perfection and that of their station. They will make at least half an hour of mental prayer, hear Holy Mass, read a chapter of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* or of *The Love of God*,<sup>3</sup> make a general examination of conscience daily, and go to confession and receive Communion at least once a week.

(3) On the first Friday of every month, they will meet in the place designated by the Queen and will converse humbly and devoutly for half an hour on the inspirations Our Lord gave them at prayer on the morning of the meeting day, on the subject given them of the Christian virtues proper to their state in life.

(4) Next, each will report in order the difficulties and needs they have found in the Company assigned to them. When Her Majesty has listened to the said Ladies and had them give their opinion on the subject, she will collect the individual votes and recommend what she thinks is best before God. This will be written in a register and then implemented by each of the Ladies in their ministry. They will meet three by three on the fifteenth of each month to discuss the same affairs of the Companies that have been entrusted to them and to find a solution for them, being satisfied to report the principal matters at the meeting that will be held in presence of the Queen.

On principle, they will not handle personal matters there, nor general ones, especially matters of State, nor make use of this occasion to take care of their own business. They will hold the Queen in high esteem and will be attached to her service with a very special devotion. They will cherish one another as sisters whom Our Lord has bound together by the bond of His love. They will visit and console one another in their illnesses and trials, and will receive Communion for the intention of the sick and those who die. Lastly, they will honor the silence of Our Lord in all things that concern the said Company because the prince of this world makes light of holy things that are divulged in society.

## **200. - REGULATIONS FOR THE COMPANY OF THE LADIES OF THE HÔTEL-DIEU (1660)**

(1) This Company has been instituted to honor that of Our Lord and His Holy Mother and of the other ladies who followed Him, furnishing what was necessary for Him, His disciples, and sometimes the crowds that followed Him. It will do so by assisting the poor persons at the Hôtel-Dieu, the foundlings of Paris, convicts destined for the galleys, and by being engaged in other suitable works of charity as the same Company will judge it capable of doing in the most pressing needs. All of this will be done with no obligation or pain of mortal or venial sin.

(2) It will be composed of a certain number of Ladies, either widows, wives, or unmarried women. Every three years, on the Monday of Holy Week, they will choose three of these Ladies--from among the widows and unmarried women only, and not from among the wives--one of whom will be the Superior, and the two others Assistants or Treasurer and Councillor. They will have the entire direction of the Company together with a Priest of the Mission, and will leave office one after the other from year to year, beginning with the Second Assistant, then the First, then the Superior, unless it is deemed more appropriate for one, two, or all three to continue for a longer term for some particular reason. And if people want to change them and hold elections, two of them will be chosen for each office at the smaller meeting of the officers, which they will hold a week or ten days before the full meeting, either for that purpose or to show the Priest of the Mission and the officers the records of their receipts and expenditures to see if they are in the state they should be, in order to give an account of them at the next full meeting. The two Ladies thus chosen at the smaller meeting for each office will then be proposed to the full assembly, which will elect one of the two by a plurality of votes, with each member telling privately the Priest of the Mission who will be present which of the two she nominates as an officer.

(3) The Superior will see that the present Regulations are observed and that each Lady does her duty well, giving a reminder to those who are remiss. She will accept into the Company those who request it. These latter must be well known as virtuous persons devoted to the practice of

charitable works; they must also have all the requisite qualities and be able to submit to the orders and Rules of the Company, which will be read to them. When one of the Ladies of the group is seriously ill, she will inform the other members so that they will pray for and visit her. She will also notify them of the Ember Days Communion and of any extraordinary meetings, particularly the meeting of AThe Fourteen,@ that will be held every three months after the Ember Days. The fourteen Ladies who had been at the Hôtel-Dieu the three preceding months will be invited to attend in the manner for the purposes that will be explained below. Also invited will be the other Ladies thought to have the qualifications to succeed those among the fourteen who would not be able to go there the following three months. In addition, she herself will visit the sick Ladies of the Company who desire this, and will notify the Company when they die so that each Lady will be sure to receive Holy Communion and have a Mass said for those whom God has taken from this world. She will call the Company together when she judges it advisable, informing the members of the day and place of the meeting, and will settle any affairs that come up in the meantime. In a word, she will animate the body of the Company and guide it with the advice of the said Priest of the Mission and her two Assistants.

(4) The First Assistant or Treasurer will act as Councillor to the Superior and will represent her in her absence. She will receive and keep the money intended for the light meal of the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris and for the other special charities the Company will judge appropriate, except for what will be used for the foundlings. She will give her account annually to the Company only.

(5) The Second Assistant or Treasurer will likewise act as Councillor to the Superior and will also represent her in her absence and in that of the First Assistant. She will collect the money and provide the funds required for the foundlings, of which she will give a similar account annually to the Company only.

(6) Since one of the first and principal duties of the Company is the spiritual and material assistance of the sick poor of the Hôtel-Dieu, it will continue to take them some little sweets for their refreshments, see that the patients are instructed in the things necessary for salvation and make a general confession of their past life, that those who are nearing death may leave this world in a good state, and that those who will recover may live in a Christian manner for the rest of their days.

(7) For that purpose, the Ladies will divide up to go in turn to serve the patients. They will do this in two ways:

[1] Fourteen of them will be named every three months at the extraordinary meeting after the Ember Days. Every day, two of them will instruct the women patients in the Christian truths necessary for salvation, prepare them to make a general confession of their whole life, telling them the motives and manner of making it well and exhorting them to make use of every possible means to be saved, with the help of God, whether they die, or whether they recover from their illness.

[2] The Ladies assigned to distribute the refreshments will go to the Hôtel-Dieu at two o'clock, put on their apron, and distribute to the patients the sweets and refreshments that have been prepared, in the order indicated by the Lady in charge of this. They will use this opportunity to console the patients with some edifying words suitable to their need.

(8) They will all adore Our Lord when they enter the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu, offering Him the service they are about to render Him, asking Him to find it pleasing and to give them for this purpose the charity and humility with which He honored Saint Louis in the same place.

They will leave at five o'clock in summer and four o'clock in winter, after thanking God for the favor He has given them of serving His poor members. They will ask His pardon for the faults they have committed there and the grace to improve, then they will offer the sick poor to God, praying that He will sanctify them and those who assist them.

(9) Besides the care and trouble the Ladies take for the things they have undertaken--or can undertake--they will all contribute something to the expenditures it will be agreed upon to make. Every month they will each give something according to their devotion and will do their utmost to get others to contribute money, linen, beds, fabric, clothing, preserves, or other things useful for the poor people of the Hôtel-Dieu and the foundlings, as well as for the other works of charity the Company has undertaken.

(10) They will meet once a week at the home of the Superior or some other place indicated; the first ones to arrive will converse on something edifying, while awaiting the others.

(11) At the meeting, they will give their report, in order, of what they have done, the difficulties they encountered, and the results they had in the task to which each of them devoted themselves. They will also present the new needs they have discovered, in order to try to find a solution to them. The other Ladies will vote on these matters; then the Priest of the Mission who will be present will collect the votes and state which ones received the plurality. The decisions will be written in a register and then implemented by those to whom the task will be assigned.

(12) They will make it a rule never to interrupt those who are speaking and not to propose anything outside of the topic under discussion, until after it has been settled.

(13) They will briefly state their thoughts on each question, acting always for pure love of God, considering only the greater good to be done and not the persons and places that have been recommended.

(14) The said Ladies--officers as well as the others--will strive to acquire the Christian perfection required for their state in life. They will make mental prayer for at least half an hour daily, hear Holy Mass, read a chapter of some spiritual book, make a general examination of conscience in the evening, and go to confession and Communion at least once a [month].<sup>1</sup>

(15) And in order that they may be preserved and perfected in the spirit, in addition to their regular, private Communions, they will receive Holy Communion together every Saturday of the Ember Days--the days on which Holy Orders are conferred--that God may be pleased to give good priests to the Church and new blessings to the Company.

They will honor the silence of Our Lord in all that concerns the Company because the prince of this world makes light of holy things that are divulged thoughtlessly. They will have some Daughters of Charity take care of the feeding and education of the foundlings as well as to prepare the little sweets and to take them every day at two o'clock to the Hôtel-Dieu, explaining to the Ladies to whom and how these should be distributed, and indicating to them those who are dying and those who have recovered and are ready to be discharged. Lastly, they will even perform the tasks of the Ladies, when there are rumors of contagion and the Ladies cannot risk going to the Hôtel-Dieu.

And so that God may be pleased to maintain the Company, the Ladies, during their lifetime, will prepare one of their relatives or some other woman with the requisite qualities, to succeed them in carrying out these works of mercy. After the officers have accepted her, they will introduce her at the regular meeting.

## **201. - LETTER OF THE ALDERMEN OF RETHEL TO THE LADIES OF CHARITY**

Rethel, March 1, 1652

Dear Ladies,

The present letter was to have no other purpose than to express to you, by a humble word of thanks, how deeply indebted we are to you for your goodness in the charitable alms we have received from you. However, the needs that have arisen by a run of misfortunes, which increase from one day to the next, oblige us, for the safety of the poor people of our town and the environs, to redouble our entreaties that you may be pleased to continue the acts of charity you have performed so successfully in their regard with such incredible results. They are even more edifying and meritorious since the distribution is made to the needy in an orderly fashion, accompanied by such great prudence by the director of the [Congregation of the] Mission sent here for that purpose. Each individual has reason to thank God for this, not only for the assistance of temporal goods, which have snatched from the tomb an infinite number of persons, but for the administration of the sacraments to countless others who, without His care and good guidance, would have died like savage beasts, without confession and without any spiritual assistance.

So many benefits received should call a truce to our demands, but the deplorable way in which fathers and mothers are abandoning their children, and husbands their wives; the young women who have been robbed of their honor, overwhelmed by misfortunes; the tyrannical demands of those who claim falsely the authority to raise taxes and the cost of maintenance by unjustified ways; the conduct of partisans who would willingly break people's bones to sell the marrow in them, together with the banditry and universal disorders of undisciplined soldiers cause us to have such great compassion and deep regrets that we are obliged by the law of necessity to have recourse to your continued charity. Only your perseverance in so doing will crown the work you have so generously begun in such an edifying way.

That is why, Ladies, we humbly beg you with all our heart and with tears in our eyes, as earnestly as propriety and respect may allow, by the merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, to have pity on our miseries. Your virtuous actions will be rewarded by a life filled with blessings in this world and blessed immortality in the next. That is what the poor people of this region, and we in particular, desire unanimously for you.

We are, Ladies, your most humble and very obedient servants.

THE ALDERMEN

*Addressed:* Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Priests of the Mission at Saint-Lazare, to be brought, please, to the meeting of the Ladies of Charity in Paris

## **202. LETTER OF THE ALDERMEN OF RETHEL TO THE LADIES OF CHARITY**

Rethel, May 1, 1652

Dear Ladies,

The generous alms you have sent to the region have plucked from the tomb a countless number of needy persons, who are indebted to you, after God, for their lives. Since, however, virtuous plans need perseverance to help them reach the summit of perfection, we have the effrontery once again to beg you earnestly--as we do now with all our heart for the greater glory of God--to be pleased to continue your charity for another six weeks so that, once the harvest time arrives, the most indigent persons may be able to live from the work of their own hands, and the disabled from the alms of those who will gather in their crops and will then have greater means to assist them. This continued charity will crown the salutary undertaking you so generously began.

Once again we will be hoping for this favorable assistance from your goodness. God alone will be the reward of your pious actions. This is the desire of your most humble and deeply indebted servants.

THE ALDERMEN

*Addressed:* Monsieur Vincent, Superior General of the Mission, to be brought, please, to the meeting of the Ladies of Charity