

24. LETTERS TO FATHER RENÉ JEAN GUILMIN

René Jean Guilmin (1823-1891) entered Libermann's novitiate in 1849 and left in April 1851 for Guiana. Illness forced him to return to France after two years, but in 1861 he went to Mauritius as Superior of the College of Port-Louis. He was named Prefect Apostolic of the Little Malgache Islands in 1886 and died at Mayotte, December 7, 1891.

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Father Libermann grieves with him over the death of his confrere. Faithfulness to the rule.

Letter One

Vol. 13, p. 289

Notre Dame du Gard, September 12, 1851

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

As you readily understand, I was grievously affected by the news just received. You had scarcely reached your destination when God subjected you to a severe trial. I have not yet received the letter in which the Prefect Apostolic gives details about the death of our beloved Father Alphonse Toulouse. . . .

[I Grieve With You Over the Loss You Have Suffered]

Don't become disheartened because of that trial. Give yourself to God with all your soul. Your confrere has had the happiness of sacrificing his life for the salvation of souls. Perhaps I suffer more than anyone on account of those misfortunes, for it is probably because of my sins that they have

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occurred. That is why I am sorrowful unto death and should like to be immolated for all of you.

However, if God wishes to choose victims that are purer and holier than I, at least I desire to offer Him the sorrows of my heart caused by all those misfortunes. For I must assure you, dear confrere, that all your sufferings resound loudly in my heart.

May God be blessed! Let Him strike! Let Him tear us to pieces! I desire to suffer a thousand times more than I have suffered in the past, if only He maintains you and your confreres in the fervor of His divine love and preserves your desire to sacrifice yourselves unceasingly for His glory and the salvation of souls. Be ready to endure everything and to sacrifice yourselves unceasingly. Preserve peace of heart, joy, and generous love. Live in the peace and union of children of the Heart of Mary and you will be filled with abundant graces.

[*Faithfulness to the Rule*]

Father Guilmin, you will replace Father Toulouse as First Assistant. Place your trust in God, and act with calm, wisdom, reserve, and moderation. However, both of you ought to be full of energy—an energy that dwells in your heart—and let your minds always preserve the calm that springs from the Spirit of God and the prudence which He inspires.

Live together in peace, confidence and charity. Live in union and consultation with each other. In difficulties and even generally, let Father Guilmin consult the Prefect Apostolic, whose great prudence and wise experience will prove most useful.

Take care to observe the rules faithfully and preserve the spirit of the Congregation. This is doubly necessary, first for your own sanctification, and secondly, in order that, when

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

I shall send you other confreres, they may find fervor and good example in your community.

I want to make the community of Cayenne a fervent one and a model of regularity. If you lay down such solid foundations now, you will easily attain success. Courage, my beloved confreres! God is giving you His grace. You have begun with a cross! It is a sign that God's goodness desires to sanctify you.

I do not doubt that His grace is with you and that you are faithful to it. My heart overflows with consolation in the midst of pain and tribulation.

May the peace, joy and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your souls and unite you in the union of His perfect love!

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior

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Crosses are a blessing. How to act toward persons who oppose you.

Letter Two Paris, October 30, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 349

Dear Confreres:

The latest letters which you addressed to us were a source of great consolation. God, who had afflicted us to punish us for our sins and to teach us that we ought to place our confidence in Him alone, now shows that He loves us and deigns to make use of us for His greater glory.

[Crosses Are a Blessing]

The blessings He pours out on your labors are, I trust, the beginning of His gifts. The crosses and contradictions

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He mingles with them are as salt for our food; they preserve our souls in a spirit of humility, abnegation and confident abandonment to God. In the eyes of God and His Saints, those crosses give a special savor to your works, draw down new graces and blessings upon you, and, finally, teach you prudence, restraint, moderation, and discretion; they will make you acquire that tact which is necessary to a missionary in his dealings with men.

[How To Act Toward Those Who Oppose You]

Hence, I don't worry at all about the many annoyances to which you have been subjected and which you may expect in the future.

For the rest, don't yield to anxiety. God's goodness watches over you and, moreover, I, as your superior, can assure you that there is no real danger. So, don't worry but do your work in peace; yet be prudent and avoid anything provocative. Act with gentleness toward everybody; be modest and peaceful in all your dealings with the clergy. Don't let it appear that you know all that is being planned against you. If those who are opposed to you or whom you suspect of being opposed tell you what is being said or done against you, answer calmly and with restraint, but don't let them notice your restraint. Don't show the least displeasure toward any one. Observe what your rule tells you on this subject. Avoid also giving the impression that you are leaning on my influence. Remain calm and be kind and good-natured to all. Do your work zealously and prudently and have no anxious pre-occupation about the rest. . . .

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FRANCIS LIBERMANN, Superior