

VIII. LETTERS TO MISS SAINTE-BÉCEL

Miss Sainte-Bécel of Nantes was a devout lady who engaged in Catholic Action long before such work became known under this title. She had the spirit of a Christian Apostle and while remaining in her own country, did all she could to help the work of the missions. Father Libermann recalled in a letter to Mrs. Bresdon (February 1843) that it was his confrere "Father Saint-Albin who had spoken particularly about Miss Bresdon and Miss Bécel, and had given him a touching description of their charity." Father Libermann gave her the benefit of his special spiritual direction.

66

Letter One

La Neuville

Vol. 4, p. 199

Tuesday after Easter, 1843

J. M. J.

Dear Miss Sainte-Bécel:

I accept your proposal with all my heart, and agree to unite our prayers with yours, as our two missionaries promised you.

Have courage and be comforted in the midst of tribulation. It is a sign of God's special predilection when He sends suffering to a soul. Accept these pains from His hands with love and humility. Consider yourself unworthy to partake of the chalice which the Beloved of our heart once drained to the last drop. Accept it, nevertheless, in a spirit of gratitude. Don't be surprised that you find it hard to endure the trials that divine goodness sends you. There is nothing wrong in feeling pain, so long as we place our soul at the disposal of the divine Master. You know well that He Himself manifested sorrow at the sight of the torments He was about to suffer.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

This was because He loved us and wanted to encourage our weakness. So long as the sorrow and pain which we feel at the sight of tribulation is not inspired by resistance to the will of our divine Master, there is nothing wrong with it. Remain prostrate in spirit before His divine Majesty. Be ready to endure all the sorrows He may wish to send you in the future, and be willing to bear those you suffer at present as long as it is His will that you should do so. Do this for love of Him and because it is pleasing to His divine will. Bear the sadness that overwhelms you, with peace and love. We ought not to forget that if crosses are not painful, they are not crosses at all. Let us embrace our crosses with all the power of our souls, no matter what it costs us.

Although you should bear your pains with great love and submission to the divine good pleasure, still, you may ask God to end those that cause you sadness. Do not ask this favor in order to be comforted—you must be ready to suffer a thousand times more if such is the will of the divine Master—but, ask that favor for the good of the souls that are dear to you. You have, I think, already recommended those intentions to the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories. Persevere in hoping to the very end, and never cease to ask with faith, love and humility. You will, eventually, obtain mercy. Have great faith in the divine Master and bear all things calmly and with love. Be gentle and humble of heart after the example of the Heart of your Beloved and the Heart of our most sweet and humble Mother.

Be moderate in your conduct. Desire ardently whatever may serve the glory of God, the salvation, perfection and sanctification of your soul. But let your desires be always calm and avoid excessive eagerness and that violent activity which tends rather to disturb than benefit your interior life. Our desires should be humble, and full of love, patience, and submission to the divine good pleasure. Drag yourself feebly before your Beloved until He grants your request for

LETTERS TO MISS SAINTE-BÉCEL

His glory. Do not displease Him by trying as it were, to force His hand. Ask with gentleness and meekness and do not try to force His will by demanding what He does not want to grant. Rather should you win His favor by your meekness, love and submission to His will.

Accustom yourself to keeping your soul always in a state of peace, humility, gentleness and love. Practice a certain reserve in your manner of acting, but let this be the fruit of love rather than indifference. Try to develop a calm and stable character. Such was the character of Mary, our loving Mother. Her heart was always peaceful, humble, loving, in God's presence and in her dealings with creatures. Her disposition was always the same—gentle, calm, pleasant, modest and kind to all—and her manner of acting was always moderate, humble, sweet and charitable.

In Her you have your great model. It is my hope that her Heart, so full of tender love for your soul, will pour some of that balm of divine grace into the heart of her dear child.

It is in the charity of this most pure and holy Heart that I have the honor of being,

Your most humble and devoted servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN,
Missionary of the Holy Heart
of Mary

67

Letter Two La Neuville, February 28, 1844 Vol. 6, p. 95

J. M. J.

Dear Miss Sainte-Bécel:

I am pleased to comply with your request that I should write to you. If I had a better knowledge of your interior life

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

and more time at my disposal, I would write at greater length. I hope that the Most Holy Virgin will make up for my deficiency and that her most holy Heart which is so full of zeal for souls, will not fail to take care of your heart.

It is not wrong to feel sorrow about our personal problems, but we must bear that sorrow with peace, humility, love and submission to the divine will. When you suffer, live in a spirit of sacrifice as did Mary, whose heart was pierced from the time of the first moments of her joy and whose wound bled always and increased constantly. Mary had peace of soul, love and humility in her sufferings, and that, even at the foot of the Cross. Remain with her at the foot of the Cross; see how she bore her sorrows, and act in like manner in your own sorrow. Also imitate Mary at the foot of the Cross and reproduce in yourself what you see in her. Ask Jesus, ask Mary herself, to give you that grace. You suffer, so much the better. The greater are your pains, the greater will be your treasures of sanctification. It is up to you to profit from them. Joys, delights, and good-living nourish the body; afflictions, privations and sorrows nourish the soul and fill it with graces.

The misfortune of several of your relatives is your great cross. Our Blessed Lady had a similar cross to bear when she saw so many hardened sinners among her children. Bear your cross as she bore hers. I entreat you to act thus and you will grow in sanctity and in the divine love of Jesus and Mary, in which I am,

Your most humble servant,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN