

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I, A: SKETCH MAP OF BELGIUM

This shows the main places connected with Canon van Crombrughe and the Daughters of Mary and Joseph

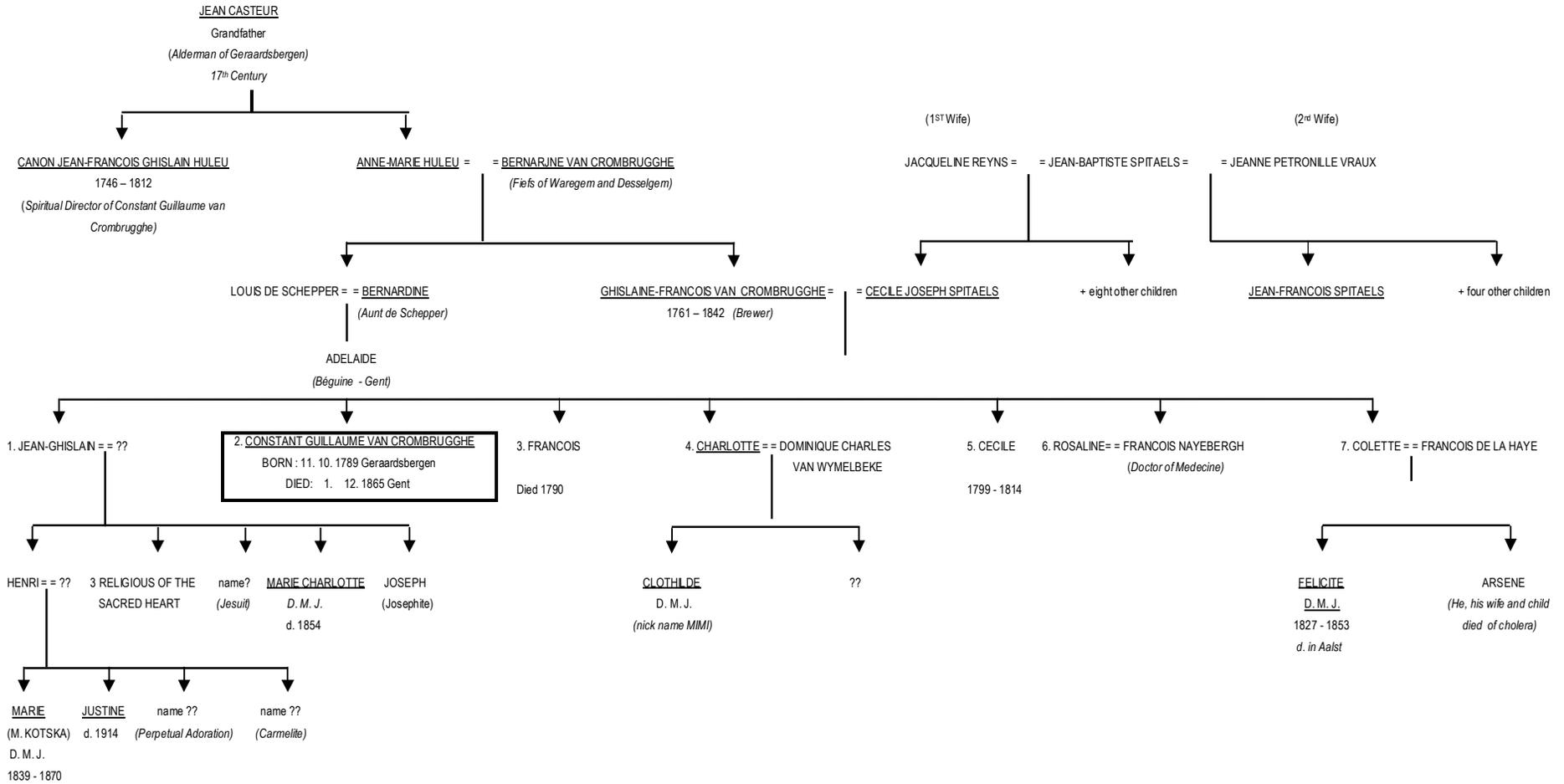


APPENDIX I, B: SIMPLIFIED CHART OF THE VAN CROMBRUGGHE AND SPITAEELS FAMILIES

Note : People mentioned in the text are underlined.

VAN CROMBRUGGHE FAMILY
(GENT 1600)

SPITAEELS FAMILY (*Family of businessmen*)
(GERAARDSBERGEN 1568)



1. BOUSSEN, François-René, Bishop of Brugge, 1834-1848.

Born: Furnes, 1774; died: Brugge, 1848.

From 1806 to 1832, Bousсен was secretary to the Diocese of Gent. In 1834, he was named to the new Diocese of Brugge. His episcopate was marked by his wise government and his kindness. He was noted, too, for his gentle and friendly manner. He was a life-long friend of van Crombrugge.

(see: PUTTE Van de, "Bousсен, François-René", in B.N., Vol. 2, 1868, col. 866 - 870).

2. BRACQ, Henri-François, Bishop of Gent, 1864-1888.

Born: 1804; died: Gent, 1888.

Studied at Aalst under van Crombrugge. Ordained a priest in 1827. Bracq had taught in the seminary in Gent until 1864, when he was named Bishop. At his consecration as Bishop of Gent, van Crombrugge gave him the pectoral cross of Bishop de Broglie. As Bishop, he was especially interested in education and the development of religious communities.

(see: SIMON A., "Bracq, H.-F.", in B.N., Vol.31, 1962, col.115-118).

3. BROGLIE, Maurice-Jean-Madeleine, Prince de, Bishop of Gent 1807-1821.

Born: Chateau de Broglie, Normandy, 1766; Died: Paris, 1821. Ordained priest in Trèves, Germany, in 1792, having completed his seminary at Saint-Sulpice. In 1801 he went to Paris, under Napoleon and was made his chaplain. In 1805 he was made Bishop of Acqui in Piémont, from where he was translated to Gent in 1807. He continued the work of reorganisation of his predecessor, Bishop Fallot de Beaumont, especially in the area of education. In 1811, he took part in the Council of Bishops and was imprisoned for his outspoken stance against Napoleon. Released in 1814, he once again tried to get the Colleges onto a sound basis, among them Aalst, where he appointed van Crombrugge. Once more exiled, this time under the Dutch regime in 1817, he died in exile, in Paris.

(See the introduction to DE BROGLIE, M., Evêque de Gand, Recueil des mandements, lettres pastorales, instructions et autres documents, Gand, Poelman-de Pape, 1843),

4. FALLOT de BEAUMONT, Etienne André François de Paule, Bishop of Gent, 1802-1807.

Born: Avignon, 1750; died: Paris, 1835.

Fallot de Beaumont came from an aristocratic family, later entering the clerical state. He eventually became the Vicar General of Blois, then co-adjutor Bishop of Vaison, in Avignon. Because of the Civil Constitution concerning the clergy in France, he left for the Papal States in Italy. In 1801 he resigned his bishopric; in 1802 Napoleon appointed him to Gent. The canonical nomination followed. He reorganised the Diocese, especially the parishes and the education of the clergy. In 1807 he was transferred to the

See of Plaisance and this was the beginning of a new phase in his life. In 1811 at the Council of Bishops he accepted the ideas of Napoleon and was part of the deputation that asked the Pope for concessions. By 1815 he was chaplain to Napoleon. He retired in Paris in 1816 where he stayed until death.

(see: VANDER MEERSCH, "Fallot de Beaumont, Etienne André François de Paule", in B.N., Vol.6, 1878, col. 880 - 881).

5. FENELON, François de Salignac de la Mothe.

Born: 1651; died: 1715.

Entered the seminary of Saint-Sulpice in 1672 and was ordained in 1675. Eventually appointed Archbishop of Cambrai, his earlier written work included Traité de L'Education des Filles, which is widely quoted by van Crombrugghe, in his educational principles. A very sensitive man, he was drawn into the controversy with Bossuet concerning semi-quietism, and his teaching was put into question regarding the spiritual life and prayer.

(see: VARILLON, F., Fénelon et le pur amour, Paris, Ed. du Seuil, 1957).

6. LAFAYETTE, Marie Joseph Paul Yves Gilbert de Motier, Marquis de, Soldier and Statesman.

Born: Auvergne, France, 1737; died: Paris, 1834.

As a young military officer he went to aid the Americans in their fight for Independence. In 1779 he returned to France and eventually in 1787 won a seat in the Assembly. He advocated liberal measures, while opposing the Jacobins and supporting the restoration of the monarchy. In 1789, he was made the commander of the National Guard by the king and in that office he eventually became the warder of the King Louis XVI, when he and his family were taken prisoner. At that time he was very popular with the people and in fact held responsibility for power in the country. His popularity waned and he eventually retired from public life in 1791.

(see: METZGER, C. H., "Lafayette, Marquis de", Vol.8, 1966, p. 316 - 317).

7. LAMARTINE, Alphonse, Marie Louis de Prat de, Poet.

Born: Mâcon, Burgundy, 1790; died: Paris, 1869.

As a young man (1809 - 1811), he was educated by the Fathers of the Faith in Amiens. He is considered one of the early Romantic French poets, especially for "Les Méditations". He was interested in philosophy and particularly in the philosophy of India, an unusual interest during that period. During the years his faith had wavered, but towards the end of his life he experienced a conversion and became a Christian once more: he expresses this in his poem, "A la croix". He is usually thought to be one of the better Romantic poets.

(see: LOMBARD, C. M., "Lamartine, Alphonse Marie Louis de Prat de" in N.C.E., Vol.8, p. 337 - 338).

8. LAMENNAIS, Hughes-Félicité-Robert de, Priest.

Born: 1782; died: 1854.

Until 1832, Lamennais was the leader of the French Ultramontanists. He followed the teaching of people such as de Maistre and de Bonald, which led him to allying Catholicism and Liberalism. He began the paper "L'Avenir" which was the voice of Catholic liberalism. His work came under increasing criticism as being too extreme. In 1831 he met with Pope Gregory XVI to explain his position. However, the encyclical "Mirare Vos" was published in 1832 condemning the alliance of Catholics with liberals. Lamennais became cynical in his despair at ever being able to explain his position. He became increasingly embittered, especially when his bishop made him repeat an act of submission four times. By 1837 he had abandoned the Church. The last years of his life were spent working on social issues and in defense of democracy.

(see: BOUDENS, R., "Lamennais, Hughes-Félicité-Robert de", in N.C.E., Vol.8, 1967, p.347-349).

9. LEBLANC, Pierre Charles-Marie, Father of the Faith /Jesuit.

Born: Caen, 1774; died: Namur, 1851.

Leblanc joined the army as a young man, serving in various parts of Europe. In 1793 he heard of de Tournely's new society and left the army to go and join them. He was with the Fathers of the Sacred Heart through all their years of difficulty and eventually became a Father of the Faith. He returned with Joseph Varin to establish the Society in Paris. He became the first director of the new College in Amiens, until 1807 when he was forced to leave the staff. In 1814 he became a Jesuit and was sent to Belgium to re-establish the Society of Jesus there. He worked very closely with Bishop de Broglie. In 1836 he retired to Namur as confessor where he stayed until his death.

(see: GUIDEE, A., "Le Père Charles Leblanc", in Vie du R. P. Joseph Varin, Paris, Poussielgue-Rusand, 1854, pp. 159 ff.).

10. NOOT, Henri-Charles-Nicolas, VALADER, Lawyer.

Born: Bruxelles, 1731; died: Strombeck, Belgium, 1827.

A lawyer licensed from Leuven, he was advocate to the Council of Brabant. In 1787, after the edicts of Joseph II, he became involved in the work for independence for the Lowlands. He was a rather audacious type of person, who joined forces with Vander Mersch to achieve independence, but the alliance failed because of the argument between the two men and their followers. In 1796 he retired and would never again speak about his place in the revolution.

(see: DUCHESNE, E., "Noot, H.C.N. Vander", in B.N., Vol.15, 1899, col. 835 - 865).

11. RYCKEWAERT, Augustin-Joseph, Professor of theology and Canon Law, Gent. President of the Seminary 1829-1836.

Born: 1771; died: Gent, 1836.

Followed his course of rhetoric in the College of Tournai, Philosophy in Leuven, and the seminary in Ypres. He was ordained priest in Mechelen in 1797, after which he worked for the Diocese of Ypres. In 1806, after parish experience, he was appointed professor of theology at Gent. Bishop de Broglie appointed him his theologian for the Council of Bishops of 1811, for which he made a study of Church-State relations. In 1813 during the persecution of the Gent seminary he was imprisoned. After the return of Bishop de Broglie in 1814, he was named a titular Canon. He was one of the administrators for the Diocese when it was without a Bishop from 1821 to 1829. In 1829 he was appointed president of the seminary. Since 1825 he had been writing against Lamennais and warning of the dangers of this type of liberalism. He was a theologian known for his erudition as well as being considered a holy priest.

(see: SCHREVEL, A.C.de, "Ryckewaert, A.-J.", in B.N., Vo1.20, col. 640 - 650).

12. SAINT-BAUZILLE, Jacques-Louis de la Brue de, Bishop.

Born: 1760; died: 1832.

In 1813, Napoleon named de la Brue de Saint-Bauzille as Bishop of Gent. The Vicar General, de Meulenare, as well as the professors from the seminary, especially Ryckewaert (see above), refused to accept the appointment. Bishop de Broglie refused to resign from the episcopacy of Gent. Saint-Bauzille had, during the revolution in France, emigrated to Bavaria, and after the defeat of Napoleon he returned there, where he received the title of Bishop 'in partibus'. He eventually returned to France where he died.

(see: VANDERMOERE, J., Récit de la Persécution endurée par les Séminaristes du Diocèse de Gand en 1813 et 1814, Gand, Vander Schleden, 1863).

13. SAMBUCY, Louis de, Father of the Faith.

Died: Paris, 1848.

De Sambucy had been at St-Sulpice with Charles and Maurice de Broglie, Varin and de Tournely. He eventually became a Father of the Faith, and went as a teacher to Amiens. Varin (see below) asked him to help both the Sisters of Julie Billiart and also the Society of the Sacred Heart. Unfortunately in both Congregations there were eventual difficulties of a very painful nature between them and de Sambucy. When many of the other Fathers of the Faith entered the Jesuits in 1814, de Sambucy did not join them. He eventually became counsellor to the Ambassador in Rome and secretary to the Sacred Congregation for France. He returned to Paris as a titular Canon of Notre Dame in 1838, and died there ten years later.

(see: BLIN DE BOURDON, F., Vie de Julie Billiart, Rome, P.U.G., 1978 and PIERAERTS et DESMET, Vie et Oeuvres du Chanoine van Crombrughe, Bruxelles, 1937, l'Édition Universelle, p. 70 - 71)

14. VALNETIJNE, Charles, Jesuit.

Born: Brugge.

As a young man he had helped van Crombrughe in the College at Aalst, both as a teacher and as spiritual director. In later years, during the 1840's, he became the spiritual director in Melle, the Josephite College. He was a very close friend and collaborator of van Crombrughe throughout his life.

(see: PIERAERTS et DESMET, Vie et Oeuvres du Chanoine van Crombrughe, Bruxelles, l'Edition Universelle, p. 191 - 192).

15. VAN DER MERSCH, Jean-André, Soldier.

Born: Menin, 1734; died: Dadizeele, 1792.

Went into the army as a young man, serving first for France then for Austria. He had wanted to fight in America as well but was not accepted. He had a long military career, returning to Belgium in 1779 as a Colonel. Vonck (see below) asked him to lead the refugee army that had established itself in the Netherlands. He accepted and led the battle for independence against the Austrians in 1789. In 1791 he was afflicted with premature old age and died in 1792.

(see: LINDEN, H. Vander, "Van der Mersch", in B.N., Vol.14, 1897, col. 590 - 595).

16. VARIN, Joseph Désiré d'Ainville, Father of the Faith / Jesuit.

Born: 1769; died: 1850.

Student at Saint-Sulpice with Charles de Broglie (brother of Maurice, future Bishop of Gent) and Eléanor de Tournely. He joined them shortly after their founding of the "Fathers of the Sacred Heart" and went with them to Antwerpen. After the death of de Tournely he eventually became superior of the small society. It was under him that the Society joined with the group of Nicholas Paccanari to form the "Fathers of the Faith". Varin returned to Paris in 1801, and was superior of the group in France. He was responsible for opening Lyon and Amiens. Varin was particularly responsible for helping Madeleine Sophie Barat with the foundation of the Society of the Sacred Heart, which followed the inspiration of de Tournely. Varin was of great support to her during all the years of difficulty with de Sambucy (see above). He was also responsible for helping Julie Billiart and her first companions. He continued helping these Congregations, after becoming a Jesuit in 1814. He was a man who lived a very deep interior life and helped others to do the same. His favourite expression was "How good God is:", "Que Dieu est bon:"

(see: GUIDEE, A., Vie du R.P. Joseph Varin, Paris, Poussielgue-Rusand, 1854).

