Ignatius Schwindenhammer was born at Ingersheim, in the Diocese of Strasbourg, in the year 1818. He was ordained a priest in 1842. A short time after this, through Father Libermann’s intervention, he came to Paris and was sub-director of the Archconfraternity of Our Lady of Victories for one year. In this way divine Providence gradually led him to the society founded by that convert Jew; he entered its Novitiate of La Neuville, near Amiens, September 8, 1843. He later became professor of theology and superior of the community of Notre Dame du Gard (1848). After Libermann’s death, he became his successor as Superior General of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost (1852). He died in Paris, March 6, 1881.


Letter One  La Neuville, January 13, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 101

J. M. J.

Dear Confrere:

Your letter was most consoling, for it showed me that you are constantly increasing your desire to live solely for our divine Master. May it continue to grow and entirely fill your soul.
LETTERS TO IGNATIUS SCHWIN DENHAMMER

[The Spirit of Jesus]

You are right, dear friend; if we want the spirit of Jesus to animate all the powers of our heart, we have to be dead to self and to every other creature. As I probably told you on another occasion, our great task is that of dying to self. This is the essence of all that we ought to do and strive for, helped by the all-powerful help of divine grace; and this grace is very strong in us through the mercy of our good Master. We ought always to follow the promptings of the divine Spirit who dwells in us.

The divine Spirit wants to be the soul of our soul, and we should let Him be absolute master over it, enabling Him to communicate to it His life and action. We should allow Him to act in us just as our body allows itself to be activated by the soul. Allow Him to give our soul whatever movement He desires to impart. But there is one difference: our body is necessitated by the actuation of the soul, whereas our soul has freely to accept the holy impulse of the Spirit of Jesus which dwells within. Our soul should be as it were lifeless, as our body is dead without our soul.

How blessed our condition and how great our holiness if we were thus dead to ourselves but alive through the divine Spirit! If our soul had no longer any taste except the one that is given by the divine Spirit! If it had no other desire, love, action than those given to it by the Holy Spirit! If we no longer loved anything, sought no more glory, felt no longer any joy or satisfaction, had no longer any will of our own, or any life but in and through Him! In such a condition no obstacles would block the way to perfection and the sanctification of our soul. On the contrary, if we let our own affections, volitions and activity be our sole guide and motive power, we obstruct and prevent the action of divine grace in our souls; we live a purely natural life.
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

[Holiness is Not Attained Through Personal Efforts
But Comes Only from God]

This, then, dear friend, is the essential principle for your conduct. Avoid violent efforts; do not rely on your own efforts to unite yourself more perfectly to God. The task of uniting our souls with God is not our task but that of our Lord. It is the Holy Spirit who has the role of developing greater or lesser perfection in us according to the divine plan and the degree of our correspondence with grace. Without His help, all our striving and labor will be useless and even be harmful; for the more you exert yourself in a natural way to cement that union with God the more self-willed you will become, and the activity of the Holy Spirit will be smaller as your natural activity increases. Yet it is the divine Spirit alone who can produce that holy and admirable union in its various degrees; our natural action and effort, on the contrary, can achieve nothing for that purpose.

Hence in the practice of the holy "presence of God" avoid tenseness and strain. Do not seek to propel your soul Godwards and to unite it with Him unless you feel within you a divine impulse that pushes you and, as it were, carries you off. In the presence of such an impulse, yield to it, but do not seek to run farther than the impulse prompts you to go. You will thus avoid acting by natural activity and will be obedient to divine direction.

I think that you understand in what sense you ought to avoid striving for divine union by personal efforts. Your task consists in facilitating the divine action of grace and keeping your soul in a constant readiness to obey the divine impulse with perfect fidelity. You will facilitate that divine action when you use the means ordinarily employed to remain recollected and thus expose yourself better to divine grace—for example, by observing the [seminary] rule, keeping silence, paying peaceful attention to God, thinking often of things that
LETTERS TO IGNATIUS SCHWINDENHAMMER

will move your heart, and considering our Lord and the most Holy Virgin in the various mysteries.

You will dispose your soul to divine action when you increasingly moderate your desires, curb and control your vivacity, gently confine yourself to supernatural sentiments, or at least carefully avoid yielding to natural affections, when you renounce wilful enjoyment of creatures, that is, refuse to surrender completely to the joys created by your relations with them, when you watch carefully over the pleasure which self-love finds in itself or in the excellent things which you discover in yourself, or in the esteem in which others hold you.

Be particularly on your guard against the various forms of self-love. Be indifferent in regard to things that concern yourself; forget yourself as much as possible so that the attention of your mind and the intention of your will may be truly "in God." If these are self-centered, they are not "in God."

[Moderate Your Self-Activity]

Another fundamental disposition which you need is habitual moderation of the activity of your mind. I spoke about this last year; hence I need not say much on this subject. Always preserve great mildness and gentleness of mind. Never permit your mind to become sour, rigid, tense. Remember the words of Holy Scripture: "He reaches powerfully from end to end and disposes all things gently."

March on, do things without being too much preoccupied with the work you are engaged in; give it only the attention which it requires; but your attention should not disturb the depths of your soul. Your soul should be only superficially affected to the degree of attention you have to give to the work in hand. It makes no difference how important any particular work may be; it ought never to disturb your interior
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

life. Your interior must belong to God alone and not to any external thing, whatever its nature. God alone must be the driving force in you, and He alone ought to act in you.

Remind yourself of the truth that the works of God are indeed His works. They are not ours. The thing we are expected to do is to take the proper steps according to the impulse and direction given us by God. Hence we ought to avoid all haste, agitation, all preoccupation and anxiety. Never act with precipitation. Wait for God’s promptings, and if God postpones giving them, remain peacefully in His presence. Don’t be so anxious to have God move you in the direction of your own ideas and likings. God can and will wait; why can’t you? And why shouldn’t you also desire to wait? Otherwise your eagerness will merely prove that you are self-seeking.

Rely always greatly on God and very little upon your own efforts. When you undertake something for God and for His holy love, conceive a strong desire to procure His glory by means of that work and to establish His reign in souls. May your soul be ablaze with fires of divine love. But do not crave success. Let this thought not enter into your mind and let no such ambition be the motive or end of your actions. Success will be pursued indirectly, but it is the glory of God and His divine love that must animate your desire, and this desire should be gentle and peaceful. I hope that our Lord will grant you the grace to deaden more and more your excessive eagerness and impetuosity of mind.

[No Self-Imposed Mortifications]

Lay down a rule for yourself and determine what precautions you ought to take for the good of your health. Avoid excess; be moderate in this care. You ought to know by this time what is truly harmful to your health; [in taking precautions] act, as it were, mechanically. When you happen to be ill, rejoice before God because you are able to suffer
something and do not become troubled. If trouble comes of its own accord, humble yourself before God and try to calm your mind rather than endeavoring to remedy that evil. Let such agitation then be considered a cross.

I do not advise you to practice bodily mortifications; our Lord does not demand them; moreover perfection does not consist in such things.

Accept joyfully the burden of the Seminary rule and the sufferings that are caused by men. Practice sobriety, poverty, that is, be indifferent to the possession of nice things. Do not seek things that will give you comfort; try not to relish keenly the pleasures occasioned by creatures.

[Adoration and Mental Prayer]

In your mental prayer pay special attention to adoration. If your adoration of God is fervent, the rest will also be fervent. Meditate on the mysteries as you have been doing. Nevertheless, if you have some particular taste for one or other mystery, dwell on it at greater length. Do not change the subject of your meditation every day.

The news you sent me makes me very happy. I will pray with all my heart for your intentions. Tell Mr. Burg that I do not forget him before the good Lord. My best regards to MM. Acker, Freyd and Kobès. Tell the last that his soul is particularly dear to me in our Lord, although I have never had the pleasure of seeing him in Strasbourg.

In the charity of Jesus and Mary I am,

Entirely yours,

Father Francis Libermann
Faithfulness to God will give you control over your emotions and result in perfect peace. Advice regarding his vocation.

Letter Two    La Neuville, May 9, 1842    Vol. 3, p. 189

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Confrere:

[Faithfulness to God Will Give You Control Over Your Emotions]

I wish I had a little more time to reply to all your questions, but I am very busy and a full answer to those questions would make this letter very long; so please don’t be angry with me for being relatively brief.

Thank our Lord for showing you what He wants you to do for your sanctification and what is the chief obstacle that stands in its way. It is true that your physical condition affects your moral dispositions and is the major cause of your agitations of mind; but this does not mean that you ought not to make peaceful efforts to calm yourself. You must aim at giving your soul more and more completely to God. You are capable of diminishing those agitations and attaining to a condition in which your soul will no longer be disturbed. You will attain this state of peace by interior renunciation and progressive curbing of your fiery emotions.

The greater your fidelity to God, the stronger your adherence to His love and the more perfect your detachment from the things that affect your sensibility, the easier will be your control over the emotions that are aroused through the senses. Organic agitations will then cease or at least
become much weaker, for they are occasioned or caused by a certain amount of susceptibility. When the soul is thus aroused, it gets away from its foundation, which is God, and although He is not far away, the soul allows itself to become agitated as soon as an emotion arises. This agitation takes place in the mind, although the will continues to tend toward its sovereign Love. The troubled mind then no longer sees its foundation in God and lets itself be carried away and cast into anxiety. If, on the contrary, you accustom yourself to flee to God in the midst of such agitation, your mind will have a support. Trouble and darkness will then no longer overcome it so easily, and the organic agitation will gradually vanish.

[Perfect Peace Results from Pure Love]

This, dear friend, is why you should always try to act in a gentle way and deaden all passionate movements. Purify the sentiments of your heart and establish your interior life on the foundation of perfect love. If you sincerely wish to acquire perfect peace, you need a love that is pure and free from all self-love.

The two vices that usually put the greatest obstacles in the way of our spiritual progress are self-love and a sort of tenderness toward ourselves. The latter is frequently a considerable impediment, and it prevents us from loving independently of sensibility. If it pleases God to reveal to you the nature of pure love, you will then realize how harmful it is to entertain self-love and that sort of tenderness toward self.

Aim at a life of prayerfulness, but strive for it in all gentleness, avoiding natural effort and strain. You recall what I told you regarding that matter, and you say rightly that we should not look beyond the present moment. Always endeavor to sanctify yourself in your present situation, and
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

do not seek to leave the particular spiritual state you are in, unless the good Lord demands it. . . .

[Advice Regarding His Vocation]

In regard to your vocation, it is my opinion that you should not remain in the world, for I feel certain that you are not made for such a life. On the other hand, you should not go into solitude either [by joining a contemplative order], as you proposed last year. Seek rather to join a group of fervent men who desire to serve God and labor for the salvation of souls. . . . The thing that still needs to be decided is whether you should join the Jesuits or come to us in order to go to the missions. You need not hurry that decision, for you are not yet leaving [the seminary]. . . . The good Lord is not telling me anything at this moment in regard to what choice you ought to make; wait and the matter will be settled later on. . . .

[Yours in the holy love of
Jesus and Mary,
FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMAN]

1The end of this letter is missing.
Thoughts about the approach of the priesthood and the death of his parents.

Letter Three  La Neuville, August 4, 1842  Vol. 3, p. 247

Praised be Jesus and Mary

Dear Confrere in Jesus Christ:

[Jesus, Priest and Victim, Living in You]

The greatest day of your life is getting nearer, for the Lord will soon raise you to His divine priesthood. Fill yourself therefore with a perfect love of sacrifice. The priestly spirit requires that he who offers the sacrifice should also offer himself together with the divine Victim. Jesus is the Victim whom you will offer, but the same Lord Jesus should also be a sacrificing priest in and through you. You ought, as it were, to disappear and the Son of God should take your place in you.

Jesus, thus "living in your soul," desires to share with you His divine life of sacrifice, which is inherent in His priesthood. Hence, just as Jesus never exercises the priestly function without immolating Himself to His Father—since there is not nor could there be any other victim that is truly pleasing to His eyes—so ought you not to immolate Jesus without immolating yourself together with Him.

[God Took Away Your Parents That You May be Entirely His]

And now what must I say to console you for the loss you have suffered [through the death of your parents]? Since you are to become a priest, our Lord will become
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your All and you will no longer need earthly consolations or support. It seems that God's goodness has desired to take everything away from you before you ascend to the priesthood in order that you may no longer possess anything on earth, in order that you will no longer be attracted to any worldly thing, but your life may be a life of sacrifice like that of Jesus in the Eucharist. For He is there to immolate Himself constantly for men and unite them intimately to Himself in order that, through Him and in Him, they may fulfill the highest duties of religion to His heavenly Father. This is what you will do at the holy altar.

Now, in order to accomplish this perfectly, you should no longer be a man according to the old Adam, a creature of earth and mire; but you should be a man according to Jesus Christ, a heavenly man. Hence our Lord wants you to forget your origin from Adam and all those [natural] desires and affections. Your soul must cling completely to God. No other principle should animate your thoughts, feelings and love than your new origin; you must now live only in, for and through Him who imparts and perfects in you that new conception and birth.

The Lord took away from you those who connected you with the tainted stock of Adam, in order that you might become a true priest according to the order of our great divine Melchizedec. You must be "without father, mother and genealogy; and have neither beginning of days nor end of life."

You ought no longer to have any personal views or tastes, no affections for the perishable things of this world. You must be immersed and, as it were, lost in the eternal Jesus without ever returning to a beginning or tending to an end. "Former things have passed away"; the reign of nature in you must come to an end. You have been a weak child long enough, living, at least partly, under the
influence of nature. You must henceforth become a man, a man in Jesus Christ through the divine priesthood with which He will clothe you. . . .

Don't worry about the interior condition of your soul. When you unexpectedly commit a fault, restore peace to your soul and gently continue your way before God, as if you had not been at fault. Put all your confidence in Jesus and Mary, in whom I am,

Entirely yours,

Father Francis Libermann

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Let God act in you as He pleases. By sending trials, He destroys your self-love. Patience in the matter of his vocation.

Letter Four La Neuville, November 25, 1842 Vol. 3, p. 346

Jesus, Mary, Joseph

Dear Confrere:

May God's will be the soul of your life.

I am not astonished that you do not get along well with Father Tisserant; he is not cut out to give you direction or to be useful to you. He told me almost nothing about your state of soul. I asked him to give me news about you; he replied that you had still some difficulties but that they would gradually fall away.

[Remain Before God Like Clay Before the Potter]

I am grateful to our good Master because He is giving you a little peace. I realize that it is not your vocation to
LETTERS TO CLERGY AND RELIGIOUS

remain at your present post, and I have always thought that you would not remain there. But allow God's hand to lead you. Please, dear friend, do not seek to hasten things that concern God. You should remain in the Lord's presence like clay before the potter. The workman does what he pleases with it: he beats it, presses it, and beats it again to make it supple. The clay offers no resistance; it leaves the potter perfect liberty to do with it what he wishes. The potter fashions a vase and it often happens that when it is half finished he breaks it up and reduces it to a shapeless mass. He then starts anew to make of it the particular vase he wants. The more the clay has been battered and crushed, the easier it is for the potter to achieve his purpose. That kind of clay is used to make the most beautiful vases. But clay that has not been sufficiently kneaded, serves only to make cheap pots and it will sometimes be put to common uses.

This parable is easy to understand and can readily be applied to spiritual things. Allow God full liberty to handle you; wait peacefully in a spirit of gentleness and patience until "God's moment" has arrived. If you were immediately in a position to fulfill your own desires, this would be harmful to you, even if what you do is in accord with God's will. Entertain a love for pains, crosses, and opposition on the part of others. Blessed is he whom the Lord tests and tries a little. You recall St. Paul's words; we spoke about them when we were walking in the garden of the Seminary of Strasbourg: "Tried virtue works out hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

[Trials Destroy Our Self-Love]

When divine charity fills our hearts we are happy in the midst of contradictions, for such temptations put us to the
LETTERS TO IGNATIUS SCHWINDENHAMMER

test. We are in need of being tried, otherwise our self-love will destroy that divine charity, or at least it will injure it and mingle imperfection with it.

In times when everything runs smoothly and nothing prevents our interior repose, we walk in peace, but this is but a peace of the senses which happen to be undisturbed. Meeting no opposition, our self-love is not aroused. We feel joy in belonging to our Lord, and follow therein our own desires. But self-love and affection for self which accompany the impulses of divine grace mingle their poison with that divine stimulus. In this way our works are a mixture of good and bad things; they are imperfect. The more we act in that way, the more our self-love and affection for self may develop. We may even permit them to become stronger than those impulses of grace. If that happens, we are in a bad way and almost incapable of regaining the upper hand.

Generally speaking, we can say that souls that are tranquil and exempt from the sort of opposition which you presently suffer remain in their imperfections, and their faults eventually take the upper hand. I repeat therefore that you are fortunate because God deigns to put you in a state of embarrassment and trouble like a dislocated limb. I call that situation a “test” or “trial”, for it tests and tries your soul. If you are faithful, you will greatly increase your strength, you will make constant acts of surrender to God, of humiliation before your Lord, of recourse to Mary, of gentle and peaceful submission to your present condition. Patience will be the fruit of your trial, an interior patience which will gradually make you impassive in God’s presence: “Patience has the perfect work.”

Let me assure you that patience constitutes the great perfection of souls that belong entirely to God. Such patience works out hope, which is based on the divine charity with which those souls are filled. For, seeing ourselves in
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affliction, oppressed by contradictions on the part of men, we cast ourselves at the feet of our Lord; infused charity does its work in us; self-love and tender affection for self have to yield, and gradually disappear; and charity finally gains the upper hand. Our soul then finds no longer any support in self; it is driven by interior charity and it surrenders to our Lord with complete confidence; it places all its hope in Him. And this hope never confounds, for the charity that fills our soul overpowers it and plunges us into Jesus, thus causing us to possess all that we hope for.

Be firm, then, in the way of the Lord. Surrender to Jesus and fear nothing. You belong to Him and He to you. What, then, can you possibly fear? Don’t reason, don’t examine, but give yourself to Jesus, permitting Him to destroy in you the old structure of nature and gradually to establish His reign in your soul.

[Avoid Haste in the Matter of Your Vocation]

You are in no way doing wrong when you occupy yourself with the question of your vocation. This, in fact, accords with the order of God’s will; but you should do this peacefully and lovingly and avoid acting hastily. I do not think that the time for making a decision has already arrived. Don’t be afraid of Father Desgenettes. If the delay in the decision will cause him, at a later date, to feel your loss more keenly, the good Lord will compensate him for it. Father Desgenettes has had many troubles far more severe than that [of losing a good assistant]. Moreover, we must not take men into consideration in regard to such matters; the good Lord will make up for everything. When we are too anxious to prevent one difficulty we usually cast ourselves into greater ones. On the contrary, if we wait for God’s “own moment,” His goodness will arrange things in such a way that all obstacles disappear.
LETTERS TO IGNATIUS SCHWINDENHAMMER

So remain in peace and say, “I have waited for the Lord and He has taken care of me.” Wait for the Lord, and at a later time He will attend to the matter. Your various “attractions” are genuine, and I know that you have had them for a long time: the attraction for retreat, for becoming a guide of souls, for relations with simple people, for being away from the world. But wait for God’s own time, full of gentleness, peace, humility of heart, and confidence that is saturated by love. I hope to be able to visit Paris soon; we shall then speak at length about those questions. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere.

Entirely yours in the charity of Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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If your irresolution continues, you should not join our Congregation. It is against God’s will to worry about what kind of work you would be expected to do if you were to join us.

Letter Five August 2, 1843 Vol. 4, p. 297

Dear Confrere:

[Your Indecisiveness Makes Me Hesitate to Admit You to the Novitiate]

I am sorry to have caused you grief and anxiety. This affair is certainly important, very important, but this is precisely the reason for my delay. It is true also that I have been very busy, but it is not on this account that I have waited
so long. The true reason was my embarrassment, for I did not see things clearly, although I had had a clear view before, as I explained to you in detail.

I sought counsel from our good Lord to find out whether I should spend two days in Paris, and it seemed to me that this was not in accordance with His will. Again, I have not been well for a few days, and this is why you did not receive my reply yesterday or this morning.

The thing that embarrasses me in regard to your vocation is that you have had additional hesitations since the time I gave you a considered opinion. I would not want you to come and join us for anything in the world if it were contrary to God’s will. . . . You know well, dear friend, that I did not act hastily. I waited several months before stating my opinion. And now, in spite of all that, your uncertainties have reappeared, and it is this that embarrasses me. If you are uncertain now, must we not expect that you will have such uncertainties at a later date? Ought we not to expect that you will be uncertain at the end of your novitiate?

[With such an attitude] you will suffer during your novitiate and will not advance in perfection, and at its end you may have to begin all over again, a thing that is forbidden by our Rules. We are not permitted to let you commit yourself and to admit you into the Congregation if those hesitations are still present. The general rule is that before one enters the novitiate one is already decided. This ought to be so especially in your case, for we have to expect that your irresolution will still exist at the end of the novitiate as well as at its beginning.

