

LETTERS TO SEVERAL SISTERS

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XIII. LETTERS TO SISTERS ST. LEOPOLD,
ST. AGNES OF JESUS, AND MISS
THEODORA LIBERMANN

Letter One *Rome, August 2, 1846* *Vol. 8, p. 197*

My dear nieces:

Though guilty, I am repentant, and you know that a good act of contrition takes away all sins. My contrition is so sincere that my forehead is covered with drops of perspiration! And moreover, if my heart is aching with sorrow because of my grievous fault, I have reason for rejoicing because of the profit you have drawn from it. Sister St. Leopold has overcome a great temptation to become angry with me, and Sister St. Agnes of Jesus has made a wonderful sacrifice. Only our good Theodora remains silent, but I feel sure that it is not because she holds anything against me. She is constantly at her studies and this does not leave her a free minute. That is why her silence is more eloquent than the most beautiful letters. It is possible, nevertheless, that there might still remain a little resentment in a corner of her heart. I will try to erase this by bringing her a small reliquary containing relics of St. Therese and St. Elizabeth; I think that this will speak to her heart. I shall try to bring for each of our two Sisters a small reliquary, one containing the relics of St. Paul and St. Leopold, and the other those of St. Charles and St. Agnes.

If there is anything else you want, write yourselves or get someone to write. There is still time as I shall remain in Rome until the end of August and possibly until the 8th or 10th of September.

SPIRITUAL LETTERS OF FRANCIS LIBERMANN

I have seen the Holy Father. He is full of goodness and kindness. All who have had the privilege of meeting Him are very pleased. The Roman people have an ardent filial affection for the Pope, a thing that had not been witnessed for many years.

I myself am in excellent health at present. I paid my tribute to the heat immediately I arrived in Rome, for I was unwell for ten days and was unable to go anywhere or to do anything. This left me with a pile of work and prevented my writing to you. But now everything is going well, very well. I feel much better than when I was at La Neuville. Throughout my stay here in the Holy City, the heat has been excessive. I have not seen a cloud since I arrived and there has not been a drop of rain for the last three months. This drought may last for another fortnight or month. The heat is constant and does not seem to lessen or increase. The nights are pleasant and cool, but from eleven to two or three we have heat such as we never experience in the North. I had to go out twice at one o'clock and it was just like walking in a furnace. One feels comfortable inside the houses and we manage to arrange things so that we are all right. I feel cool in my room, and am more at ease there than I was at La Neuville during recent years. But enough about myself!

And you, poor children, you are orphans! Your good mother has weaned you, and it has been impossible for me to be with you to console you even a little, and to mitigate the pain caused by her death. I think the good Lord has disposed things so that your sacrifice may be fruitful. Have courage! God loves you and Mary protects you.

If you are faithful, your souls will grow in divine love. You know that we must have courage, devotedness to God, and detachment from all earthly things, from the people who are dear to us, and from ourselves. The Savior speaks to you, you hear His voice speaking in your hearts, you understand

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Him and you practice more and more perfectly from day to day what He suggests to you. By acting thus you will continue to suffer for a while yet, but this suffering will sanctify you and in the long run it will make you happy already in this world. This happiness greatly surpasses all natural satisfactions and anything that mere nature is able to give.

O my dear children, I am filled with joy when I reflect on all God's goodness towards you, and when I see that you will be faithful. I feel convinced that you will be faithful when I consider all the graces which God will give you and His loving predilection for you.

And you, dear Sister St. Agnes of Jesus, you are the "lamb of Jesus." He loves you with a special predilection. That is why in all probability He is crucifying you now and will continue to do so for some time to come. Rejoice with all your soul! Jesus wants you to be a lamb, a lamb full of meekness, simplicity, humility, and docility to His divine voice, and full of love and deep attachment to your divine and beloved Shepherd.

You cannot expect Him to make you a cherished sheep, if He is not allowed to tear away from you what is faulty and whatever He finds in you that is contrary to the holy life of a lamb of Jesus. You know how much work the divine Savior still has to accomplish in you in order that He may make you what He wants you to be and what you yourself also ardently desire.

You will succeed, my dear Sister St. Agnes. It will hurt, it will hurt very much, but have courage. Jesus carries you on His heart, in His arms, on His shoulders, like a beloved sheep. He will afflict you with one hand and support and carry you with the other. With every blow you suffer interiorly, Jesus' hand will at the same time remove a corresponding thorn from your soul. This is painful but your

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cure is in sight. His treatment of you will make you beautiful and lovable in His sight.

Happy child of God! Happy lamb of Jesus! You can fully rejoice in the possession of the Heart of that dear Lord. Be glad because you are frequently able to offer Him the sacrifice of yourself, of your soul, and by so doing, to become more dear to Him. Be faithful, very faithful. The reward is exceeding great even in this world. That you will be faithful, I have no doubt.

To both of you I recommend that you walk, not in the way of fear, but in the the way of sacrifice, meekness, and humility. It is a way of love, of pure love. Fear is unworthy of souls that are dear to Jesus and Mary. The way of fear in such souls is unthinkable.

Adieu, my dear nieces.

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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Letter Two Paris, January 17, 1851 Vol. 13, p. 91

My very dear Sisters:

Your letter grieved me for I fully realize that my silence must have caused you sorrow. Your good hearts have tried to excuse my negligence, but, being unable to find a plausible excuse, you have tried to make a good resolution. You were then faced with the question of how to carry out this resolution, which would require that the hearts which God gave you should be changed for others. Further, since the resolution was not made at the end of mental prayer it did not bind in conscience. But, joking aside, I must first reassure you, and then express my surprise at your not receiving my reply

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to your second last letter of the New Year. I am certain that I answered within a fortnight, so you can believe with easy hearts that I did not commit the fault of not replying. Be assured that I have not forgotten you, nor will I ever forget you. Your souls are too dear to me to allow that this should happen. Write to me always for the counsels and consolations you need.

I sincerely wish that Theodora would finally find a permanent home. It is a pity that she was unwilling to come to Dunkirk at the beginning of this year. The poor child must be very lonely in Strasbourg, and we must pray for her.

I have not yet said anything about my New Year good wishes. It is really useless to speak about them to you, since by expressing those wishes I shall not add anything to the desires I have for your souls' sanctification and for your happiness in this world and especially in the next. What I have wished for you in my heart I have expressed to God and our good Mother. I have asked that your intentions be holy and that your actions be fervent, that you may have meekness, peace, humility, obedience, charity, perfect regularity, perfect submission of your wills to God's will, abandonment with full confidence to Jesus and Mary, recollection and the spirit of prayer.

You can see that my desires for you are abundant. I hope that divine Providence will be even more abundant in His mercy towards you. Have confidence! Bear your cross with patience and love and God will be with you.

Your most devoted uncle, in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

P.S. Give my greetings, best wishes and congratulations to Madame St. Alexandre. I shall soon see the good Mother St. Bernard. It is always a new source of pleasure for me to be able to meet this good Mother.