

LETTER TO FATHER PROSPER LAMBERT

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Prosper Lambert (1811-1875), after trying the life of a Trappist at Port-Salut and that of a Benedictine at Solesmes, became a secular priest at Orleans. Seven years later, he entered Libermann's novitiate and was sent to the mission of Bourbon in 1845. Transferred to Mauritius in 1846, he labored at Sainte-Croix where he died on March 6, 1875.

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*We are nothing but humble instruments used by the Divine Sower. Observance of the rule and the obligations arising from our ministry.*

Paris, February 23, 1851      Vol. 13, p. 50

Dear Confreere:

All your letters brought us joy and happiness in Our Lord Jesus Christ. They showed me that you are laboring for the salvation of souls while preserving peace and recollection to the extent that they are possible for you; hence I have no doubt that God will bless your efforts. He asks but one thing of us and then accomplishes the rest. He asks that we sacrifice ourselves entirely for His glory and the salvation of souls, abandoning to Him the care of blessing our good desires according to His merciful designs for us and the souls He wants to sanctify.

*[We Are Nothing But Humble Instruments in the Hands of the Divine Sower]*

We are sowers of the Divine word but it is He who causes that sacred seed to fructify. Let us rejoice, recalling God's

## *SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN*

goodness in choosing us for His holy work. We are like the sack which the farmer attaches to his neck as he sets out to sow the seed all over the field. That sack which he uses to spread the seed is not exactly the most beautiful thing he has. God has chosen us in a similar way, for we have nothing to boast of in His house. He fills us with His divine seed; and He uses us to cast it into souls. The farmer makes sure that the sack he is using is not full of holes. And in case there are holes he first takes pains to mend them. This is what God has done for us in His divine mercy: We were full of "holes" caused by pride, susceptibility, self-seeking, sloth and other numerous weaknesses and faults; but he mended all that and put our souls in proper condition. How grateful we ought to be to our Divine Master! He mended our miseries and filled the voids in our souls, because He wanted to make use of us. We are weak vessels and are full of holes on every side; yet, in spite of it, God chose us for a work that is most holy and most pleasing to Him.

Let us do all that we can to remain humble, gentle, recollected and detached from ourselves and from all things; and let us surrender entirely to the designs of His divine mercy toward us.

### *[Observance of the Rules and Ministry]*

I draw great consolation from the news that all our beloved confreres of Mauritius are walking with fervor in the way of God, that they are trying to avoid dangerous faults, that they are well united among themselves in the charity of the Divine Master and with their confreres who are at the Mother House. Father François [my assistant] will be able to tell you how greatly I am consoled and filled with joy at the thought of our mission of Mauritius.

However, there is still one little "hole" which needs mending, if I am to believe the report of Father La Vavas seur. It

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concerns regularity. You and your confreres are not too satisfactory in this respect. True, in itself, it is but a small "hole," but it is likely to be widened by those who come after you and even in your own time.

Regularity is proper to the life of the community; it constitutes its strength. God wills it; the rule is for us the expression of God's will. It is the safeguard of the missionaries; it preserves them from laxity, and even guarantees their unity. This is why I urge all of you to make every effort toward the maintenance of regularity. If every individual will make personal efforts in this respect, God will bless you.

I believe that it is necessary for you to assemble in council as often as possible. In such meetings you will examine the points of the rule which are not properly observed and devise means for their exact fulfillment.

It is sometimes imagined that souls will suffer harm from such a faithful observance but this is wrong. True, it may now and then be necessary to exercise the ministry at a time that is set apart for some community exercises. However, when we consider the losses that will result for the missionary himself from a constant lack of regularity, we realize that the temporary losses occasioned by fidelity to the rule are amply compensated, for the losses suffered by missionaries in their interior life have a nefarious influence on souls. Moreover, the laxity that apparently follows in the wake of irregularity forebodes considerable losses at a later date. I shall pray for this intention.

I'll not tell you any news now about ourselves, for Father François will write you about our affairs.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN