

13. LETTER TO MR. RICHAUD, SEMINARIAN

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Have confidence in your spiritual director. Instead of eagerly seeking means of perfection, remain gently submissive to God's will and preserve serenity of mind.

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Praised be Jesus and Mary

If I did not see you so troubled by grief, I should like to scold you very much. You greatly deserve it, not because of the cowardice and other faults of which you complain, but because of the haste, the unrest and the agitation which you constantly foster and which are the true obstacles to your spiritual progress.

*[When You Are in the Dark, Trust the Guidance
of Your Director]*

I declare in all truth that the condition of your soul is not evil at all, and that if you were a little more patient, you would advance considerably, and much more than many others. Believe my words and don't trust at all in your own ideas. You know nothing about God's ways with souls. Even if you did know them, you would be unable to judge your own state. You would always see black everywhere, and you would consider evil that which is good, even God's grace.

Be like a child, dear friend, and trust in those who are charged with your guidance. I assure you, and this, I am certain is also Father Pinault's opinion, that your interior

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state is very good, and that your progress is excellent and capable of leading you to true perfection.

You are keeping the state of perfection in mind and you entertain a strong desire of attaining it. Take courage, dear friend, you shall attain it, but with gentleness, moderation and patience. Your view of this state is not and cannot yet be very clear to you. It is obscure, and the desire which God has added to it is vague, and without fixed or definite object. It is always thus in the beginning. The desires which God inspires us with, are always in accord with the view which He grants us of His sacred love and of divine perfection. It follows that what good you possess in your soul cannot yet be clear to you nor definite.

Here is what Our Lord told Nicodemus: "The wind blows where it wills; and you hear its sound, but know not whence it comes nor whither it goes; so is it with every one that is born of the Spirit." You, my friend, are a little Nicodemus. The Holy Spirit breathes, and you know not whence comes His inspiration, nor whither it leads, and you are troubled. Be content and remain in great joy, because it pleases the divine Spirit to breathe in your soul and to vivify it in this way.

What is wrong with you is that you add your own ideas to this obscure view and to this genuine and strong, although indefinite, desire of sanctification. You keep adding particular ideas [of holiness] to be realized by you, but you will never accomplish them because those ideas are on a natural level. They do not proceed from Our Lord, and consequently you will never have the strength of putting them into practice—which is all to the good so far as the well-being of your soul is concerned. If you were able to execute and realize them, you would suffer considerable harm, for they would cause you to go outside the supernatural state to which the good Lord wants to guide you.

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*[Avoid Overeagerness in Trying to Discover
What God Wants]*

There is another evil: you want to know more than the good Lord is willing to show you at present. This is very bad. Patience, dear friend! The time has not yet arrived. Wait for God's own good time, and do not seek to anticipate it. It is not possible that it be as bright and as warm at the first instant of the rising of the sun as it is at noon. The great secret consists in having patience and waiting for the moment of the good Lord. You want to know by all means what you could do in order to reach perfection and in what things you could practice renunciation. You are wrong in being so eager. Wait until it pleases God to make all that known to you.

But since you are so anxious to know, I will tell what God's goodness demands of you at the present moment. It is very little. If you do it very gently, I assure you, in all truth, that you will do something that is incomparably more perfect than all mortifications, all sensible fervor, and all beautiful prayers. It consists, first, in keeping yourself in a gentle and humble submission to the divine Will, and, secondly, in never becoming angry with yourself.

[Remain Gently Submitted to God's Will]

The first requires that you renounce your own mind and your entire self. Do not seek so much to know and be enlightened, but be content with what God is pleased to grant you. If you are in the dark, remain quietly in your blindness, placing your confidence in Our Lord, in order that He may lead you according to His pleasure, as He wants and where He wishes. You have the good will of serving Him well; this is all that is needed. A blind man trusts in his small dog. The dog leads him where it wants and the blind man follows. Shouldn't you therefore be willing to entrust

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your blind soul to the guidance of Jesus, who is the light of heaven and earth? Do this effortlessly and without haste.

You must also moderate the too violent desires of the will toward things which your mind represents to you as being perfect and able to sanctify your soul. God will always give you great fervor to practice all things which He inspires you to accomplish. Your great virtue must be serenity and peace. Put yourself earnestly to the task and you will see that it is a great perfection. "Patience has the perfect work." This, dear friend, is what God asks of you. Be faithful to His grace and try to overcome your hurry and agitation.

[Never Become Angry with Yourself]

As regards the second point, namely of not being angry with yourself, remember that mildness must be practiced first toward self. You should constantly encourage yourself and sustain yourself by thoughts of confidence in Our Lord and His most blessed Mother. When you have committed a fault, enter gently into yourself, appease all bitterness and all agitation. Then humble yourself in your interior before God, and remain in this attitude with perfect peace and confidence. Act in the same way when you feel too weak to do the things which you imagine, most of the time erroneously, to be good. Never make any resolution except those that present themselves with great peace and serenity, which give you courage and trust, and which lead with facility to God. These resolutions should be taken with interior humility and confidence in Our Lord.

As regards those that present themselves in a different way, especially if they are accompanied by uncertainty and distrust, trouble, disquiet, bitterness, or by haste and agitation, put them entirely aside, except in matters which are of obligation, and which you must fulfill in all circumstances,

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as for example, observing silence. Pay great attention to this rule, for it is of the highest importance. So, don't start following your own judgment. Cast aside all fear and anxious reflection, and do with simplicity and for the love of God what I tell you. I take upon myself any evil which may result.

Do not become upset on account of your cowardice and immortified spirit. This weakness springs from your agitation, your pains, and your uncertainty of mind. Follow my advice and everything will soon be changed; especially do not hurry too much to attain your advancement [in holiness]. Moreover, this cowardice is not in your will, which is truly determined to serve God. Pay no attention to this trouble, but bear it all for the love of God.

When this trouble affects you do not try to overpower it; offer your soul to God, in union with all the spiritual sufferings and aversions of our adorable Master, with the desire of suffering all things for His divine Love. In these circumstances make acts of love of God, of self-sacrifice, of humiliation, and entertain the desire of belonging to God without indulging in the consideration of those sufferings and those fears. You must disregard them and preserve your tranquility. They proceed, at least in part, from the same defects as everything else. Gently avoid the thought of death and any other sad or painful things, and occupy your mind with subjects which lead to peacefulness and confidence. At the hour of death you will be more tranquil than anyone else; at least, this is what ordinarily happens to those who have such great fear of it while they are in good health.

[Advice Concerning Your Religious Vocation]

Regarding the religious state which you mentioned, I believe there is nothing wrong in thinking about it. This

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great fear of the world which you experience is a sign that the good Lord does not want you there; at least, this is frequently the case. Hence, I cannot see any harm in having this desire. However, in this matter also, you are too hasty, as you are in everything else. Be moderate, dear brother; allow God to act; He will arrange all things for the good of your soul. The solitary life is not for you. As regards the place where the good Lord wants you, it would be hard for me to make a decision. Follow to the letter all that Father Pinault will tell you.

Do not cling to your own ideas; give your full confidence to your director; ask him, put your problems before him in order to know what are his ideas, without manifesting your tastes and inclinations with too much violence.. Then examine attentively what he has told you; consider what you feel about it in God's presence; report to your director afterwards what has taken place in you; and then follow to the letter and in all simplicity what he tells you.

I have still another thing to recommend to you, dear friend; do not go to war, do not yield to sentiments of anguish and distrust. Open your heart to him with all simplicity and do not worry whether he says much or little to you. Be on your guard against the ruses of the enemy; he wants to take away from you that help of which you stand in need in your state of agitation. In any case, be watchful, do not change to another director; this would be the greatest evil that could come to you in your present condition. Father Pinault is the man you need; you will not find a better director. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere. I pray Our Lord Jesus to give you His peace and His love.

Entirely yours in that holy love
of Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, ACOLYTE