

LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY OF CAPE PALMAS

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*God is with you, why should you fear? Love one another.  
Be faithful to the rule. Avoid unnecessary dangers but don't  
be too fearful. The virtues of the Lay Brothers.*

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[Dear Confireres:]

May the peace of Our Lord be with you!

Be full of courage, my dear Brothers! Devote yourselves to the glory of God and the salvation of so many wretched souls. You have much suffering and will continue to undergo great trials, but remember that it is for God that you bear these troubles and that He will reward you a hundredfold even in this world for all the sacrifices you are making for love of Him. Every trial that you offer for the salvation of souls will perhaps save several. It may be that this is "the hundredfold" that Christ has promised.

[*God is With You; Why Should You Fear?*]

Keep in mind that the Sovereign Master lived a life of sorrow and that He underwent inexpressible pain for the salvation of the world. You are disciples of Jesus Christ! Don't seek to receive better treatment than your master. Never entertain fears because of the difficulties you encounter. It is not in your own name that you went to the missions nor is it you who will accomplish the work. The Master sent you and you are not alone; if you are faithful, He is always at your side. Hence don't be fearful or weak in faith. An apostle of

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Jesus Christ must never be downcast in the presence of obstacles. Bear difficulties peacefully and patiently and always persevere in your projects and labors that are truly useful for God's glory and the salvation of souls. Rest awhile when you face obstacles that you are unable to overcome at that time. Wait for "God's own time" full of confidence, and be faithful when that moment arrives.

*[Love One Another]*

My dear Brothers, love one another! What good could you do if you failed to keep peace and union among yourselves? Show, therefore, that the spirit of Jesus Christ dwells in you because you are all perfectly united in mutual affection. Bear one another's faults that spring from individual temperaments and imperfections. Support one another in the charity of Jesus Christ. All sufferings will be nothing if the love for Jesus unites you. Don't judge one another or contradict one another. Why offend the Divine Heart of Jesus which wants a bond of union to exist among you? Let your brother act as he sees fit in God's presence. And you, on your part, act following the inspiration of the Holy Ghost who dwells in your soul. Be considerate and show affection to all. Console one another and act as you would toward Jesus Himself, your Divine Master. Rejoice together in the midst of your labors, pains, and afflictions, for you are the servants and apostles of Jesus Christ.

Oh how my heart trembles! How great is my desire to be in the midst of you to labor, to suffer also a little for the glory of God. But no! I have not been considered worthy of so great a favor, of the privilege of sacrificing everything for Him who sacrificed Himself for love of me! My dear Brothers, you have been chosen from among so many to receive that great favor; lead therefore a life that is worthy of so great a grace; live animated by love and charity.

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### [*Faithfulness to the Rule*]

Establish the rule of the community and be faithful to it. Even if, after you receive this letter, you have not to remain for a long time at Garroway, observe the rule in spite of that; you will experience great peace and a great repose of soul whenever you observe the rule well. Practice obedience with humility and eagerness, as children of God who are docile to whatever is willed by their Heavenly Father. If it is hard to do so, esteem yourselves happy that you can offer this little sacrifice to your God. "Be faithful in small things and you will be faithful in great ones," as Eternal Wisdom tells us. But if you are unfaithful in small things you will likewise be unfaithful in greater ones.

### [*Avoid Needless Danger but Don't Be Too Fearful*]

You are ready for "any work and any sacrifice" for the glory of the Master; nevertheless, be prudent and do not expose yourselves unnecessarily to imminent danger. Keep in mind that if you sacrifice your bodies too much, you are doing harm to a multitude of souls. On the other hand, don't be too fearful; put your confidence in God. When some work has been decided upon by the Community Council, let every one be ready to abandon himself into the hands of his Superior, in spite of every danger. It then belongs to Jesus, your Master, who exposes you, to watch over you, if He wishes to make use of you for greater things. Cast out fear; He will watch over you and protect you. Have a filial confidence in Mary; in her your souls will find great consolation and a powerful protection.

In your Council meetings do not cling too much to your own opinions. Do not defend your ideas with too much warmth. Observe in general what the rule says about the matter and you will see that your works will produce fruits of salvation.

## SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

### [*The Virtue of the Lay Brothers*]

Let the lay Brothers esteem the holiness and greatness of their vocation. Let them have a deep feeling of their unworthiness [for their sublime calling]. They must remain humble if they want to avoid the loss of so great a grace through self-love.

The great virtues of the Brothers are humility, obedience, a most perfect docility, modesty and a hidden life. If they are unfaithful and fail to practice those virtues, they will become unhappy. They will cause sorrow to their superiors; they will introduce disorder in their communities; will put obstacles in the way of the sacred ministry of the missionaries and thus do harm to souls. They will even run the danger of losing their own souls.

Let the Brothers remember the great sacrifice [of themselves] they have made for God, and conduct themselves in a manner that is worthy of the great favor they have received. They must assist the missionary priests by doing perfectly and with a contented heart whatever work is entrusted to them. Humility and obedience will make them pleasing to God whatever be the nature of their work.

Let the Brothers respect the priests as if they were Jesus Christ Himself. The first missionaries to arrive in your area will bring you the rules for our dear Brothers. In the meantime, let them zealously learn whatever will be helpful to acquire the religious spirit. They are still novices and cannot be admitted into the Society without having undergone a sufficient probation.<sup>1</sup> This is an additional reason for doing your very best to practice the virtues I have mentioned and which are in a special way the virtue of novices. Put your

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<sup>1</sup>The "Brothers" in question were young laymen who had joined Father Bessieux and his companions on the first expedition to Africa at Bordeaux. Only one of them became a professed Brother.

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trust in God; He will give you the grace to acquire those holy virtues. . . .

I greatly recommend that you preserve peace and great harmony with the civil authorities. Help their designs whenever conscience permits it. They deserve this since they help to fulfill God's designs.

We have many novices, and we have enormous expenses because we must construct additional buildings. . . . Our Lord will not abandon us, I hope. He will enable us to overcome the difficulties. Without his help I don't see how we shall be able to "make ends meet" when we come to the end of the year. . . .

No Signature