This now is what seems to me in accord with God’s will: make a novena to the most Holy Heart of Mary. If at its end your irresolution is gone, pursue your vocation. If your hesitations remain, follow the ordinary way of divine Providence, [that is] remain in your diocese or in Paris. . . .
I received a letter from Father Pinault regarding your problem. Judging from his letter, he misunderstood your problem; at least, this seems to be the case. The life which you would lead here would be quite normal. You would live in retirement; you would occupy yourself with your own sanctification, and help in the formation of our little society, its direction, and the formation of its novices. Besides this, you would have a certain amount of ministry in the neighborhood; its extent would depend on God's will. You have tried to foresee the kind of ministry that you will have to exercise; such an approach is irregular, as I have already told you. It is not possible to foretell such a thing regarding any place to which you might be sent.

You should abandon yourself to God's guidance. He alone is the Lord of the vineyard. He chooses His laborers when and in the way He wishes. Your worry [about the sort of ministry you will exercise] is not in accordance with God's will. We should always remember our incapacity, but on the other hand we must always be ready before our Master for any work that He might wish to give us. After He has given us a task, we must apply ourselves fully to it to cultivate the small portion of the vineyard entrusted to us and make it produce fruit. This is a fundamental lesson I want to give you; woe to him who fails to follow it! He runs the danger of following his own mind and doing harm both to himself and to the souls in his charge.

You "feel an attraction for the work of direction in seminaries," etc., but you are not permitted to tell your bishop that you prefer this or that. It is not good and not in conformity with good order to state your likings unless the bishop asks you to manifest them. You should deliver yourself blindly into his hands if you desire to remain in his
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diocese, or if he judges it proper to retain you in it, and you ought then to go where you are sent without offering objections.

This I call acting according to the ordinary way of divine Providence. I know well that, unfortunately, there are many priests who do manifest their likes and wishes; but this is also one of the greatest difficulties in the administration of dioceses, and it must be a source of great embarrassment for bishops. I don't think that this is merely a matter of perfection; rather it seems to me that it is actually a fault when a priest proposes his own likings to his bishop without being asked to reveal them. Examine all this in God's sight; it belongs to Him to tell you in the depths of your soul what He wants of you. . . .

Adieu, dear confrere. Pardon me for delaying my reply.

Entirely yours in Jesus and Mary,

FATHER FRANCIS LIBERMANN

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The bad news we are getting from Africa shows that God does not want us to rely on ourselves but solely on Him.

Letter Six  Paris, November 20, 1851  Vol. 13, p. 379

Dear Confrere:

We have just received another piece of very bad news from Galam. Father Arlabosse, who became ill at Bakel, was taken to Saint-Louis in Senegal and died there. I do not know exactly when he became ill nor the date of his death. . . .

1Father Schwindenhammer entered the novitiate a few weeks after this letter.
You know that I have had constant anxiety about that mission since the departure of Father Arlabosse. This fervent confrere had formed wrong ideas about that country; he told us that it had a very healthy climate. He had scarcely left when I learned that Galam is the most unhealthy spot in Africa. Hence I am not surprised to receive that bad news, but this has filled my heart with sorrow.

The thing that astonishes me most in all that has happened to us in that holy and crucifying mission [of Africa] is that the blows are always struck at the confreres that happen to be outstanding in ability. Father Arlabosse is the twelfth missionary whom God has seen fit to call away from us on those African coasts. Well, ten of them were the most capable men we had, and I am not including Father Allard, who nevertheless was not without talent.

This thought might seem to give us good reason for deep sorrow, but if we consider it properly we shall on the contrary feel greatly consoled, for the hand of God is clearly seen in all this. He is not here acting according to the ordinary ways of His providence, but in view of special designs that are hidden from our eyes, and we have the duty to adore and bless Him.

One thing, however, stands clearly revealed in His manner of treating us: He wants to maintain us in lowliness; He does not want us to indulge in lofty ambitions. He does not want us to base our works on ourselves and on the means that are in our hands. God alone must be the foundation of the work He desires to accomplish with the use of instruments that are indeed poor but generous, full of self-renunciation, and persevering amidst all sufferings, opposition and dangers. We must be docile, obedient and full of the religious spirit, full also of unshakable confidence in God alone. I feel certain that He will cause us to adopt such an attitude even if for this purpose He has to tear our hearts to pieces.
If anyone of our beloved students seems to lose heart on account of that bad news and other news that might follow, do not hesitate to reassure him. Tell him that we will never send any one to Guinea whose heart is not full of fortitude and courage, ready to meet the greatest dangers....

In Jesus and Mary,

Francis Libermann, Superior