17. VELDE, Jean-François van de, Bishop of Gent, 1829-1838.

Born: Boom, 1779; died: Gent, 1838.

Van de Velde came from a middle-class family. He studied humanities near Antwerpen and went to the seminary there. He was ordained a priest by Bishop van de Velde de Melroy (see below) in 1802. Before being named a Bishop he was in parish work and was later parish priest of St. Laurent. After he was named to Gent, he worked particularly at re-establishing the Colleges in Gent, Aalst and Geraardsbergen. He was the Bishop who encouraged van Crombrughe and the other priests from the, Diocese to accept their elected places in the first National Assembly.

(see: CLAEYS-BOUAERT, "Velde, Van de", in B.N., Vol. 26, col. 537 - 545).

18. VELDE DE MELROY, Jean-Baptiste-Robert, Baron van de, Bishop of Ruremonde.

Born: Brussels, 1743; died: Ruremonde, 1824.

A lawyer, licensed from Leuven, Velde de Melroy entered the seminary at Mechelen and was ordained 1769. He was an ecclesiastical councillor and Provost of the Chapter in 1782. He was made Bishop of Ruremonde in 1794, but at the time of the Battle of the Fleurus was exiled to the edge of his Diocese. He received a pension from Francis II, Emperor of Austria. Eventually he helped the Archbishop of Mechelen, especially with ordinations and confirmations, and thus was the Bishop who ordained Constant van Crombrughe.

(see: VERHAEGEN,P., "Velde de Melroy, J.-B.-R., Baron de", in B.N., Vol.26, 1936 -1938, col. 558 - 560).

19. VOLDER, Joseph Ghislain de, Professor of Scripture.

Born: Gent, 1770; died: Gent, 1820.

De Volder followed the course of studies at the Theresian College, Gent, then in Douai and finally obtained his license in theology from Leuven. He was named secretary to the Bishop and then in 1805, professor of Scripture in the Gent seminary. During the persecution of the seminary both he and his brother François, also a professor (of theology) in Gent, were imprisoned. When he was released he was named a titular Canon, member of the synod and member of the episcopal council. He died rather suddenly, having only taught for a few years.

(see: SMET,J.J.de, "De Volder,J.-G.", in B.N., Vol.X, 1876, Col. 846 - 847).

20. VONCK, Jean-François, Lawyer.

Born: Baerdegem, 1743; died: Lille, 1792.

He studied with the Jesuits in Brussels and at the law faculty of Leuven. A lawyer to the Council of the Brabant, in 1788, under the Austrian domination, he decided to organise resistance. He began to publish and took

the models of the governments of America, Holland and France. He was the real organiser of the revolution. He was already working with Vander Noot, when he asked the help of Van der Mersch. Vonck and Van der Mersch were similar in their ideals, both democrats and patriots. Eventually, because of his criticism of Vander Noot, the alliance failed. He was a moderate, and considered a great citizen.

(see: TASSIER,S., "Vonck, J.-F.", in B.N., Vol. 26, 1936 - 1938, col. 822 - 833).

APPENDIX III, B: OUTLINE OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1633			Foundation of small lay community at Mouscron with ecclesial approval
1780	Joseph II Emperor of Austria		
1787	Lowland Estates lost their autonomy.		
1789	December: independence. United Belgian Estates.	October: birth of Constant van Crombrughe (11. x)	
1790	End of the United Belgian Estates. Lafayette in power in Paris. Leopold II, Emperor of Austria.		
1792	Francis II, Emperor of Austria.		
1793	France annexed Lowlands after Battle of Fleurus. Founded: Fathers of the Sacred Heart.		
1797	Jacobin Coup d’Etat, France. 19 th Fructidor: oath of allegiance. Death of Eléanor de Tournely.		
1799	November: Napoleon in power. Death of Pius VI at Valence. Union of Fathers of the Sacred Heart with Paccanari	Began teaching catechism.	
1800	Varin went to Paris		
1801	Concordat between France and the Pope. Fathers of the Faith at Lyon.		
1802	Reorganisation of the educational system in Belgium. Fathers of the Faith at Amiens	Pensionnat de Wilhous	
1803		Pensionnat de M. de Woulf	
1804	Napoleon declared Emperor. Sellier ordained priest.		
1805	Battle of Trafalgar.	School in Amiens, France, with the Fathers of the Faith.	
1806		Amiens moved to Montdidier. Decision to become a priest.	

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1807	Defeat of Russia by Napoleon. Fathers of the Faith sent away from the school.	Parents purchased “Onze lieve Vrouw op de Oudenberg”.	
1808	Napoleon occupied Rome.	Responsible for the Choir School boys.	
1809	Pius VII taken prisoner. Papal States annexed.	Seminary in Gent.	
1811	National Council of Bishops. Bishop de Broglie imprisoned.	Subdiaconate Diaconate.	
1812	Pius VII taken to Fontainbleau. French lost the Russian Campaign.	Ordination to the priesthood.	
1813	De la Brue de Saint-Bauzille appointed to Gent by Napoleon. Persecution in Gent seminary.	Mouscron parish.	
1814	Napoleon abdicated. Belgium under William of Orange, Netherlands. De Broglie freed from prison. Pius VII returns to Rome.	April – Kortrijk. June – Heusden. September – Aalst Principal of College.	
1815	Flanders – economic chaos. Growth of Church – State disagreement, Belgium.	Speeches on education. Uncle, Huleu died.	
1816	Government office for Church business.		
1817	Economic chaos. Famine in Lowlands. De Broglie exiled to France.	Founded Congregations – DMJ’s and Brothers of Saint Joseph.	March 6: foundation, Aalst. Colette de Brandt, Mère Séculière.
1818	Report required on all Religious Institutes. Gent under Ryckewaert and Goethals.	Opened lace-workshop and Sunday School at Geraardsbergen. First letter to the DMJ’s and the Josephites.	Opened Geraardsbergen, Mme. Van Crombrughe, Mère Séculière. First official letter and Rule. Took fourth vow of education of the poor.
1819	Setting up of national Schools.	Aalst College grew in importance.	
1820	De Mean appointed Bishop of Gent by William of Orange.	Modified teaching methods of the Brothers.	Sunday School opened in Geraardsbergen. Sister Antoinette entered.
1821	Reorganisation of all schools. Death of Bishop de Broglie.	Publication “Manuel de la jeunesse Chrétienne”.	No records kept.

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1822	Proposed Concordat Holland-Rome.	Josephites' first statutes submitted to the government.	
1823	Death of Pius VII	Bought "Pausipone" near Aalst.	
1824	Difficulties increased for teaching religious.		
1825	Belgium lost freedom of education and of press.	Spokesman for the diocese of Gent. Forced to close the College. Director of "Le Catholique des Pays Bas".	
1826		Diocesan spokesman with Archdiocese of Mechlen. Mother died.	
1827	Economic prosperity. Concordat William and Leo XII		Small community Belleghem founded by M. L' Abbé Robb and Julie Herbau.
1828	Union of Catholics and Liberals.		
1829	Van de Velde appointed Bishop of Gent.	Member of the Diocesan Council	
1830	Belgian independence, Leopold I, King.	Elected to National Assembly by Aalst. Approval of Josephite Rule. Named Canon of Saint Bavon. Moved to Gent. Synodal examiner.	1830 Rule, approved by Bishop, feast of St. Teresa. 22 sisters. Joined by Mouscron community. Sister Julie Herbau entered.
1831	Election Gregory XVI	On Royal commission for prisons. Director for religious. Diocesan Commission for education. 7 letters. (**) (**) The number of letters given hereafter refer to the extant letters written to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.	Mouscron opened as DMJ. Belleghem. Maldegghem. Aloÿse Bruycher entered. 6 professed. Julie Herbau first Superior General.
1832	Encyclical "Mirare Vos".	18 letters	Separation began with Geraardsbergen. Opened Waeken, Brugge. 5 professed. Flore Delhaye entered.
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1832	Encyclical "Mirare Vos".	18 letters	Separation began with Geraardsbergen. Opened Waeken, Brugge. 5 professed. Flore Delhaye entered.
1833		16 letters.	Began nursing in Geraardsbergen. 5 professed.

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1834	Boussen Bishop of Brugge	Leaves Diocesan Council. 29 letters.	Definitive separation, Zusters van Maria en Josef, Sr. Antoinette Sup. General. DMJ 38 sisters. 4 professed including Flore Delhaye, Olympiade Derville. 2 died.
1835		30 letters.	8 professed.
1836	Belgium accepted loss of Luxembourg and Limburg.	47 letters.	1 professed.
1837	Sterckx appointed <u>Cardinal</u> Archbishop of Mechlen.	Held chapter of all Josephites, settled their name. Time of possible spiritual darkness. 48 letters.	Separation of Sisters of St. Joseph, Brugge, trial period. Opened Brussels and Mechelen. 2 professed, 1 died.
1838	Crisis in Belgian wool industry. Holland accepted Belgium. Delebecque Bishop of Gent.	Returns to Diocesan Council. 72 letters.	Death of Aloyse Bruycher. Definitive division, Julie Superior General (Brugge), Olympiade Derville vicar of DMJ's who now have 53 sisters. 4 professed, 1 died.
1839		45 letters.	Death of Bathilde Delhaye, sister of Flore. 4 professed, 4 died.
1840	Treaty of Belgium With France and Netherlands.	Introduced cycle of business studies at Melle. Revision started of DMJ Constitutions. 62 letters.	Olympiade Derville first elected Superior General. Mechelen becomes Mother-House. 4 professed, 2 died. Poor school at Mechelen.
1841		29 letters.	6 professed. 1 died.
1842		Opened Leuven with Josephites. Working mostly with the Josephites. Father died. 32 letters.	Flore Delhaye first made a local superior. Death of Clothilde Minne. 25 years celebration. 65 names inscribed of whom 12 were dead. 5 professed, 2 died.
1843	Church / State collaboration regarding education.	Intensive work on the Constitutions. 19 letters.	9 professed.
1844		16 letters.	Approbation of Rule by the Archbishop of Mechelen. 2 professed.

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1845	Famine in Belgium	Josephites in Melle, Brussels, Tirlmont and Leuven. 13 letters.	4 professed.
1846	Liberal Congress. Election of Pius IX.	13 letters.	Poor school in Brussels. 5 professed.
1847		Precentor of the Cathedral Chapter. 7 letters.	1 professed.
1848	Austria and Prussia ended hostility with Belgium. Flight of Pius IX to Gaeta. Francis Joseph I, Emperor of Austria.	Promoted the Society of St Vincent de Paul. 13 letters.	2 professed.
1849		Very active period. 6 letters.	Olympiade Derville re-elected Superior General. 4 professed.
1850	New laws in Belgium regarding secondary education.	9 letters.	1 died.
1851		13 letters.	Death of Catherine Dal and Emélie Lecroart, both in Mouscron from the original community. 3 professed, 2 died.
1852	Russia accepted Belgium.	12 letters.	Death of Colombo Verduyn. 3 professed, 2 died. New free school opened in Mechelen.
1853		38 letters.	Death of Félicité van Crombrughe, niece of the Founder. 1 professed, 2 died.
1854		24 letters.	8 professed, 2 died. Visit of Duke and Duchess of Brabant, Mechelen.
1855	Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.	29 letters.	Death of Marie-Anne de Ponthieux, first novice-mistress. Raphaëlle Becq professed with 3 others; 3 died.
1856		24 letters.	Death of Colette de Brandt, who had helped in the foundation and been Mère Séculière. New free school opened in Brussels. Opening at Chaussée d'Haecht. 9 professed.

YEAR	GENERAL – BELGIUM	VAN CROMBRUGGHE	DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH
1857		Re-organisation of study programme at Melle. Began to be ill. 26 letters.	
1858		27 letters.	Flore Delhaye elected Superior General. Clothilde van Wymelbeke made novice-mistress. 4 professed.
1859		20 letters.	Year of common second novitiate. 10 professed, 2 died.
1860	Defeat of Papal Troops by the Sardinians.	21 letters.	Ended year of second novitiate. Sent address of sympathy to Pius IX. 1 died.
1861	Rome proclaimed the capital of Unified Italy. Victor Emmanuel II, King.	Revision of both Constitutions. 32 letters.	Began revision of the Constitutions preparatory to sending them to Rome for approval. 11 professed, 2 died.
1862		34 letters.	4 professed.
1863		Retired from public activity. Named Dean of the Chapter and Archdeacon. 41 letters.	3 professed, 1 died. Sent text of Constitutions to Rome for approval.
1864	Syllabus Errorum of Pius IX, condemning liberal teaching.	21 letters.	Decree of praise, July 30, 3 professed, 2 died.
1865	Bishop Bracq named to Gent.	Gave de Broglie's episcopal cross to Bracq. 29 letters. Died, December 1 st at Gent.	Death of Julie Herbau. 2 professed, 2 died.
1867	Death of Cardinal Sterckx.		50 years of Institute.
1869	First Vatican Council.		First house opened outside Belgium: Coloma, Croydon, England, consecrated to the Sacred Heart.
1870	Proclamation of Papal infallibility.		
1878	Death of Pius IX. Election of Leo XIII.		
1891			Definitive approbation by Rome of the Congregation and the Constitutions.

N. B. The population of Belgium in 1800 was 3 million
And in 1900, 6.7 million, an increase of 123%.

APPENDIX III, C: THE CONGREGATIONS TODAY

THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH – ROME

An international Congregation of Pontifical right.

There are 380 religious, 359 of whom have made final profession, 12 have made temporary profession and 9 are novices.

The Congregation is divided into 6 provinces: Belgium, Burundi, California, England, Ireland, Uganda. There is one District, Ghana, dependent on the English province.

In total there are 57 houses.

Works undertaken are various, including the following:

- Education
 - primary school
 - secondary school
 - college and university

- Health care
 - nursing
 - doctors
 - public health
 - dispensaries
 - hospitals
 - care of the aged
 - hospital chaplaincy

- Parish and social work of varied nature

- Retreat and conference centres in
 - California
 - England
 - Ireland

ZUSTERS VAN DE HEILIGE JOSEF – BRUGGE

A Diocesan Congregation under the Bishop of Brugge.

There are 220 religious living in a total of 20 houses.

Work is undertaken in both Belgium and Zaïre, including the following:

- Teaching

- Education
 - primary school
 - secondary school
 - handicapped children

- Health care
 - nursing
 - care of the aged

ZUSTERS VAN MARIA EN JOSEF - GERAARDSBERGEN

A Diocesan Congregation under the authority of the Bishop of Gent.

There are 50 Sisters living in 7 houses, all in the Gent Diocese.

Works undertaken include:

- Education
 - primary school
 - technical school

- Healthcare
 - nursing

JOSEPHITES

A Clerical Institute of both priests and brothers.

150 members divided into four regions: Belgium, England, America and Zaïre.

The particular aim of the Institute is education, which is undertaken at both College and secondary school level.

APPENDIX IV. SISTERS TO WHOM THE FOUNDER ADDRESSED LETTERS

(Note: the number corresponds to that used in the footnote references; for example, ADMJR / 7 - 4 refers to the fourth letter written to Flore Delhaye. The last number is the total number of letters we have.

No.	NAME	LETTERS	PROFESSION	DEATH	N°
0.	<u>Julie Herbau</u> First Superior General before the separation; remained Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Brugge.	1834	1831	1865	2
1.	<u>Superiors at Mechelen</u> - Eulalie Vandemaele - H�el�ene Dubus (Vicaire de l'Institut) - Raphaelle Becq	1853 – 1865	1838 1849 1855	1871 1868 1900	14
2.	<u>Superiors at Aalst</u>	1859 – 1865			15
02.	<u>Marine Coulon</u> Superior of Brussels, Superior of Aalst.	1834 - 1835	1835	1894	146
3.	<u>Marie-Anne de Ponthieux</u> Mistress of Novices, 1830-1833, she was part of the original community at Mouscron who were incorporated into the DMJ's in 1830.	1832 – 1851	1830	1855	35
4.	<u>Various Superiors unknown</u>	1835-1865			53
5.	<u>Catherine Dal</u> Superior at Mouscron, part of the original community (pre - 1830).	1835 – 1841	1831	1851	36
6.	<u>Olympiade Derville</u> First elected Superior General, 1840 - 1858	1833 – 1863	1834	1887	106 + extracts
7.	<u>Flore Delhaye</u> Superior at Mouscron, Vicaire de l'Institut, Second Superior General, 1858 - 1885.	1834 – 1865	1834	1886	113

No	NAME	LETTERS	PROFESSION	DEATH	N°
8.	<u>Raphaelle Becq</u> Superior of Mechelen Third Superior General, 1885-1900.	1854 – 1865	1855	1900	4
9.	<u>Aloÿse Bruycher</u> Superior, Holy Angels, Brussels. Considered to be a very saintly person. Died age 23.	1832 - 1838	1832	1838	11
10.	<u>Gonzague</u> Left the Institute	1838 – 1839	?		13
11.	<u>Bathilde Delhaye</u> Sister of Flore Delhaye.	1832 – 1838	1833	1839	11
12.	<u>Louise Deschamps</u>	1834 – 1858	1841	1876	14
13.	<u>Justine van Crombrughe</u> Grandniece of the Founder.	1859 – 1864	1867	1914	16
14.	<u>Eleonore Laoulais</u> Maîtresse Générale.	1854 – 1862	1855	1894	16
15.	<u>Colombo Verduyn</u> Local Superior Godaughter of Canon van Crombrughe.	1833 – 1852	1832	1852	36
16.	<u>Pauline D'Halluin</u>	1861 – 1864	1866	1942	11
17.	<u>Clothilde Minne</u> Assistant at Aalst, Superior at Coloma, Vicaire de l'Institut, Superior at Brussels, Holy Angels.	1833 – 1841	1833	1842	49
18.	<u>Clothilde van Wymelbeke</u> Niece of the Founder, Superior at Brussels, Holy Angels; Mistress of Novices; Superior, Coloma, Mechelen	1843 – 1865	1845	1878	174
19.	Addressed to various people: <u>Emélie Lecroart</u> (Letters 1-6) Member of the original Mouscron community of 1830.	1831 – 1839	1831	1852	6
	<u>Raphaël Hennion</u> (Letters 7-12)	1835 - 1839	1835	1839	6

No	NAME	LETTERS	PROFESSION	DEATH	N°
19 cont.	<u>Clémentine</u> (Letter <u>13</u>)	1837	?		1
	<u>Colette Wouters</u> (Letters <u>14-15</u>) Died age 21 years. Considered to be a very saintly person.	1838	1831	1839	2
	<u>Séraphine de Troch</u> (Letter <u>16+35</u>)	1839	1838	1851	2
	<u>Julie Loix</u> (Letters <u>17-19</u>)	1840 – 1844	1842	1854	3
	<u>Hélène Dubus</u> (Letter <u>20</u>) Superior, 1859-1862. Vicaire de l'Institut. This letter was written before she entered the community.	1847	1849	1868	1
	<u>Félicité van Crombrugghe</u> (Letters <u>21-23</u>) Niece of the Founder.	1848 – 1850	1847	1853	3
	<u>Albertine Oden</u> (Letter <u>24</u>) Soeur Converse.	1854	1841	1855	1
	<u>Apolline Delbecque</u> (Letters <u>25-27</u>)	1857 – 1859	1859	1859	3
	<u>Justine Beyser</u> (Letters <u>28-29+45</u>)	1858 – 1859	1861	1865	3
	<u>Adèle Delacroix</u> (Letters <u>30-32</u>) Mistress General of the Institute.	1858 – 1859	1859	1903	3
	<u>Flore de Mytternaere</u> (Letter <u>33</u>) Postulant?	1861			1
	<u>Flavié Serrais</u> (Letter <u>34</u>) Considered a saintly person, died age 29.	1842	1843	1850	1
	<u>Stephanie de Jaegher</u> (Letters <u>41-42</u>)	1838 – 1839	1838	1840	2
	<u>Léocadie Mullier</u> (Letters <u>43-44</u>)	1837 – 1840	1838	1840	2
20	<u>Unknown Religious</u>	1833-1864			39

References to Scripture found in the Constitutions and the Commentaries of Canon van Crombrughe.

Note: the Article number refers to the 1932 revised enumeration, the Page number to the English Translation made after 1932.

ARTICLE	PAGE	CITATION	REFERENCE	
<u>Charity and Union</u>				
160	20	The two commandments	Mt. 22:37-40.	
	21	Love one another	Jn. 15:10-15. Jn. 13:35.	
	21	God is love	1 Jn. 3:15.	
	21	Speak with the tongues of men and of angels	1 Cor. 13:1-13.	
	23	Son of Man came to save men's lives	Lk. 9:55b-56. Jn. 12:47.	
	24	Love without dissimulation	Rm. 12:3-13.	
	<u>Obligations imposed by charity</u>			
	26	As you would that men do to you	Mt. 7:12.	
	26	Passions are the root of all disputes	Jms. 4:1.	
	27	Bear one another's burdens	Gal. 6:2.	
<u>Rendering mutual assistance</u>				
28	See another in need and close his heart	1 Jn. 3:17		
<u>Means for acquiring love of our neighbour</u>				
30		This is my Body, this is my Blood	Mk.14: 22-26. Mt. 26: 26-30. Lk. 22: 19-20.	
	31	... to the least of these ones you did it to me	Mt. 25: 40, 45.	
<u>The Presence of God</u>				
35		God is not far from us	Acts 17: 27-28.	
		Can a mother forget her child?	Is. 49: 15.	
<u>Zeal for the Welfare of Youth</u>				
161	39	shine as stars for all eternity	Dan.12:3.	
<u>Meals</u>				
163	41	Whether you eat or whether you drink.	1 Cor. 10: 31.	
<u>Cheerfulness, Meekness, Politeness</u>				
50		Do your work in meekness...	Sir. 3:17.	
		Rejoice in the Lord always	Phil. 4:4.	
		The fruits of the Spirit	Gal. 5:22.	
<u>Dissipation of Mind</u>				
175	54	Come apart and rest awhile	Mk. 6: 31.	
	54	We have laboured all night	Lk. 5: 6.	
	54	I am the vine, you are the branches	Jn. 15: 5.	

ARTICLE	PAGE	CITATION	REFERENCE
		<u>The Blessed Sacrament</u>	
184	64	Delight to be with the children of men	Prov. 8: 31.
	64	Come to me all who labour	Mt. 11: 28-30.
	64	Taste and see that the Lord is good	Ps. 34: 8.
		<u>The Angelus</u>	
186	68	Behold the handmaid of the Lord.	Lk. 1: 38.
		<u>The Holy Name of Jesus</u>	
191	77	No longer servants but friends	Jn. 15:15.
		<u>St Joseph</u>	
193	80	Whatever you do to the least of these little ones ...	Mt. 25: 40.
		<u>The Chapter</u>	
197	88	Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart	Mt. 11: 29.
	88	Humble yourself before the Lord	Jms. 4: 10.
	88	Clothe yourself with humility before one another	I Pet. 5: 5
		<u>Holy Communion</u>	
209-213	96	Come to me all that labour	Mt. 11: 28 Mt. 4: 19.
	96	Bread I will give is my flesh	Jn. 6: 51.
	96	I will remain in him	Jn. 6: 56.
	97	Ask and it will be given you	Mt. 7: 7.
		<u>Superiors</u>	
221	113	My food is to do the will of him who sent me	Jn. 4:34.
		<u>Novices and Postulants</u>	
223	115	Forget your people...	Ps. 45: 10.
	115	I chose you	Jn. 15:16.
		<u>Poverty</u>	
227-241	124	Blessed are the poor in spirit	Mt. 5: 3.
	124	No place to lay his head	Lk. 9:57.
		<u>Chastity</u>	
242-245	128	Blessed are the pure of heart	Mt. 5: 8.
		<u>Obedience</u>	
246-256	130	To do the will of him who sent me	Jn. 4: 34.
	130	Am I trying to please men?	Gal. 1: 10.
		<u>Obligation to observe the Constitutions</u>	
321-324	135	I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord	Ps. 89: 1.
		<u>Attachment to the Constitutions</u>	
	136	Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace	Eph. 4: 3.

APPENDIX V, B.

References to Scripture found in the "Instructions Spirituelles" of Canon van Crombrugge.

- 1^e Quelques réflexions sur l'avent
Shower O heavens from above and let the skies rain down righteousness. Is. 45:8.
He lives to make intercession for them Heb. 7:25.
Fellow heirs with Christ Rms. 8: 17.
It is no longer I who live Gal.2:20.
- 2^e Sur la Circoncision
Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of the faith Heb. 12:2.
- 3^e Ce que vous devez au Seigneur Jésus
I am the vine, you are the branches Jn. 15:1-11.
- 4^e Sur l'Union de Jésus-Christ avec nous
Behold I am with you all days Mt. 28:20.
I am the vine, you are the branches Jn. 15:1-11.
- 5^e Sur l'Amour de Jésus-Christ
As the Father has loved me so have I loved you Jn. 15:9.
If you love me you will keep my commandments Jn. 14:15.
I do not call you servants but friends. Jn. 15:15
Appointed you that you should bring forth fruit Jn. 15:16.
Come to me all that labour Mt. 11:28-30.
Take my yoke upon you Mt. 11:29.
- 6^e Sur la Résurrection 1 Cor. 15:15-23.
Once risen Christ dies no more 1 Cor. 15: 15-23
- 7^e Sur la Présentation de Marie
Everyone who has left house, or brothers and sisters... Mt. 19:29.
- 8^e Sur le mystère de l'Incarnation
Behold the handmaid of the Lord Lk. 1:38.
- 9^e Des Sts. Anges: I and II
Are they not all ministering spirits? Heb. 1:14
He will give his angels charge over you Ps. 91:11.
My angel is with you; your lives will be in his care Bar. 6:6.
Angel to Lot "Arise..." Gen. 19:1.
If you listen to the voice of your angel... Ex. 23:22.
- 10^e Amour de la Paix
Blessed are the peacemakers Mt. 5:9.
Passions are the root of all disputes Jms. 4:1.
- 11^e Affection Réciproque
Love one another as I have loved you Jn. 15:12.

APPENDIX V, C: REFERENCES MADE TO VARIOUS WORKS OTHER THAN
SCRIPTURE IN THE "INSTRUCTIONS SPIRITUELLES"

- 3^e Ce que vous devez au Seigneur Jésus
Imitation of Christ, Bk. 2, Chapter 7
Bk. 3, Chapter 10
- 4^e Sur l'union de Jésus-Christ avec nous
Imitation of Christ, Bk. 2, Chapter 8
- 9^e Des Sts. Anges: I et II
St. Jerome on St. Matthew, Chapter 18
- 10^e Amour de la paix
Imitation of Christ, Bk. 2, Chapter 3
- 13^e Pureté de zèle, jalousie
Imitation of Christ, Bk. 3, Chapter 54
- 17^e Respect pour nous-même
Imitation of Christ, Bk. 3, Chapter 34

APPENDIX VI: TRANSCRIPTS AND TRANSLATIONS

A: AMDJR / 19 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Emélie Lecroart, 18 October, 1831.

1. Text

Ma bien chère fille en J. C.

Il m'a été bien agréable de voir les sentiments de gratitude qui vous animent pour les faveurs dont le bon Dieu vous remplit, et pour les sentiments que vous reconnaissez en moi et que Dieu m'a donnés pour votre perfection. Louons le Seigneur, mon Enfant, et glorifions-le de toutes les puissances de notre âme; il est vrai que vous êtes une de ces créatures privilégiées appelées à être les Epouses de l'Agneau et à être un instrument de la miséricorde divine, dans l'Eglise militante. Goûtez votre bonheur, en vous tenant toujours dans une joie douce fondée sur la soumission à la volonté de Dieu en toute chose. Ne permettez jamais que la tristesse entre dans votre coeur; veillez soigneusement sur vous-même, afin que chacun comprenne que vous êtes heureuse sous le St. joug du Seigneur.

Quant à la méditation, vous y ferez des progrès en vous rendant à l'invitation de votre divin Epoux qui vous dit d'apprendre de lui qu'il est doux et humble de coeur, et ce ne sera plus seulement dans la méditation, mais dans toutes les pratiques de la vie religieuse que vous avancerez par la douceur et l'humilité.

J'ai vu avec beaucoup de la satisfaction que les enfants de la Congrégation et les Soeurs (du 2e ordre) ont profité des paroles d'encouragement que je leur ai données. Assurez-les que je les porte toutes dans mon coeur et que je fais des voeux fréquents pour leur bonheur. J'attends aussi quelque petite prière de leur part afin que je devienne un Prêtre selon le coeur de Dieu.

Il me paraît que vous avez pris une bonne méthode pour l'examen des livres qui paraissent bons; pour ceux que vous ne connaîtriez en aucune manière, il faudrait les examiner d'un bout à l'autre.

Recevez, ma chère Enfant, avec ces conseils, ma bénédiction paternelle et l'assurance de mon sincère dévouement

Votre Père spirituel

C. G. van Crombrughe

Gand 18 Oct. 1831

2. Translation

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

It has pleased me a lot to see you moved by feelings of gratitude for the favours with which God fills you and for the affection that you recognise in me and that God has given me for your perfection. Let us praise the Lord, my Child, and glorify Him with all the faculties of our souls; it is true that you are one of those privileged beings called to be the spouses of the Lamb and to be an instrument of divine mercy in the Church militant. Savour your happiness, always maintaining yourself in gentle joyfulness based in submission to the will of God in everything. Never allow sadness to come into your heart; watch over yourself carefully so that each one may understand that you are happy under the blessed yoke of the Lord.

As to meditation, you will make progress as you accept the invitation of your divine Spouse who tells you to learn from Him that He is gentle and humble of heart, and it will be not only in meditation but in all the practices of religious life that you will make progress by gentleness and humility.

I have been very pleased to see that the children of the Congregation and the Sisters (of the 2nd order) profited from the words of encouragement that I have given them. Assure them that I carry them all in my heart and that I frequently pray for their happiness. I also expect some small prayer on their part so that I may become a priest according to the heart of God.

It seems to me that you have adopted a good method for the examination of books that seem to be good; as for those that you do not know at all, you must examine them from one end to the other.

Receive, my dear Child, with these words of advice, my fatherly blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness,

Your spiritual father,

C. G. van Crombrughe

Gent, 18 October, 1831.

VI, B: ADMJR / 15 – 11, letter of van Crombrughe to Colombo Verduyn, 12 March, 1835.

1. Text

Loues soient J.M.J.

Ne vous tourmentez donc plus, ma chère Soeur, par des pensées quelles qu'elles soient. La volonté seule peut rendre bonnes ou mauvaises les pensées ou actions des hommes. S'il se présente des pensées qui ne sont pas à admettre, renvoyez-les doucement et sans vous effrayer. Voilà tout ce que vous avez à faire. Ne perdez donc plus le temps à examiner ces pensées, ne vous en troublez plus; imitant de petites enfants qui ont peur de leur ombre et qui se mettent à fuir une chose qui les poursuit.

Vous avez toujours trop accordé d'attention à vos idées; et vous n'avez pas cru avec assez d'humilité que vous aviez, des idées noires. Conservez donc en paix un coeur où J. C. daigne faire sa demeure. Vous déshonorez le divin Epoux, par des craintes ridicules et des sentiments tout à fait contraires à sa bonté. Dites-moi, mon Enfant, J. C. ne vous a-t-il pas donné assez de preuves de son amour? Ne devez-vous; pas le croire assez puissant et assez bon pour vous aider contre les ennemis de votre salut?

Voilà, ma chère Enfant, ce qui vaut mieux que des remèdes contre telle pensée en particulier. Soyez humble et ayez confiance en J. C. C'est ce que vous souhaitez votre tout dévoué Père spirituel.

12 Mars 1835

G.C.V.C.

Préparez-vous avec joie à la fête de St. Joseph.

2. Translation

Praised be Jesus Mary and Joseph

My dear Sister, do not torment yourself with ideas anymore whatever they may be. Only man's will can make his thoughts or actions good or bad. If ideas which should not be accepted present themselves, send them away gently and without fear. There, that is all you have to do. So do not waste any more time in examining these thoughts; never worry about them again; act as little children who are afraid of their shadow and who start to run away from a thing that is after them.

You have always given too much attention to your ideas, and you have not believed with sufficient humility that you had gloomy ideas. So keep in peace a heart where Jesus Christ chooses to dwell. You dishonour the divine Spouse by these ridiculous fears and feelings contrary to His goodness. Tell me, my Child, has not Jesus Christ given you sufficient proof of His love? Should you not believe Him powerful enough and good enough to help you against the enemies of your salvation?

There you have, my Child, something better than looking for remedies against each thought in particular. Be humble and have confidence in Jesus Christ. This is my wish for you as your devoted spiritual father,

12 March 1835

C.G.V.C.

Prepare yourself with joy for the feast of St. Joseph.

VI, C: ADMJR / 13 – 16, letter of van Crombrugge to Justine van Crombrugge, after 1863;
possibly Easter 1865.

1. Text

L.S.J.M.J.

Ma très chère Fille en J. C.

En lisant, hier, le passage relatif à Marie-Madeleine, dans le St. Evangile, où cette ardente servante de J. C. cherche avec une espèce de trouble, et ne le trouve pas ou ne le reconnaît pas, quoique le bon Sauveur se trouve à ses côtés, j'ai pensé à vous, ma pauvre Enfant. Ce trait de l'histoire de Madeleine est l'image de ce qui arrive à beaucoup d'âmes sincèrement dévouées au Seigneur, et dont le divin Époux veut éprouver l'amour, en se dérobant à leurs yeux par la soustraction de ses grâces sensibles. Cet état les alarme, les trouble et leur fait craindre d'avoir perdu l'état de grâce, l'amour de Dieu, Jésus l'unique objet de leur vraie et unique réelle affection... Elles gémissent, elles cherchent, elles oublient que le consolateur qu'elles croient loin d'elles, est dans leur coeur pas sa grâce, et autour d'elles par sa protection.

Apprenez, mon Enfant, que votre confiance en Jésus, doit augmenter lorsque vous ne ressentez pas sensiblement sa présence. C'est, en effet, que ce véritable ami, veut exciter en vous, des sentiments plus conformes à ceux que son amour a pour vous, une foi plus vive, une espérance plus dégagée de tout mélange de votre suffisance propre, un amour pur et confiant en l'infinie miséricorde divine.

2. Translation

Praised be Jesus Mary and Joseph

My very dear Daughter in Jesus Christ

On reading yesterday the passage relating to Mary Magdalene in the holy Gospel, where this fervent servant of Jesus Christ looks, in a troubled sort of way, and neither finds nor recognises the good Saviour, although He is by her side, I have thought of you, my poor Child. This episode in Magdalene's history is the image of what happens to many souls sincerely devoted to the Lord, whose love the divine Spouse wishes to test, by disappearing from before their eyes by withdrawing His consolations. This state worries them and makes them fear that they have lost the state of grace, the love of God, Jesus, the sole object of their true and only real affection... They groan, they search, they forget that the Comforter whom they think far away from them is in their heart by His grace and around them by His protection.

Learn, my Child that your confidence in Jesus must grow, when your senses do not feel His presence. What happens, in fact, is that this true friend wants to stimulate in you feelings of love more like those He has for you, a more lively faith, hope that is less tainted by self sufficiency, a love that is pure and confident in infinite divine mercy.

Tant donc que l'absence de J. C. vous afflige, tant que vous craignez de lui déplaire, soyez certaine que son amour est dans votre coeur, que vous êtes son amie et que vous les (*sic*) sentirez quand l'épreuve sera terminée.

En attendant, rappelez-vous ce que vous avez lu dans traité de la paix de l'âme, et continuez à lire cet excellent ouvrage. Recevez ma bénédiction et croyez à mon dévouement, Votre Père en J. C. toujours dévoué,

C. G, van Crombrugghe

So, in so far as the absence of Jesus Christ troubles you, in so far as you fear to have displeased Him, be certain that His love is in your heart, that you are His friend and that you will experience this when the trial is over.

Meanwhile, remember what you have read in the Treatise on inner peace* and continue to read this excellent work. Receive my blessing and believe in my devotedness, Your always devoted father in Jesus Christ,

C. G. van Crombrugghe

* The exact Treatise is unknown. In other letters C.V.C. recommended Quadrupani's book, "Instructions pour éclairer les âmes pieuses", (origin : Documenti per tanquillare le anime nelle loro dubiezze), or two other books in use at the time are possible: Jean de Bonilla, Traite de la paix de l'âme, Alcalá, 1580; Ambroise de Lombez, Traité de la paix intérieure, 1737.

D: ADMJR / 5 - 38 , undated letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal.

1. photocopy of both recto and verso (following page

2. translation

Note the archival addition of a description of the subject matter on the recto right hand top corner.
The lack of signature suggests there may well have been another page which has unfortunately not survived, though what we have seems complete in itself.

2. Translation

To my dear Mother in Our Lord and to our dear Sisters of the Convent of St. John the Baptist
(Mouscron)

The letter which you asked Sister Adelaide to write to me brought me up to date on all that happened in your house, in a way that was very satisfactory, and the one you had joined to it gave me a most pleasant piece of news. You begin by giving thanks to the God of all mercies and then you tell me the reason for your joy and your intense thanksgiving. I felt the same thing; my first impulse was to raise my hands and above all my heart, to the Author of all good and it is to Him that I have expressed my sincere gratitude. Yes, praise God and may our hearts feel more and more the need to love Him whose goodness is so great and whose mercy is infinite.

This is what the events, so instructive for us, lead me to tell you at this moment: the peace of the Holy Spirit which our Sisters' divine Spouse has sent them, is such an excellent good that we must talk about it and encourage each other to keep it, even at the price of the greatest sacrifices. This peace 1) with God, by a complete submission to His orders and by perfect purity of conscience, 2) with our neighbour, by charity, by gentleness, by the humble and unaffected expression of the holy friendship that binds us, and 3) with ourselves, by discarding the things of this world and above all the mortification of our disordered desires. This peace is, I say, in the plans of God, the very purpose of your holy vocation; this is the hundredfold which Jesus Christ promised here below to those who renounce all to follow Him. Happy, says our Master, happy are the peacemakers, they shall be called the children of God.

In fact, they will show the glorious characteristics of the children of God, by the likeness that they will have to the Father, who only has thoughts of peace; to the Son, who has obtained it for us by His death; to the Holy Spirit, who keeps it in us by the love which he pours into our hearts. But you, my dear Sisters, you the children of Mary and of Joseph who by a particular attraction are tranquil and peaceful, you the spouses of Jesus Christ, who allow this divine Spouse to freely exercise His reign in you; it is to you that peace must belong... Love peace, therefore, in all and always. Keep it, if necessary, at all cost. Maintain it carefully, suffer everything, keep things hidden, give up everything, rather than break the sacred link that unites you among yourselves and binds you to God and to Jesus, this Prince of Peace.

Take care not to disturb this peace by excessive, even imaginary, fears; do not be at all wise in your own eyes. Conform your sentiments humbly to those of all your Superiors and to your Rule. Fear pride,

fear curiosity, fear superficiality. These are sources of trouble, carefully avoid them and do not stop being on guard against them. Train yourselves to that attractive cheerfulness which makes you happy and dear to God and to those whom you are called to edify and comfort. There it is, my very dear Children, this is what I have believed it my duty to tell you in these graced moments, I whose words would not be doubted by you, I to whom God has given for you, the heart of a father. May that gentle inner peace that goes beyond everything, remain with you always:

Appendix VII, ADMJR/ C-3, Regel-Boek der Dogters van Maria en Joseph, 1830; introductory letter to this Rule written on the 6th of March 818.

1. Photocopy of both recto and verso (following pages)
2. Translation

Note that this edition of the Rule was published in 1831, after the first approbation on the 15th of October 1830, by the Bishop of Gent, Msgr. Joannes-Franciscus Van de Velde.

AEN DE DOGTERS VAN MARIA EN JOSEPH

AGTBAERE DOGTERS,
EEMINDEZUSTERSIN DEN
HEER

Om de pligten van uwen roep tot het onderwys der kinders, met eenen heyligen iver te volbrengen, en tot de kloosterlyke volmacktheyd te geracken, moet gyliden wel overleggen, en diep in uw herte printen, de grootheyd van het ampt tot het welk God u verkozen heeft, en de verhevendheyd en heyligheyd van den staet tot den welken hy u geroepen heeft.

Inderdaed, de kinderen, die den Heer ulieden toebetrouwd beminde Dogters, zyn niet alleenelyk kostelyke panden, die zyne vaderlyke zorgvuldigheyd in uwe bewaernisse steld, maer zyne kinderen zelfs, den prys des dierbaers bloeds van Christus, en de lidmacten van uwen minnelyken Zaligmacker, die gezuyverd zyn heylig gemackt door het doopsel ... de tempels van den H. Geest, de levende woonplaetsen van de allerheyligste Dryvuldigheyd; met een woord, uytverkorene schepsels om God op deze aerde te dienen, en hem eeuwiglyk te beminnen in den hemel.

Gyleiden, Dogters van maria en Joseph, zyt dan als voestermoeders van God verkozen, om die jonge aenkomelingen in de deugd op te voeden, te bestieren, en allengskens tot de christene volmacktheyd te brengen.

To the Daughters of Mary and Joseph

Esteemed Daughters, Beloved Sisters in the Lord,

In order to fulfil with holy zeal your vocation of educating children and to arrive at religious perfection, you have to consider well and imprint deeply in your hearts the greatness of the work for which God has chosen you and the excellence and holiness of the state to which He has called you.

Indeed, the children committed to your care by the Lord, my beloved Daughters, are not only precious pledges which His Fatherly love puts in your care, but also His children, the prize of the precious blood of Christ and the members of your lovable Redeemer, purified and sanctified by baptism, temples of the Holy Spirit, living dwelling-places of the most holy Trinity; in one word, chosen creatures to serve God on this earth and to love Him eternally in heaven.

You, Daughters of Mary and Joseph, as foster-mothers of God's chosen ones, are to educate these young-new-comers to virtue, to lead them and slowly and gently, to form them to Christian holiness.

Gy zyt als de zienelyke engelen-bewaerders van den Zaligmacker, dooe hem gesteld, om zyne schaepkens tot de weyden van zyne eeuwige glorie te helpen leyden. Gy zyt de gelukkige dienstmaegden van de allerheyligste Dryvuldigheid, die haere levende woonplaets zyn, zule tragten te vereieren en le verryken, om aen zoo groote majesteyt te behaegen. Eyndelinge gylieden

zyt geroepen, om de lidmaeten der helige Kerk, in den stryd tegen de helle, de wereld en het vleesch, te oeffenen; hun de listen der helle te doen kennen, de ydelheyd der wereld te leeren verfoeyen, het kleed van onnoozelheyd te bewaeren, en hun hert in de liefde van Jesus-Christus ongeschonden te houden.

Nogtans, beminde Dogters, gy zult tot deeze groote eynden nooyt geraeken, nooyt zult gy uwen heyligenroep volbrengen, is het zaekegy niet eerst voor al en tragt u weerdig te macken, door uw godvrugtig en volmactt leven, de waere instrumenten te worden der bermhertigheyd Gods: Aen wie zult gy goed weezen, vraegt den H. Geest, is 't dat gy voor u zelve slegt zyt? Wat zoude het u baeten, voor andere gewerkt te hebben, is't dat gy u zelve vergeet en arm blyft? Is't dat gy andere nae den hemelheydt, en zelve nae de helle gaet?

Om zulk ongelukkig lot te ontgaen, om veor u te werken, terwyt gy u voor de andere teenemael besteed; met een woord, om uwe pligten te kwyten, op eene wyze gelykelyk nuttig voor u en voor de andere, en God, die uw eenig eyende in alles moet zyn, opregtelyk te dienen, moet gy besonderlyk overtuygd zyn van deeze grondwaerheyd van ons geloof, dat wy alle geschaepen zyn alleeneiyk om God te dienen, vervolgens, dat geheel onze volmacttheyd bestaet in twee zacken: 1^o In te doen 't geen God belieft, en 2^o in het zelve te doen op de wyze dat het aen dien oppersten Meester belieft.

Op 't geen het eerste aengaet, het eynde van uwe vergaeding en de gehoorzaamheyd die gy er oeffent, mogen u gerust maeken.

You are as the visible guardian angels of these precious treasured ones, these members and heirs of Jesus. You are co-workers with the Saviour, placed by Him as helping hands to guide them to the pastures of His everlasting glory. You are the blessed servants of the most Holy Trinity, who expects from you that you should try to adorn and to enrich these children, who are His living dwelling places, so that they may please so high a Majesty. Lastly, you are called to prepare the members of Holy Church for the struggle against hell, the world and the flesh; to teach them to know the wiles of hell, to abhor the vanity of the world, to conserve the garment of innocence and to keep their hearts forever undamaged in the love of Jesus Christ.

However, Beloved Daughters, you will never arrive at these important ends, you will never be able to fulfil your holy vocation, if you do not, first of all, try to make yourselves worthy, by a godly and perfect life, to become true instruments of God's mercy. For whom will you be good asks the Holy Spirit, if you are bad for yourselves? Of what use would it be for you to have worked for others, if you forget yourselves and remain poor; if you bring others to heaven and yourselves go to hell?

In order to avoid so unhappy a fate, work for yourselves while you are devoting yourselves to others; in one word, acquit yours of your duties in a manner that is as much use for yourselves as for others. To serve God sincerely which should be your only aim in all things, you have to be particularly convinced of this fundamental truth of our faith: that we are all created only to serve God; further that all our perfection consists in two things: 1^o to do what is God's pleasure; and 2^o to do that in a way that will please this Supreme Master.

For the first point, the reason for your coming together and the obedience you are practising may set you at ease.

Alle onze pogingen moeten dan gestierd worden om het tweede te bekomen, of: om alle onze werken te doen, op de maniere die God wilt. Ten dien eynde dan, heb ik met de hulpe zoo ik hoope, des Heere, uwe Regels gemaekt, en de middels, om-ze in eenen opregten geest van godsdienstigheyd te onderhouden, heb ik daer zorvuldiglyke by gevoegd.

Wy leezen in den tweeden boek der Machabeën, dat Judas machabeus, om zyn volk tegen den vyand ter stryd op te wekken, hun wapende, niet met schigten en schilden, maer door goede woorden en aenwakkeringen, en dat hy hun verhaelde van in een visioen Jeremias gezien te hebben, die hem een goud zweerd gaf, en zeyde: Neem dit heylzaem zweerd, 't is een geschenk dat God u doet, waer mede gy uwe vyanden zult vernielen. Deze woorden wekten zoodanig den moes der Israëlitien op, dat er besloten wierd ter stryd te trekken, om den tempel en de heylige stad kloekmoediglyk te verdedigen; want zy waren, zegt de H. Schriftuere, min beangst voor hunne ouders en vrienden, dan voor de heyligheyd van den tempel.

Judas nogtans ziende de groote menigte der vyanden, en hunne schrikkelyke wapens, hefte zyne handen tot den hemel, en bad den Heere (die geene magt moet vreezen om te doen zegepraeten wie hem belieft), dat hy zoude geweerdigen zynen engel tot hunne hulpe te zendenn den schrik te jaegen onder dit volk dat, zynen naem lasterende, tegen zyne dienaers opkwam.

Den vielen zy den vyand geweldig op, en terwylen zy met de handen vogten, badden, baden zy met hun herte tot God, en versloegen niet min als vyf-en-dertig duyzend mannen, grootelyks zig verblydende over den bystand des Heere.

Aenveerd ook, beminde Dogters, met zulke

gesteltenisse, deeze geestelyke wapens, die ik u, tot Gods glorie en uwe zaligheid, aanbiede. Peyst dat de H. Maegd, dat den H. Joseph a dit geestelyk zweerd schenkt, om den duyvel, de wereld en het vleesch te verpletteren; gebruykt het om kloekmoediglyk te stryden tegen den vyand uwer ziele.

And so our efforts are to be directed at obtaining the second, that is, to accomplish all our work in the way that God wants it to be done. To that end, I hope with the assistance of the Lord, I have prepared your Rules and carefully added to them the means to observe them with a sincere religious spirit.

In the second book of Maccabees, we read that Judas Maccabeus, in order to rouse his people to fight against the enemy, armed them, not with arrows and shield, but with good works and exhortations. He told them how he had seen Jeremiah giving him a golden sword and saying: Take this salutary sword, it is a gift given you by God, with which you will destroy your enemies. These words roused the courage of the Israelites so much, that the decision was taken to go to war in valiant defense of the temple and the holy city; for, according to Holy Scripture, they feared less for their parents and friends than for the holiness of the temple.

Judas, seeing the great number of their enemies and their terrific weapons, lifted his hands to heaven and prayed to the Lord (who does not fear any power, but grants His victory to whom He wants), that he would send His angel to assist them and to terrify the people who were blaspheming His Name and were marching against His servants.

Thereupon, they violently attacked the enemy and fighting with their hands while praying to God in their hearts, they defeated no less than thirty-five thousand men, greatly rejoicing in the assistance of the Lord.

You, too, Beloved Daughters, with the same feelings, accept these spiritual arms which I am offering to you for the glory of God and for your sanctification. Keep in mind that the Holy Virgin Mary and St. Joseph give you this spiritual sword to crush the enemy of souls.

Gy zyt de leevende tempels des Heere, vergeet dan al wat van buytenis, en bekommert u alleen met u inwendig te vereiren en aen de Goddelyke majesteyt aengenaem te maeken. Ik heffe ook, gelyk Judas Machabeus myne handen nae den hemel, en smeeke uwe magtige en goedertiere Patroonesse, dat zy u bescherme en verkryge dat God u zynen engel afzende, die u in alle tyden verdedige, uwe vyanden verschrikke, en u over hun doe zegepraelen.

Beeld u eyndelyk in, dat uwe H, Moeder maria uyt den hemel tot a zegt:

Myne dogters, onderhoud deze Regels met de zalfste nauwkeurigheid, dat gy den appel van uwe oog bewaerd: bind-ze in uwe handen: schryft-ze in uw herte, en gy zult met my eeuwig leeven (PROV. VII, I).

Aelst, den 6 maerte 1818, een jaer naer de instelling deezer geestelyke vergadering.

Uwen genegen dienaer,

C. G. V. C., Priester,

Oversten van het Gymnasium dezer stad.

You are the living temples of the Lord, so forget all that is outside and be solicitous only about adorning yourselves internally and making yourselves agreeable to the Divine Majesty. Like Judas Maccabeus, I lift up my hands to heaven and beg your powerful and gentle Patroness to protect you and obtain for you that God send His angel to defend you at all times, to overcome your enemies and to help you to triumph over them.

And lastly, imagine that your Holy Mother Mary is addressing you from heaven with these words:

My daughters observe these Rules with the same exactitude with which you care for the apple of your eye; tie them in your hands; write them into your hearts and together with me you will live forever. (Prov. VII I)

Aalst, 6th March, 1818, one year after the institution of this spiritual congregation.

Your devoted servant

C. G. V. C., Priest

Superior of the Gymnasium of this town

**INSTRUMENTS
OF
MERCY**

Part 2

TERESA CLEMENTS DMJ

1939 - 2007

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITAS GREGORIANA

FACULTAS THEOLOGIAE

INSTITUTUM SPIRITUALITATIS

INSTRUMENTS OF MERCY

A STUDY OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF
CANON CONSTANT GUILLAUME VAN CROMBRUGGHE
FOUNDER OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY AND JOSEPH

Auctore

TERESA A. CLEMENTS D. M. J.

1939 - 2007

Excerpta ex dissertatione ad Doctoratum
in Facultate Theologiae
apud Institutum Spiritualitatis
Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae

ROMA 1982

VIDIMUS ET APPROBAMUS AD NORMAM STATUTORUM UNIVERSITATIS

Romae, ex Pontificia Universitate Gregoriana
die 8 mensis maii anni 1982

Prof. Gervais Dumeiqe S.J.

Prof. Robert Fancy S.J.

Con approvazione del Vicariato di Roma
in data 10 giugno 1982

Where shall I turn, O Lord, when I can no longer see You,
who are the light and the way,
the beginning and the end of my existence?

If I keep my gaze steadfastly fixed on You
I shall never stray far.

In the overwhelming darkness of life's journey,
I have but to put all my faith and trust in You, O my God.

You atone do I seek,

You alone do I see reflected in all creation.

The fulfilment of Your will is my sole desire.

Even when preoccupied with the innumerable cares
of my daily life,

I am still united with You.

Did you but cease to look on me with love,

I should be unable to concern myself

with even these earthly matters,

and I would sink back into my very nothingness.

O Lord, always assist me with Your saving grace.

C.G. van Crombrughe

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My special thanks are due to my mother and remembrance of my father, who shared with me their gift of faith and through it brought me to recognise the Lord's love. Finally, in gratitude, this dissertation is dedicated to my Sisters of the Uganda Province, who have shown me by their love what it means to be instruments of the Lord's mercy.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations have been used in the bibliography and notes:

Archives

ADMJR	Daughters of Mary and Joseph, Rome.
AJM	Josephites, Melle.
AZHJB	Zusters van de H. Josef, Brugge.
AZMJG	Zusters van Maria en Josef, Geraardsbergen.

Printed works

B.N.	Biographie Nationale publiée par l'Académie Royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique. Bruxelles, Emile Bruylant, 1880..
Coll. Mechl.	Collectanea Mechliniensia.
D. Sp.	Dictionnaire de Spiritualité , Paris, Beauchesne.
E. A.	Encyclopedia Americana , New York, Americana Corporation.
<u>N.C.E.</u>	New Catholic Encyclopedia , Washington, 1967.
N.D.S.	Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritua1ità , Edizioni Paoline, 1979.
N.E.B.	New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropaedia , London.
J.H.L.	Journal Historique et Littéraire.
R.A.M.	Revue d'Ascétique et de Mystique.
T.D.N.T.	Theological Dictionary of the New Testament , Michigan, W.B.Eerdemans.

INTRODUCTION

The spirituality of the founder of a religious congregation offers its members and through them the Church, a particular way of responding to and living the Gospel. This study has been undertaken in order to examine the spirituality of Canon van Crombrughe as given to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

Constant Guillaume van Crombrughe (1789-1865), Canon of Saint Bavon of the Cathedral of Gent, was Founder of four Congregations, three of women and one of men: the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Sisters of Mary and Joseph, and the Josephites. He lived during a time of much political upheaval and took an active part in helping his country, Belgium, arrive at independence in 1830. Priest, educator, politician and founder, he was recognised in his day as being a man of spiritual maturity. As founder, he handed on his spiritual vision to the members of his Congregations and it is this vision with which we are concerned.

This dissertation is entitled, “Instruments of Mercy. A Study of the Spirituality of Canon Constant Guillaume van Crombrughe, Founder of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph”. Instruments of mercy, because this term synthesizes van Crombrughe’s spirituality. Various biographies have been written and one doctoral study has been made concerning the Founder’s response to life as a Christian, and as an educator¹. No attempt has been previously made to make a systematic study of his spirituality. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph are in possession of over 950 letters, mostly of spiritual direction, addressed by van Crombrughe between the years 1831-1865 to various Sisters. One of the ideas that emerged through a study of these letters was that of being ‘instruments of mercy in the hand of God’. The apparent originality of the theme and the desire to understand the founding intention of van Crombrughe that it expresses, brought about this study. Hence the title.

The thesis is entitled ‘A study’, because of its limitations. In it we are concerned with the spirituality as given to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. Although the Josephite Fathers are in possession of approximately another 500 letters addressed to their early members, direct reference has not been made to these letters, even though the material in them has been available. A reading of the documents convinces us that the spiritual content is similar, but a different accent is given. For example, regarding the use of the term “spouse of Christ”, which is not used. For them, the relationship with Christ is expressed in terms of working with Him as “brother”, ‘master’, and “saviour. However the differences are relatively unimportant. They too are invited to be “instruments of mercy in the hand of God”.

An attempt to examine the spirituality of a founder is marked initially by the question of

¹ GARCIA, G.C., Constant Guillaume van Crombrughe, 1789—1865 — the response of a Christian and an Educator to and within the historical context of the 19th century. Doctoral dissertation,

what is meant by “spirituality”. Many definitions may be attempted. For the purposes of this thesis it is defined as the personal assimilation of Christ’s salvific mission and represents the sum total of the person’s motivations and reactions; the way in which life is responded to and lived.

The spirit of the person is as the breath of that person, as the Spirit of God may be said to be the Breath of God. It is the essential element unique to each one. We may get in touch with the spirit of another by examining their particular sensitivity to life and their ability to see and respond to the reality of life around them. However the spirituality of a person moves into the dimension of faith, because it refers to the way in which the individual assimilates and is sensitive to the salvific mission of Christ, receiving His Word as a faith reality and offering a response. Therefore the spirituality of an individual as defined is concerned with the sum total of their principles of life and the way in which these are lived but in faith.

Man is not only a spirit, he is body and spirit. Therefore the spirituality of any person is grounded in the social and political climate in which their life is lived. Both the invitation of Vatican Council II given to religious congregations to return to the sources of their spirituality, and the popularity during the last few years of people desiring to return to their roots in order the better to understand themselves, point this out.

In attempting to study the spirituality of Constant van Crombrughe, we need then to try to come to terms with these factors, above all with his personal assimilation of the Good News of Christ’s salvific mission.

The reasons for undertaking this study are various. The world today is in need of the Lord’s mercy in a way that is unprecedented. The encyclical of John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, witnesses to this. Therefore any attempt to come to a degree of understanding of God’s mercy is important. It is in this world that the Congregations founded by van Crombrughe are invited to serve. The invitation he has given them is that their members should be instruments of mercy. Another reason, a major one for undertaking this work, was to help the members of these Congregations, particularly the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, to grow in awareness of what it means to be such an instrument in today’s world. If the spirituality of Canon van Crombrughe is relevant today, it needs to be evaluated in terms of today’s needs.

The materials used in this thesis were the various Rules and Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph that were in use between 1817 and 1865; the 22 “Instructions Spirituelles”, official letters addressed to the Sisters on various topics, some of which were given as conferences; the more than 950 letters, mostly of spiritual direction, addressed to the superiors and to individual Sisters, all of which are found in the Archives of the Congregation in Rome and Belgium. Reference has also been made to the material found in the Archives of the Josephite Fathers, Melle, including approximately 500 letters, as well as the Archives of the Sisters of Mary and Joseph,

Geraardsbergen, and the Sisters of St. Joseph, Brugge.

To begin, a detailed analysis was made of each letter addressed to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph and the 22 “Instructions”, most of which are in the authenticated original text. Through the analysis of each letter it was possible to correlate the various themes. Seeing that van Crombrugge had written of himself as an instrument of mercy for others, the next point of study was an attempt to determine how he understood this idea. This required a review of the historical times in which he lived as well as an attempt to trace possible sources of influence. Since an excellent study is available of van Crombrugge as a priest, Christian and educator, it was not necessary to repeat this work and therefore the biographical material is presented only to the extent that it helps to situate the man and his spirituality in his times.

Because there is considerable evidence that van Crombrugge was a very practical man, empirical rather than theoretical in his approach to life, an analytical and inductive method has been used, that is, after making an analysis of his writings, an attempt has been made to draw out his meaning, and as far as possible, to do this in terms that are practical for our times.

One difficulty that emerged fairly early on in this work, was the fact that while taking a great personal interest in the members, van Crombrugge always stood outside the Congregations he founded. He lived alone, both actually and metaphorically and this, in some ways makes it difficult to get to know him. He was also someone who constantly changed, adapted and modified what he was saying and doing. It is consequently difficult to clarify what he intended by the use of any one term. His meaning in many instances appears to have been very fluid. For example, his “Rules” for the religious were sometimes so changed as to seem to have been written by a different person.

In any case, the man who emerged from detailed study of his writings, especially his letters, is a truly gentle man, who cared for people and loved them dearly, a man who loved his Lord and put His interests first.

Two further observations before outlining the material of the dissertation. First, to avoid confusion, place names and those of people (except the names of Saints) have been left in their original Flemish or French. The one exception is ‘Brussels’, which for the convenience of the reader is given in the English form. Secondly, unless otherwise stated, all text translations were made by the author.

The study of the concept “instruments of mercy” in the writings of Canon van Crombrugge to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph is undertaken in the following way. The thesis is divided into two parts. The first is concerned with presenting a biographical outline of the Founder and a brief history of the first fifty years of the Congregation. This follows a chronological order. A brief historical presentation sets the scene to introduce the van Crombrugge family. Then follows a

study of the Fathers of the Faith, the educators of Constant while he was at school in Amiens. Possible sources of influence on his spiritual development are underlined here.

The study continues by examining the influence on the young van Crombrugge of his uncle, Canon Huleu, who was his spiritual director. There follows an examination of the seminary in Gent where van Crombrugge spent three years during a time of persecution of the Church. Chapters three and four consider the life of the Founder under the headings of priest, educator, founder, Diocesan spokesman and politician as well as the early years of the Institute. They examine also the Rules of 1818, 1830, 1844, and 1864. Here the main themes of the spirituality of van Crombrugge are emphasised.

Part Two studies the question of what it means to be instrument of mercy. It opens with a presentation of the analysis of the letters, followed by a chapter that takes the question of mercy. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is examined in this section, as well as charity, seen as offering to others what has been received from the Lord.

This is followed by a chapter concerned with the “instrument” itself, that is, a study of the attitudes essential in the person called to be an instrument of mercy as envisaged by Canon van Crombrugge.

This section concludes with, first, an attempt to offer an evaluation of the spirituality of Constant van Crombrugge; secondly, an examination of this spirituality in terms of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, both in its early years and today; finally, an evaluation in general terms, that is, as a spirituality that is open to all as a valid way of living out the Christian life.

Following the main text of the dissertation, certain appendices are presented which offer additional information. The first contains a sketch map of Belgium which situates the towns of interest in this study, as well as a simplified chart of the van Crombrugge and Spitaels families. The second offers brief biographical notes concerning people who have been introduced in the main text. The third presents, in chart form, the breakdown of the spiritual themes found in the letters of the Founder to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. It also offers an historical outline of the Founder’s life and of the Congregation, as well as the situation of the four Congregations today. Appendix four presents the individual Sisters to whom the letters were written. The fifth contains a list of the scripture texts referred to directly by the Founder in the final, 1864, draft of the Constitutions and in the “Instructions Spirituelles”. There is also a list of the references he makes to other sources. Finally, the sixth offers a translation of three letters, plus the original text, to give the reader the opportunity to read these in full; a photocopy of an original letter with a translation are also presented in this appendix. The whole concludes with a presentation of a selected bibliography.

This dissertation is presented in the hope that it will be of service not only to the Daughters

of Mary and Joseph and the religious of the three other Congregations founded by Canon van Crombrugghe, but that it may also be of value to others, by encouraging them to become instruments of mercy in the hand of God in the world of today.

PART TWO

“YOU ARE THE INSTRUMENTS OF THE MERCY OF THE LORD”

CHAPTER FIVE THE SPIRITUAL LETTERS

A. THE LETTERS AND OTHER MANUSCRIPTS

After the death of Constant van Crombrughe, the Sisters were asked to write short biographical sketches of the Founder. They were asked to write of him as they had known him¹. They also preserved his letters and it would seem that after the death of a Sister any letters she had were brought together to the Mother House, then in Mechelen. These were kept in the Archives of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph and up until 1980 there were 770 letters in the handwriting of the Founder. There were also a few fragments of letters²

The writings of the Founder kept in the Archives may be divided into four groups. First, the various Rules and Constitutions; second, his Spiritual Instructions of which there are 22; third, the instructions concerning education; fourth, the private letters. In addition there are preserved in the Archives two sermons dating from van Crombrughe's early days as curate in Mouscron, one for the celebration of a first communion and the other concerned with the way householders treated their domestic servants³

Also kept in the Archives are collections of "sayings" of the Founder and it is clear from these that originally there were many more letters. Some of the sayings are not traceable to any known source, but have been collected as authentic quotations. In fact, some of the quotations most used in the Congregation come into this category, as for example the one that describes the spirit of the Congregation:

"The spirit by which I wish to see you animated, resides essentially in unlimited devotion to Jesus Christ, His Church and all your brothers."⁴

¹ These are still retained in the Archives under the collection, ADMJR/ A—27.

² We should recall here that for the purposes of this thesis we are only dealing with the letters addressed to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. There are approximately another five hundred addressed to the Josephites, in their Archives in Melle, Belgium. These have been studied by JORISSEN, J., op. cit., and are the material for his unpublished manuscript, *Constant van Crombrughe d'apres sa correspondance*. (He also refers to some letters addressed to the Sisters.) Also, GARCIA, G.C., op. cit., makes reference to the letters, although he does not present an analysis of them in his work.

³ "Sur les soins des Mattres envers leurs Domestiques". Considering the date when this was written, 1813, and the attitude then towards servants, this is a very interesting document. Van Crombrughe begins by writing that all who have responsibility towards the lives of others are invited to exercise that function as did the Good Shepherd. Christ as the Good Shepherd is their model. He says that the interests of the servant and the interests of God are the same, and the employer has an obligation towards the employee that reflects these interests. Van Crombrughe considers that the salvation of the employer depends on the way he helps his employee to find the Lord. The whole sermon is centred around Christ, the Good Shepherd, who searches for His sheep and cares for them.

⁴ See Part I, p.190.

While this has all the characteristics of the Founder's thought, it is not to be found in either letters, Spiritual Instructions or Rules and Constitutions. The same is true of the other well known quotation, frequently used:

“Be at the service of the whole Church. Be there as a pardoned sinner who has found peace and rejoices in the merciful love of God.”⁵

As regards the Rules and Constitutions, none of these are in the original hand of the Founder, although the Rule of 1844 has marginal notes written by him. This is one of the reasons that it is difficult to know what, in the Constitutions, directly belongs to van Crombrughe and what was the result of outside help or Madame Flore's thought. One way of tracing back what is original to the Founder, is to try to follow an idea and see if it can be traced through all the changes to the earlier Rules. If it can, then we may be reasonably sure that it is of van Crombrughe. In this category would be: first, the themes of instruments of mercy and zeal, as related to the fourth vow of education and therefore linked to apostolic activity; second the exhortations on charity, as these came to be called over the years; third, devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, also devotion to Mary and Joseph; fourth, the proposal to follow annually the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius.

The Spiritual Instructions are clearly of the Founder and some of them still exist in his original handwriting. Some were written in the form of letters, others as conference notes. They are different in style, somewhere between the letters and the Constitutions, that is, not quite so formal as the latter, but more formal than the personal letters.

The Instructions concerning education are mostly handwritten copies, possibly made by one of the Sisters. This is not all surprising as many of these were originally notes the Founder had prepared while in Aalst or that he had given to the Josephites. That is why the addition of one conference, already noted, concerning adaptation of methods, is of importance, because it is addressed specifically to the Sisters:

“In order to be always useful, our Institute, making itself all things to all men, will modify its means of action according to the new needs of society. Such will, in all ages, be our great rule concerning methods.”⁶

We return to the question of the letters, which occupies us more specifically at present. Until 1980 there were a total of 770 in the Archives, of which 738 were dated and 716 addressed to individual Sisters.

In the summer of 1980, while a cellar in one of the houses in Brussels (139, rue Edith

⁵ ADMJR/ C—18.

⁶ See Part I, page 91, (ADMJR/ A—21, “De l’Instruction et de l’Education chez les Filles de Marie et de Joseph”, 1833).

Cavell) was being cleared out, another 184 letters were discovered. These were not in the Founder's own handwriting, but were all copies. The style, however, was clearly that of van Crombrughe and they have been admitted into the Archives as having been originally written by him. These letters are of particular interest as the majority of them, 146, were addressed to one person, Marine Coulon, and give a very clear picture of the Founder's method of spiritual direction. Another 24 of them were addressed to the novice - mistress, Anne-Marie de Ponthieux . These are important because of the guidelines the Founder gives in them concerning formation.

Van Crombrughe's letters fall into three categories; those of a personal nature, usually letters of direction; business letters; letters addressed to the superiors, often to be used for the whole community. Regarding the personal letters, only in the case of Flore Delhaye do we have an actual correspondence, as there are 151 of her letters addressed to the Founder still extant. However, it is clear that many are missing and that the two of them often met to continue a discussion and therefore, naturally, there are gaps in the correspondence. This correspondence gives a good idea of the way that van Crombrughe directed an individual and at the same time helped in business affairs.

While the Founder was always concerned with the business matters of the Sisters, he did not interfere. At times he offered advice; occasionally he would refer them to someone such as a lawyer, a priest, Mlle. de Brandt, or to whoever he thought might be of help.

Among the collection of letters there are a total of 225 addressed to four Superiors General, three of whom held office during the life of the Founder. These were Julie Herbau, appointed Superior General in 1832 and remaining in office until the division of the Congregation in 1838: 2 letters; Olympiade Derville, first elected Superior General, from 1840 until 1858: 106 letters and a few extracts; Flore Delhaye, Superior General from 1858 until 1885, who had been known to the Founder since she was a young girl in Mouscron: 113 letters; Raphaelle Becq, who succeeded Flore as Superior General in 1885 and died in office in March 1900: 4 letters. Those addressed to Olympiade and to Flore are of the most help to us as they held office during most of the Founder's life.

In passing, almost as a footnote, it is interesting to notice what van Crombrughe wrote about to different individuals. For Julia and Raphaelle we have too few to make this evident but to Olympiade, other than the predominant themes of Spouse of Christ and Jesus Christ, he wrote mostly about the will of God and moderation in what she did. He also wrote to her about having confidence in God. To Flore the predominant themes were Spouse of Christ, Jesus Christ and Mary and Joseph, and for her personal help he mainly wrote to her about having confidence in God. Possibly van Crombrughe stressed that she should place her confidence in God because traditionally Flore appears to have been a rather self-sufficient type of person.

In all the letters are addressed to 35 different people, as well as to the Superior in Aalst, the Superior in Mouscron and other superiors. The largest individual collections are those addressed to Olympiade and Flore, also to Marine Coulon and to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, van Crombrughe's niece. Clothilde seems to have kept everything her uncle ever wrote to her, from the briefest note to the longest letter. She also seems to have needed help accepting the will of God generously, for these two themes, the will of God and generosity, are the two that appear most frequently in the letters addressed to her.

Marine Coulon, the other recipient of so many letters, was Superior in Aalst in 1840 and later in Brussels. She eventually returned to Aalst where she was again superior from 1861-1870. The letters written to her by the Founder date from 1834-1865. Also in the Archives are 24 letters written by Marine to van Crombrughe, 18 of them between March and November 1840 and the remaining 5 between 1852 and 1865⁷

Two other interesting collections are those addressed to Catherine Dal, 38 letters, and Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, 35 letters. Both of these sisters had come to the community from the original group in Mouscron. Catherine had remained as superior, while Anne-Marie was novice-mistress for 25 years and included Olympiade and Flore among her novices⁸. The letters addressed to her are almost entirely concerned with formation. But the Founder had also a lot to say to her personally and for the novices, about joy and sadness, more than any other subject.

Other letters are of different interest depending very much on the recipient. For example, those addressed to Aloÿse Bruycher, of which there are 11, show clearly how much van Crombrughe loved and admired her and we have already seen the effect her death had on him⁹.

The Founder had several relatives in the Congregation. The largest collection of letters addressed to an individual that we have are those written to his niece, Clothilde, whose nickname was Mimi (although this was never used by van Crombrughe). She was the eldest daughter of his sister, Charlotte, of whom he was very fond. Clothilde had a sister, Marie Charlotte van Wymelbeke, also in the Congregation (d.1855).

Another niece, Marie Charlotte van Crombrughe, daughter of Constant's elder brother, was a member of the Institute, plus two of her nieces, Louise and Justine (2 letters) . The daughter of another brother, François, who had been at school with Constant in Amiens, was also in the community, and we have 3 letters addressed to this niece, Félicité. There were other relative in the Josephites as well. There was surely something of a family atmosphere about both Institutes in the

⁷ ADMJR/ A-23.

⁸ See Part I, Chap.4, p. 130.

⁹ See Part I, Chap.4, p. 141.

early days, apart from the family spirit so encouraged by van Crombrughe¹⁰

One final remark about the recipients of the letters: one, Pauline d'Halluin, who received 11 letters between 1862 and 1865, died only in 1942, always, we are told, proud of having known the Founder.

Concerning the format of the letters, those who, from their reading of the letters, know of the Founder's insistence on good handwriting, may be surprised to realise that his own left quite a lot to be desired. His writing is small and he often runs one word into the next.¹¹ When he recommends good handwriting to the Sisters, and at times he even demonstrates on the page how to form a letter, he usually adds that they should not copy his example and this is really not surprising. However, his letters are legible.

The letters are in good condition on the whole, having been well preserved. In the later years of his life, as we have seen already¹², van Crombrughe needed a secretary and during the last months of his life he was able only to sign the letters his secretary wrote out for him.

This then presents the material available which has been made the subject of the following analysis.

B. ANALYSIS OF THE LETTERS

In general the letters may be described as either of direction or concerning business, but at certain periods during the span of years that they are available, (1831 - 1865), one or other aspect tends to predominate. During the earlier years the letters are practically all of direction, that is from 1831 until 1839. Also in the early years there is real concern for each sister expressed. About 1833 the letters become a little more formal in tone and between 1833 and 1834 there is a new concern about study and the preparation of the professional life of the sister. It is during these years of the mid-30's that van Crombrughe writes so often about using good grammar and taking a lot of care of handwriting. Seen in this context it makes a lot of sense and is clearly not a fad of his.

During 1836 there is an important clarification of the way the Founder envisaged the Institute both spiritually and in its apostolic work. Towards the end of the year there is an accent on

¹⁰ For details of the van Crombrughe - Sspitaels family, see Appendix I.

¹¹ See, for example, ADMJR/ 7 - 12, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, 29 November, 1839. See also: ADMJR/ A - 21. Contained in this collection is a copy of a letter of van Crombrughe addressed to the Josephites, 17 February, 1832. It begins: "*Vous me demandez ce que je pense de la Physiognomonie et de l'art de connaitre les hommes d'après leur écriture.*" It is a model of good judgement. He says that while it is possible to recognise certain traits of character through the person's writing (and he explains these), this should not be taken as absolute and care should be taken not to exaggerate the helpfulness of such things.

¹² See Part I, Chap. 4, p. 180 - 181.

love that is new. From this time on Van Crombrugghe's direction of people takes clearer, stronger lines.

1838 was a year when a lot of illness and deaths occurred in the Congregation and the Founder's letters are full of encouragement as well as practical suggestions and advice on moderation in what concerned health, such as food and rest. From 1835 until 1840 there is a strong accent on joy in his letters.

The 1840's mark quite a big change. The letters seem to become rather distant, written in general rather than in personal terms, and often only concerned with business. Except for the letters to Olympiade, which continue in very much the same style as previously, the letters are less personal. During these years, too, he often writes how busy he is and apologises for not having written. However, when he writes on spiritual matters, a new gentleness is found.

Letters to Flore during the 1840's are surprisingly full of business, even though Olympiade was still the Superior General. From van Crombrugghe's letters one has the impression that Flore is the business woman par excellence", and she possibly was, because she certainly, even during those years, seems to have had her eye on many projects.

During the mid - 1840's a new generation of Sisters entered the novitiate and it is in the letters to these people that van Crombrugghe spells out clearly the spirit of the Institute. From this time onwards it is always to the younger Sisters he writes most clearly about the purpose of the Congregation.

As the letters move into the 1850's, they reach a rather low ebb. There are not so many of them kept, and those that remain are more concerned with business than spiritual matters. They lack the dynamism of the earlier letters and the gentleness of those that would follow. During these years van Crombrugghe appears to be tired and over-worked, but he does not state this clearly; it is rather the impression that one receives.

Towards the end of the 1850's there is another change. Possibly the Founder finds himself with more time. The letters are longer, more spiritually oriented. The style itself changes as well; they become wordier, although there are some very striking passages. One aspect that is very strong during this period is van Crombrugghe's frequent call to thanksgiving. It becomes a much more important theme during the later years than ever before, especially as he looks back and remembers what God has done for the Institute and for himself.

Quite suddenly, in his letters, van Crombrugghe becomes an old man. As well as remembering the past, he also becomes rather fussy, for example when he spends quite an amount of time deciding about suitable names for the novices. At the same time he had become the 'grandfather' for the young Sisters. His whole way of writing to them expresses this.

By about 1862 his letters show a real insistence on the will of God and Christ has become

his all, the centre of his life.

From the end of 1862 he uses a secretary nearly all the time, and something else emerges. He quite frequently writes giving messages for other sisters, saying that he was not able to write any more. There are many indications that in the past he had written to many more people. When we realise how many letters are in the Archives of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, plus approximately another 500 with the Josephites, we realise what a prodigious letter-writer he was.

During 1864 and 1865 there is a sense of him tidying up his affairs. He sends books, pictures and other articles to the different communities, deciding where he thinks things will be put to the best use. It is almost as though he knows when he is going to die and there is an urgency about leaving things in order.

On the spiritual level there is also a sense of his drawing things together and clarifying. His last letter is written to Flore within a week of his death. The last word that he addressed through her to his daughters is:

“The Queen of Angels is watching over you.”¹³

While studying the letters, 42 main themes were extracted. Any such division tends, of its nature, to be arbitrary and represents just one way of viewing the letters. That given there is still value in looking at the frequency of the themes. We have already seen how this helps us a little in understanding the person to whom van Crombrughe was writing and therefore enables us to enter a little deeper into an understanding of his correspondence.

Some themes are clear, such as joy and moderation. Others, like the will of God, include various ideas, such as abandonment to Divine Providence. The value of such an analysis is that it offers a view of the predominance of themes during certain periods and having studied the life of van Crombrughe, they may be situated within that context¹⁴. A good example of the usefulness of such a method is the theme of “joy”. This has always, and rightly so, been considered one of the most important attitudes recommended to the Congregation by the Founder. When seen in this context we realise that he wrote about it during the time of great difficulty within the community when many Sisters were ill and dying. Similarly for “thanksgiving”, which emerges clearly later in van Crombrughe’s life. So the themes are placed in the context of the life of the Founder and of the early Sisters.

It is important to remember, before examining the breakdown of themes, that this concerns the letters only and that these must be read in conjunction with the Spiritual Instructions and the

¹³ ADMJR/ 7 - 113, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, after 25 November 1865: “*La Reine des Anges veille sur vous. Je suis toujours très cordialement votre Père en Notre Seigneur Jesus-Christ, Constant van Crombrughe.*”

¹⁴ For a breakdown of the themes in chart form, see Appendix III, which includes an outline of the history of the Congregation and of the Founder so that these may be related to the occurrence of given themes.

Constitutions in order to get a more complete picture. However, they do accent the Founder's preoccupations at a given time.

C. DELINEATION OF THE THEMES

The themes most frequently used are those of Jesus Christ and spouse of Christ. Quite often these two are linked together. The attitudes most frequently recommended in relation to Christ are confidence, love, courage, gentleness, humility, generosity and obedience. They all occur many times.

When writing of the Heart of Christ, van Crombrugge usually associates it with the mercy of God, confidence and generosity as well as gentleness and humility. This is also linked with being an instrument of mercy in the hand of God.

When referring to God, van Crombrugge used a variety of titles. The simplest and most frequent is "Dieu", God, often written as "le bon Dieu", the good God. The next most popular title is that of Jesus as Spouse, with a variety of adjectives used. For example, "le Divin Epoux Jesus-Christ", the divine Spouse Jesus Christ, or "le bon et tendre Epoux", the good and gentle Spouse. "Jesus" is used very often, with various titles added, such as Master, model, brother, mediator, shepherd and so on; there is an enormous variety. The titles most often used to describe Christ, apart from Spouse, are Lord or Saviour.

Another title occurring quite often in reference to Christ is friend, and is used both in the sense of Christ is "ami", friend and we as Christ's. There are many other names of used, but these are the most frequent¹⁵.

Mary and Joseph are frequently the subject of the letters, Mary slightly more often than Joseph, possibly because of there being more feast days in honour of Mary, giving occasion to the Founder to write of her. In writing of Mary, van Crombrugge often links her with both Jesus and Joseph. The two attitudes most frequently associated with Mary are confidence and abandonment to the will of God. Confidence appears most often. Joseph, too, is often linked with confidence and also with generosity. Both are joined to the theme of being an instrument of mercy.

Another very important theme is that of the will of God and it appears in various forms, that is as acceptance of the will of God or abandonment to this will. It is naturally joined most frequently with obedience, but also very often to peace, humility, generosity and love.

Of the attitudes recommended by the Founder to be found in the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, that of confidence and trust comes first. He writes of this most frequently and consistently

¹⁵ I am grateful to Bernadette Lecluyse, D.M.J., for permission to use the fruits of her research concerning the titles of God in the letters of van Crombrugge addressed to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

throughout his life. Closely linked to this is courage. The two go hand in hand. The same is true for gentleness and humility. Both hold a place of importance and go along together through all the years.

Another theme that is of great importance is joy. The Founder puts a lot of stress on this, but as we have already remarked, it is important to note that this is particularly true during the 1830's, especially 1834 to 1839. From 1840 onwards it appears less frequently. We notice too, that during these years van Crombrughe writes about moderation as far as health, rest and diet are concerned and joy, courage and confidence as appropriate responses during times of trouble.

Another group of themes are those of love, love of God, and mercy of God. They are not particularly joined together (as they are in the Constitutions, Article on Charity)¹⁶, but the three themes are constant throughout the letters.

Instruments of mercy is a clearly recurring theme, although not used as frequently as others. It is steady and it is unique in as much as, apart from that of spouse of Christ, it is the only theme that speaks of a way of being, rather than either a devotion or an attitude. Spouse of Christ refers to the state of life of the religious, instrument of mercy to the particular call given to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. It is also, with the themes of Christ and Spouse of Christ, the theme that is linked with all the others in a unique way. It is especially joined, in order of frequency, to Jesus Christ, spouse of Christ, the Institute, zeal and service, the Church. The other clearly related topics are the Holy Spirit, Mary, the mercy of God, generosity and the Heart of Christ. Just from an examination of the frequency of these themes we have some picture of what van Crombrughe intended when he wrote to his daughters:

“You are the instruments of the mercy of the Lord.”¹⁷

An examination of the themes as they appear in the letters made by grouping together related topics, enables us to trace out the general lines of thought of Canon van Crombrughe's spirituality, that is his particular Way of assimilating Christ's message of salvation and responding to it in his life.

He was caught up by the mercy and the love of God as particularly expressed in devotion to the Heart of Christ; this led him to confidence and trust in the Lord and therefore the desire to search out and to accept the will of God in every circumstance of his life. The importance that he placed on a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ is also evident and is reflected in his use of the term “spouse of Christ”. This fascination with the mercy and the love of God plus his own union with Christ led him out to the service of others as an instrument of mercy in the hand of God, an

¹⁶ Constitutions, 1891, Art.160, “Charity”, with all its subdivisions of topics. See below, Chap.6, for a study of this article.

¹⁷ Constitutions, 1891, Art. 161, “Zeal for the welfare of youth”, p. 38 (Official English Text).

instrument marked particularly by gentleness, simplicity and joy. This was the spirit he wanted to communicate to his religious, whom he placed under the patronage of Mary and Joseph.

The remaining chapters of this thesis are given to an examination of these letters in greater detail, in conjunction with the Constitutions and the Spiritual Instructions, in order to try to understand more fully what van Crombrughe envisaged when he invited the Daughters of Mary and Joseph to be instruments of the mercy of the Lord.

CHAPTER SIX : GOD OF MERCY AND LOVE

A. GOD, ALL-MERCIFUL, ALL-COMPASSIONATE

In 1842 Constant van Crombrugge wrote to Flore Delhayé:

“I have asked particularly for you that Jesus deign to send His Holy Spirit who enlightens, who purifies, who sanctifies, that He would make of you instruments of mercy”¹. What did he have in mind when he wrote this?

In the past he has spoken of himself as being an instrument of God’s mercy for others; now he prays that his daughters would be the same.

Constant experienced God as all-merciful, all-compassionate. The Lord is the God who consoles us in all our tribulations; to whom all things are possible because to Him belongs all power”². When van Crombrugge had experienced desolation and difficulty during his life, it was the realisation that he was deeply and personally loved by the Father that gave him courage to go on. Because of that realisation he wrote:

“I am now more courageous, and more alive in the service of God so infinitely merciful.”³

Van Crombrugge experienced this love of the Father, His tenderness, most profoundly and it is this that he would speak about to his daughters. He wrote to them in their Constitutions:

“Of all the earthly love, the strongest and most enduring is maternal love. “Can a mother forget her child and even if she did forget yet I will not forget thee, says the Lord. God is not only a father filled with compassion for His children; He is not only as a tender mother; He is still more.”⁴

Constant went on to recall how wonderful it is when children meet their parents after a long absence and what a pleasure it is to meet old friends. These homely examples speak of a very practical love, lived in everyday circumstances. He quoted St. John Chrysostom as saying that God’s love surpasses the love of father or mother, or even spouse, as the light surpasses the darkness. His love

¹ ADMJR/ 7 - 19, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhayé, 14 August, 1842:

“*J’ai demandé pour vous en particulier que Jésus daigne vous envoyer son Esprit Saint qui éclaire, qui purifie, qui sanctifie, et qu’il veuille faire de vous des instruments de sa miséricorde.*”

² Constitutions, 1891, official English text, Article 160; “The Presence of God”, pp.35-36. (For convenience, the number given in brackets is the page number in the cyclostyled edition in use; here it is (17).

³ See Part I, p.142, AMDJRI 6 - 91, letter of van Crombrugge to Olympiade Derville, 28 February, 1838.

⁴ Constitutions, 1891, official English text, Article 160: “The Presence of God”, pp.35-36 (17).

goes beyond the deepest human expressions of love⁵

Van Crombrugge also pointed out that the titles most pleasing to God are those of all-merciful and all-compassionate. This is the name that God revealed to us and that the Father prefers us to use of Him, He is the God of mercy, of tenderness and of compassion, slow to anger, full of patience and of grace and always faithful, who remembers His mercy⁶.

In one of his Spiritual Instructions, the Founder recalled that God is the author of all good and it is from Him that we receive everything.

“Recall to mind the marvels of creation.”⁷

We are invited to remember the beauty of creation, of the world around us and from this general consideration to go into more detail, to a more personal level. To recall all that the Father, through Christ, has done for each of us. We have been called into existence and received life; the physical body, health, strength and other qualities, are all gift. The very individual gifts of intellect and memory, of character, generosity, courage and sensitivity are all from God. Then we have the gifts of God in the area of the spiritual life, our baptism into Christ and, above all, of being made an adopted child of the Father through Christ, of becoming “a child of the mercy of God”⁸. All of this gives cause for thanksgiving and for moving forward to serve others to bring them to the knowledge of the love of God. it should also lead us to praise God:

“I would remind all my children that the Gospel says to us, ‘The shepherds returned (from the poor stable) glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen’. Such are the effects that the sight of the great lavishness of God’s love for men produced among these simple people.”⁹

Van Crombrugge continued by asking what effect had been produced in us after all the years that we have received the goodness and mercy of God: are we, too, led to praise God for His goodness as were the shepherds? Are we led to a greater love of God and of our neighbour?

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ cf. Ex. 33:19. See also KOEHLER, T., “Miséricorde”, *D.Sp.*, Tome X, 1980, cols. 1313-1328. Also Lk. 1: 46-55.

⁷ Instructions Spirituelles, 3^e: “Ce que vous devez au Seigneur Jésus. Reconnaissance, Amour”:
“Rappelez dans Votre esprit les merveilles de la creation.”

⁸ Ibid., “..devenir un enfant de la miséricorde de Dieu”.
The whole of this instruction recalls to mind the ‘Contemplation to Attain Love’ of St. Ignatius, the final contemplation of the Spiritual Exercises.

⁹ AMDJR/ 02-97, letter of van Crombrugge to Marine Coulon. 30 December, 1850: “*Veillez rappeler à toutes mes chères Enfants, que l’évangile nous dit: ‘Les bergers s’en retournèrent (de la pauvre étable) glorifiant et louant Dieu de tout ce qu’ils avaient vu et entendu’. Tels sont les effets que produit chez ces gens simples, la vue du grand prodige de l’amour de Dieu pour les hommes.*”

“Love very much, love with all your heart.”¹⁰

Before a God of tenderness and compassion, there is no more place for fear of any kind.

“No more fear, no more sadness, these are dangerous enemies.”¹¹

Within van Crombrughe’s experience, the love and mercy of God has been so profoundly personal that it overcame all fear in him. His insistence that the Sisters should be without fear would indicate that he himself knew and understood fear and uncertainty, but was able to go beyond them to receive God’s love. Therefore he could insist, as he so frequently did in his letters:

“No more fear, but plenty of confidence, plenty of love.”¹²

Although there is no place for fear before a merciful God, in order to be able to experience mercy means that one can recognise the need to receive it. We experience God’s mercy when and as we recognise ourselves as sinners in need of redemption. It is the sinner who is transformed by love. As van Crombrughe wrote:

“Be at the service of the whole Church. Be there as a pardoned sinner who has found peace and rejoices in the merciful love of God.”¹³

Bringing God’s mercy to another, being an instrument of His mercy, does not mean some kind of bountiful action, but rather recognition that I have need of God’s mercy. There is no place for judgement of another, but only compassion for a fellow sinner. When Christ invites us to be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful He speaks in terms of love both of one’s neighbour and of one’s enemies. It is an invitation to perfection, to holiness¹⁴.

He implies pardoning without passing judgement. Van Crombrughe expressed it in the following terms:

‘Charity does not exact that you should be blind to what is wrong... Let nothing shock you or offend you; on the contrary, have compassion on the weaknesses, the frailty of others.’¹⁵

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, “Aimez donc beaucoup, aimez de tout votre coeur.”

¹¹ ADMJR/ 5-3, letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal, 24 May, 1835. “*Plus de crainte, plus de tristesse: ce sont les ennemis dangereux.*”

¹² ADMJR/ 20-15, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Superior, (unknown date) “*Plus de crainte, mais beaucoup de confiance, beaucoup d’amour.*”

¹³ ADMJR/ List c-18. This is a standard quotation from the Founder, frequently used in the Congregation. I have therefore retained this official translation.

¹⁴cf. Mt. 5:48 and Lk. 6:36.

¹⁵ Constitutions, 1891, official English text, Art.160: “Obligations imposed on us by Charity”, p.27 (12).

The Lord is not blind to what is wrong in us, but neither is He shocked or offended. He does not reject us, but rather shows us His love and His mercy.

In order to understand better these concepts in van Crombrugghe, we need to have some idea of how he understood the word “mercy”. When he was a young man in the seminary he might have been taught that mercy was primarily the virtue that shows compassion to another and that brings us closer to God. Normally, the expression of mercy was understood to be through almsgiving or other practical help offered. To enter into the feelings of another, to empathise with them, was not commonly thought of as “mercy”¹⁶. There was an emphasis placed within the Church on the practice of the corporal works of mercy, such as teaching, nursing and helping the poor. Hence the attitude toward the poor that was common at the time, and that we saw exercised in the van Crombrugghe family¹⁷

At the time of the Founder, definitions like that of Saint Augustine that defined mercy as “heartfelt compassion for another’s misery, which drives us to do what we can to help him”¹⁸, were very acceptable. Mercy was primarily seen as a virtue that responds in an active and practical way to the misery and suffering of others. For mercy to be a true virtue, it has to be regulated by reason. Although it is not an emotion, the virtue functions through the emotions¹⁹. Man, in his weakness, identifies himself with the weakness of the other and responds.

God does not do this, because he does not experience weakness in Himself, but He sees the misery and is moved to respond, to reach out to the person. God’s mercy is wholly gratuitous, as was Christ’s acceptance of human suffering²⁰. Each time we experience the forgiveness of sin, we experience the mercy of the Lord. As the person experiences God’s mercy and love, so they are able to respond, in mercy, to others’ needs. All mercy is rooted in the love of God and in His faithfulness to us.

There was a clear awareness of this in the early nineteenth century. In the biblical “Dictionnaires” in use at the time, two texts of Matthew and Luke were frequently linked together²¹. ‘Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’²², is the invitation given to man to imitate God. The

¹⁶ SIMON, R., (Prêtre, Docteur en Théologie), LeGrand Dictionnaire de la Bible (ou explication littérale et historique de tous les mots propres de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament), Lyon, Pierre Bruyset Ponthus, 1768, p.1 7-160.

¹⁷ See Part 1, Chap.I.B: “The van Crombrugges and the Spitaels”, pp. 9-15.

¹⁸ St. AUGUSTINE De Civitate Dei, IX, 5, ed. MIGNE, Pat.Lat. Vol.41, col. 1. 261. “*Quid est autem misericordia quaedam in nostro corde compassio qua utique si possumus subvenire compellimur.*”

¹⁹ St. THOMAS AQUINAS, Summa Theologica (Trans. R.J.Batten, O.P.), Blackfriars 1975, 2a 2ae, Q.30, “Mercy”, pp.208-221, art. 2 and 3

²⁰ Ibid. (Trans T.Gilby, O.P.), Blackfriars, 1967; Ia, Q.21, art.3 Pp.73-85.

²¹ SIMON, R., op. cit., art. “Miséricorde”, pp.157-160.

second text, “Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful²³, is the invitation to become more like the Father in His attribute of mercy, that is, in His way of loving and of being. It is an invitation to conversion²⁴.

Particularly in the devotional books mercy was understood on a much deeper level. The “Memoriale” of Arvisenet may be taken as a good example of this type of book²⁵. We have already seen how the author of this work placed a great stress on gentleness shown towards the people who approached the priest, particularly in the Sacrament of Penance. Arvisenet wrote,

“Son, be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful.”²⁶

He continued by advising the priest to take his example from the father of the Prodigal Son, therefore never discouraging, but always encouraging the penitent. The priest is invited to have the feelings, the “bowels” of mercy²⁷.

These books also led people to rely on God’s mercy. In one book recommended to the Sisters by van Crombrughe “Instructions pour éclairer les âmes pieuses”, by Quadrupani²⁸, the readers are encouraged to have trust and confidence in God. He wrote that if the readers were troubled and distressed, they should throw themselves into the arms of the God of divine mercy²⁹. He encouraged people not to make such great efforts in trying to speak of God but rather be satisfied just to be before His eyes and pleasing to Him. When Quadrupani wrote of the Sacrament of Penance the same ideas recur. He called it the Sacrament of mercy which should be approached with confidence and serenity, and he remarked that long examinations of conscience do nothing but tire the spirit and freeze the heart³⁰. This way of writing about mercy goes back to the Middle Ages, especially to Saint Bonaventure, when the mercy of God was usually understood as receiving forgiveness for sin, which then led the person to the worship of God³¹.

²² Mt. 5:48.

²³ Lk. 6:36.

²⁴ DUPONT, J., “L’appel à imiter Dieu en Matthieu 5:48 et Luc 6:36”, *Rivista Biblica*, 14, 1965, pp.146-149.

²⁵ ARVISENET, *Memoriale Vitae Sacerdotalis*; See Part I, Chap.2, pp.53-56.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, Ch. LV, “De misericordia in sacro poenitentiae tribunali tenenda”.

²⁷ ARVISENET, *op. cit.*, “Habere viscera misericordiae benignitatem, humilitatem modestiam, patientiam.” Ch.LXII, “De mansuetudine”, p214

²⁸ QUADRUPANI, C.G., *Instructions pour @clairer les Ames Pieuses*, Paris, Vaton. 1852; also: *Documenti per tranquillare le anime nelle loro dubiezza*, Torjno, Stamperia Reale, 1829.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Ch.3, “Oraison”.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Ch.5, “Sacrement de Miséricorde”.

³¹ KOEHLER, T., *art. cit.*, col. 1324; ST. BONAVENTURE, “De triplici via”, chap.2, *Opera*, ed. de Quaracchi, t.8,

The result of receiving the Lord's mercy should lead one not only to show such mercy to others, but also to a greater love of God and to praise of Him. Bérulle who had so much influence on the formation of the priests in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries³², and who had a strong sense of Scripture, wrote:

“One of your first and continuing dispositions must be to adore, to love, to praise the mercy of God.”³³

Whether van Crombrughe was aware of it or not, both his life and his writings reflect these different aspects of the word “mercy”. His whole life was given to active acts of mercy. His original reason for founding the Congregations was to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. His continued encouragement of the religious was to the same end.

As we have already seen, all mercy is rooted in God's love which rests on His covenant with man and He cannot be unfaithful. Man, however, can be unfaithful and often is. Van Crombrughe encouraged his religious to rely on God's faithful mercy³⁴. In fact, it is the poor who rejoice in the Lord's covenant of mercy, as Mary sang in her song of praise³⁵.

Van Crombrughe was very aware of this aspect of his teaching; both the Constitutions and the Letters lead us to this conclusion. Perhaps he was less conscious of the other aspect of mercy that he opened up for his religious, that of compassion, which expresses the feminine aspect of mercy. In the Constitutions, van Crombrughe quoted the passage from the prophet Isaiah, about the tender love of a mother, and concluded:

“God is not only a father filled with compassion for his children; He is not only as a tender mother; He is still more.”³⁶

The love of a mother is the most intense imaginable. Her whole being has been involved in giving life to her child and that experience she is never able to forget. It is part of her very life. Both the

pp.8-9.

³² Ibid.; See Part 1, p.38.

³³ Ibid., col.1327; Bérulle, Lettre 856, ed. J.Dagens, t.3, Paris, 1939, p.574; Lettre - Oeuvres, ed. Migne, Paris, 1856, col.1431. “*Une de vos premières et plus continues dispositions doit être à adorer, à aimer, à louer la miséricorde de Dieu.*”

³⁴ This reflects the Old Testament word “hesed”, or as it was usually translated into Greek, “*ἔλεος*”. This is a masculine word which basically expresses two aspects. First, “hesed” is the active fidelity to an engagement or an alliance. God's mercy rests on the covenant and therefore man can appeal to it. When man is unfaithful mercy takes on the meaning of pardoning grace. The second meaning is love, pity, sympathy invoked in one by another, but it refers to an act rather than to an emotion. “Hesed” is a very complex word. The meaning is clearly explained in John Paul II, Encyclical, *Dives in Misericordia*, Vatican Polyglot Press, 1980, p.20, footnote 52. see also KOEHLER, art.cit., passim.

³⁵ Lk. 1:47-55.

³⁶ See above, this chapter, p. 23.

most tender and gentle affectivity, as well as the force and strength of effective love are brought together in the image of the mother³⁷. It is this that the Founder underlines for his religious. He went further by pointing out the name of God revealed to Moses; all-compassionate, all-merciful. This text to which van Crombrughe refers (Exodus 34:6-8) is one of the richest in the Old Testament:

“The Lord, the Lord, God of tenderness and of pity, slow to anger, rich in grace and fidelity.”³⁸

It would seem that this is the “still more” to which van Crombrughe referred.

In the passage just before this we see God speaking to Moses of His freedom to show mercy to those He chooses. Saint Paul when he comments on this in his letter to the Romans, makes it clear that the mercy of God is beyond our understanding, it is a mystery. It is also in this text that he explains that God chose Moses as a “vase of His infinite mercy”³⁹.

It would seem that there were two aspects to van Crombrughe’s understanding of God’s mercy. First as the normally accepted virtue expressed through active response to the needs of others. Second, as the vast, deep mystery of God’s compassion. It would appear that he wrote about this from his own personal experience of that God who had touched him deeply and told him of his personal love. Van Crombrughe referred to both these aspects with their richness of meaning and of mystery, when he used the word “mercy”.

That Constant van Crombrughe was helped in his understanding of the mercy of God through his devotion to the Heart of Christ is beyond doubt. As this devotion had spread in the early nineteenth century so a deeper dimension of the mercy of God and of the appropriate response came to be understood. During his days in Amiens, Constant had discovered this devotion which gave him such an insight into the mercy of God.

“It was the infinite mercy, incomprehensible love that urged the second person of the Blessed Trinity to come upon earth, to take upon Himself our human nature.”⁴⁰

³⁷ In the Old Testament, the word that expressed this kind of love was ‘rah^amim,’ the love of a mother. From the same root came “rehem” (singular) meaning the mother’s womb and “raham” (plural) meaning to have love, pity, compassion. Hence the root of the word compassion as used in the Old Testament, means to be moved to the depth of one’s being, to the bowels, to the womb. See also below, B: “Hearts like His Heart”, p.52-57.

³⁸ KOEHLER, art. cit., col.1317: “Yahvé, Yahvé, Dieu de tendresse (misericors, οἰκτιρῶν; rahum = tendre) et de pitié (clemens, ἐλεημων hanum = propice) ; lent à la colère (patients, μακροθυμος = magnanime), riche en grâce (multae miserationes: πολυελεος; hesed = amour inébranable) et en fidélité (verax = vrai; οἰκτιρῶν = gardent la justice: ‘emeth = solidité).”

³⁹ Romans 9:23; “σκευη ελεουζ” vessels (or instruments) of mercy. Vessels (or instruments) is used here in a passive, receptive way. See below, Chap.6, E: “Conclusions”, p. 94.
See also MAURER, C., “σκευοζ” in T.D.N.T., Vol. VII, pp.363-365.

⁴⁰ Constitutions, 1891, Official English Text, Art.194: “The Sacred Heart of Jesus”, pp.81-82, (43).

Everything that Constant van Crombrughe had to say to the Congregation is centred around this mystery.

B. HEARTS LIKE HIS HEART

1. The Heart of Christ

For the people of Europe in the nineteenth century, the revelation of the love of God through devotion to the Sacred Heart came at an important time in history. They had not only suffered exteriorly, as we have seen, through revolution and war, but they had also suffered spiritually in the sense that religious thought and practice had been very austere. They had been influenced by the Lutheran reform and Protestantism with its rather cold approach to God. In France and elsewhere the effects of Jansenism and its teaching would last well into our own century with its rigidity and its stress on the utter unworthiness of man. The combined coldness of Jansenism and Protestantism, and the intellectualism of the Gallicans, was broken through by Christ with a new dimension of the revelation of His love, of His Heart.

The experience of the love and mercy of God and the ability of man to return that love was like a new springtime.

It has been said that only a lover is able to pronounce the word “heart” with understanding⁴¹. In this sense it sums up the whole of the person, the wholeness of the individual, the core of being. It is not a word that is synonymous with love, for the heart is also the seat of hatred. It is more than the interiority of the person, but rather the wholeness of a person. It cannot be limited to the physiological. In Scripture the use of the word “heart” denotes the seat of psychological activity, the core, the centre of the person. It is the heart that is discerning, that listens to the Lord. While man looks on the outward appearance of another, God looks on the heart.

“The Lord said to Samuel: Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, for the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”⁴²

It is in the heart that we feel sorrow, joy, desire, anxiety, sympathy and all the other human motions⁴³. In the Old Testament the heart is also the seat of intellect, of rational function, of

⁴¹ RAHNER, K., “Theology of the Spiritual Life”, Theological Investigations, Vol.3, London, D.L.T., 1965, Part 5, “Devotion to the Sacred Heart”, p.321.

⁴² 1.Sam. 16:7; see also LEFEVRE, A., “‘Cor et Cordis affectus’ - usage Biblique” in D. Sp., Vol. II-2, col. 2278-2307.

⁴³ Some of the texts that indicate this: Ps. 34:18 (sorrow); Zech.10:7, (joy); Ps. 21:2 (desire); 1.Sam. 9:20 (anxiety); Hos. 11:8 (compassion)

understand and of will. Therefore it is the heart that is hardened through sin, or that turns from the Lord⁴⁴. It is also the heart that is converted.

“Return to me with all your heart....rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.”⁴⁵

In the New Testament we find the same meaning. The heart is the core of man, the centre of the functions of his soul and spirit. It is the place of the emotions, the centre of reflection, the place of will and decision making. It is therefore the centre of discernment and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit⁴⁶.

On the cross, St. John tells us, the side of Christ was opened with a spear and blood and water flowed out. This action was full of symbolism as well as being an historical fact. Christ's side was pierced so that he could be proved dead and removed from the cross. The Father used the action to glorify the Son and reveal the full meaning of the cross and the eternal lasting love of the Father for man. It reveals the power of His love to convert, to purify, to draw people to Himself; to give life to His Church, symbolised by blood; to pour out His Spirit, symbolised by water⁴⁷. In our turn we glorify the Heart of Christ, by allowing ourselves to be converted, transformed.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is rooted in Calvary and the opening of the side of Christ. During the latter half of the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century, this devotion was, in a sense, a synthesis of current Catholic thought and doctrine. Moral behaviour, dogma and devotion were brought together in terms of the love of Jesus Christ, the expression of God's love.

God is love and out of love He gave everything to man, his being, and the entirety of creation. He spoke His Word out of love, and became incarnate, present among men. In His love He listens to man and out of compassion for their weakness and sinfulness saves and redeems them. Although writing considerably earlier, St. Francis de Sales expressed this vision very clearly.

“In the Church of Jesus Christ, all pertains to love, everything is based on love, and all is love. God, who created man in His image, wills that

⁴⁴ For example, Is. 46:12.

⁴⁵ Joel 2:12-13. There are many texts that refer. to conversion of heart, for example, Jer. 31:33.

⁴⁶ Gal. 4:6.

⁴⁷ MALATESTA, E., S.J., “Blood and Water from the pierced side of Christ, (Jn. 19:34)” *Segni e Sacramenti nel Vangelo di Giovanni*, Studia Anselmiana, 66, Rome, 1977, p.171. An excellent work on the Heart of Christ is the compilation made by VEKEMANS, R., S.J. , *Cor Christi, Historia - teologia, Espiritualidad y Pastoral*, Colombia, Instituto Internacional del corazón de Jesus, 1980.

in man, as in God, all is ordered to love and for love.”⁴⁸

In 1675 Christ revealed to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque His Heart of flesh as a symbol of His love. He spoke to her, in revelation, of the rejection of that love by man and invited her to make reparation. Christ also invited her to encourage others to do the same.⁴⁹ The basis of devotion to the Sacred Heart is love, but an integral and necessary part of it is reparation. Reparation is offered to the person of Christ and is particularly concerned with the sacramental presence of Christ in the Eucharist, understood as the Sacrament of His love.

The words of Jesus to Margaret Mary in His revelation were:

“Here is that Heart which has loved men so much that it held nothing back, exhausting itself and consuming itself in order to demonstrate its love for them. And in return I receive nothing but ingratitude from most men, along with irreverence and sacrilege and the coldness and rejection they feel towards me in this Sacrament of love. But what pains me even more is that even hearts consecrated to me treat me like this.”⁵⁰

In this same revelation, the Lord asked that there be a special day set aside to honour the Sacred Heart, especially to make reparation for the insults received in the Blessed Sacrament.

The Heart of Christ signifies first, a sense of interiority which strengthens the inner person in both faith and love. Second, belief in the love of God, so far beyond the comprehension of sinful man, because it is expressed on the cross, an act of love surpassing our imagination. Third, it invites us to reparation, to suffer with Christ when we see the wasted love of Christ. Expiation is offered to the Father only in, with and through Christ. He has already redeemed us, but we are invited to share in His expiatory suffering for the sin of the World. This is the true meaning of compassion. Compassion⁵¹, “suffering-with” another, does not mean just a sympathetic desire to change a situation as we see it or as we see the sinful effects of sinful nature in another, but rather to become

⁴⁸ BAUNARD, *op. cit.*, pp. 196-197:

“Dans l’Eglise de Jésus-Christ, tout appartient à l’amour, tout est fondé sur l’amour et tout est amour. Dieu, qui a créé l’homme à son image, veut qu’en l’homme comme en Dieu, tout soit ordonné par l’amour et pour l’amour.”

⁴⁹ Some would say that this was not new; for example, see SOLANO, J., S.J., *Historical Development of Reparation in devotion to the Heart of Jesus*, Heart of Christ Spirituality Series, I, Rome, Centre Cuore di Cristo, 1980, who supports his argument with certain texts from the Fathers of the Church, through until the time of St. Margaret Mary. However, it was through Margaret Mary that reparation became important in popular devotion. This is the view expressed by Pius XI in the Encyclical, *Miserentissimus Redemptor*.

⁵⁰ SOLANO, J., S. J., *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁵¹ In the Gospels, the word “compassion” (εσπλαγγισθη) is Only used 12 times and either speaks of Christ or is a word used by Him in His parables, to speak of the Father (e.g. the Prodigal Son). It is a divine attribute and may be described as “the movement of the womb of God”. It is a passionate, profound word and the mystery is expressed in the healing miracles of the New Testament. The Gospel references are: Mt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Mk.1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Lk. 7:13; 10:33; 15:20. In Saint Paul it is develop as a Christian virtue and expresses a total response. Its most clear use is in Col. 3:12.

one with Christ and through Him to reach out to our brother or sister. It means to unite our whole life with Christ's, with its freely and willingly accepted sufferings and pains as well as joys. This demands faith of a most profound nature in the Lordship of Christ and in the power of His resurrection.

2. "In the school of Jesus Christ"

In the writings of Canon van Crombrughe we find both the attitudes of returning love for love and reparation. On the whole though, reparation holds a less important place than love. If we look again at the consecration of the Institute to the Sacred Heart⁵² which he gave as a type of last will and testament, we see there that it is love which predominates. In fact, in that consecration, there is no mention at all of reparation, only thanksgiving and love. In the "Act of Reparation"⁵³ that was recommended in the Ceremonial of the Institute for use on the first Friday of the month the form is different. The traditional act of penance practised within the community accompanying the prayer, enforced an attitude of penance rather than of love. But the prayer is based in love and there is a plea to the Lord to fill the Sisters with His love. The Act of Reparation given by the Founder to the Congregation begins:

"O adorable Heart of our divine Saviour, Heart that loves us with an infinite, eternal and unchangeable love: O gentle Jesus, who has neglected nothing in order to show us the loving sentiments of your fatherly affection; Jesus, you were immolated and utterly destroyed on the cross and each day you are sacrificed for us on our altars, what right do you not have to the reciprocal love of man? But, alas, their ingratitude is as astonishing as your love for them is incomprehensible!"⁵⁴

The prayer continues by expressing readiness to accept all that the Lord may require in justice, to satisfy the debts contracted by personal sinfulness, but this prayer is made in trust.

"We appear before you confidently entreating your great mercy. Pardon, O merciful Heart of Jesus, a thousand times pardon; all the moments of our lives are marked by your goodness and still we have been ungrateful... Could we by our tears, wipe out the injury that we have done to your love by our tepidity, our indifference, our forgetfulness, our cowardice. Could our lament satisfy your justice and make your divine mercy come down on us

⁵² See Part I, Chap.4, p.179.

⁵³ Institut des Dames de Marie, Prières, Bruxelles, 1927, pp.50 - 54

⁵⁴ Ibid., "O coeur adorable de notre divin Sauveur, coeur qui nous aimez d'un amour infini, éternel et immuable! O doux Jésus, qui n'avez rien négligé pour nous manifester les tendres sentiments de vos entrailles paternelles ; Jésus, qui vous êtes immolé et anéanti sur la croix et qui chaque jour vous sacrifiez pour nous sur nos autels, quel droit n'avez-vous pas à l'amour réciproque des hommes? Mais, hélas! leur ingratitude est aussi étonnante que votre amour pour eux est incompréhensible!"

and on all your Church.”⁵⁵

Addressed specifically to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the prayer continues by asking Him to accept the desire to make amendment and the offer to make reparation for all the acts of sacrilege and the blasphemies that are made by people, Christian and otherwise, to Christ’s Sacred Heart.

Then follows

“Do not turn us away from your face, do not close the ear of your Heart to those who love you.”⁵⁶

Finally, this Act of Reparation ends in a prayer to be filled with the Lord’s love:

“May we, Jesus, may we, in the sanctuary of your charity, always renew our strength and our love. May we find there light, happiness and mercy for ourselves and for those whom your charity has put in our care.”⁵⁷

In the “Manuel” that he wrote while still Principal of Aalst College, van Crombrughe writes briefly about the Heart of Christ and we have a clearer idea of his thought. He writes that the principal element of this devotion is the “immense love” which Christ has shown us through His death on the cross and through His continuing presence in the Blessed Sacrament. He then lists the purposes of this devotion as first, to recognise and honour this love and the tenderness that Christ has shown us, and second to repay in whatever way possible the indifference of mankind in general⁵⁸.

From the Founder’s letters to individual sisters, it is evident that he sees the Sacred Heart of Jesus as the centre of mercy and love. Someone, at an unknown date, when compiling a collection of the Founder’s instructions concerning education, chose a small quotation from him to illustrate the cover. It states quite simply

“Holiness must find its source in the Heart of Jesus.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, “*Nous paraissions devant vous, implorant avec confiance votre grande miséricorde. Pardon, ô coeur miséricordieux de Jésus, mille fois pardon: tous les instants de notre vie sont marqués par vos bienfaits et cependant nous avons été ingrates !...*”

Puissions-nous effacer par nos larmes l’outrage que nous avons fait à votre amour par notre tiédeur, notre indifférence, notre oubli, et nos lâchetés. Puissent nos gémissements satisfaire à votre justice et faire descendre votre divine miséricorde sur nous et sur toute votre Eglise.”

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, “*Ne nous rejetez pas de votre face, ne fermez pas l’oreille de votre coeur à celles que vous aimez.*”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, “*Puissions-nous, Jésus, puissions-nous dans le sanctuaire de votre charité, retremper sans cesse nos forces et notre amour! Puissions-nous y trouver lumière, onction et miséricorde pour nous et pour celles que votre charité nous a confiées.*”

⁵⁸ *Manuel de la Jeunesse Chrétienne*, pp.122 - 125

⁵⁹ ADMJR/ B-37.

Nothing sums up more clearly his thought. The Heart of Christ is both the source and the means of holiness, the centre therefore of mercy and love.

‘Yes, remain in the heart of Jesus Christ, take from there your impulses, your direction; completely immerse yourself in the furnace of sacred fire; you will emerge purified, recreated.’⁶⁰

There is nothing sentimental about his understanding of this devotion; on the contrary, as he wrote on another occasion:

“May we firmly love the Heart of our Divine Saviour.”⁶¹

The Founder seems to say that if we can learn to listen to this Heart, to be in tune with it, then all else will follow.

“Listen to what this tender friend says to your soul: receive with thanksgiving the graces which He offers you; be confident, be courageous, be gentle and humble. The rest will come to you without effort.”⁶²

When Constant van Crombrugge recommended to his daughters that they “put themselves in the school of Jesus Christ”⁶³, he was speaking of this school of the heart, and the special lessons to learn from the Heart of Christ, are gentleness and humility.

In the Constitutions, in the Article on the Blessed Sacrament, van Crombrugge quotes Christ’s words:

“Come to me all who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and by burden is light.”⁶⁴

He continues:

“Come and try; come and learn from your experience, how great is

⁶⁰ ADMJR/ 6-8, letter of van Crombrugge to Olympiade Derville, 26 March 1835: “Oui, tenez-vous au coeur de Jésus-Christ ; prenez la vos impulsions, votre direction ; plongez-vous tout entière en ce brasier du feu sacré ; vous en sortirez purifiée, recréée.”

⁶¹ ADMJR/ 18-38 (2e), letter of van Crombrugge to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 24 October, 1855: “*Puissions-nous amer solidement le coeur de notre divin Sauveur.*”

⁶² ADMJR/ 19-31, letter of van Crombrugge to Adele Delacroix, 18 Nov 1858: “*Ecoutez ce que dira à votre âme ce tendre ami; recevez avec reconnaissance les grâces qu’il vous offrira; soyez confiante, soyez généreuse soyez douce et humble. La reste vous arrivera sans efforts.*”

⁶³ Congregation of the Ladies of Mary, Chapter of Renewal, Rome, 1970, Chapter I, “To Know Christ Jesus”, p.8.

⁶⁴ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.184: “Visits to the Blessed Sacrament”, p.64 (34).

the goodness, the mercy of God.”⁶⁵

On another occasion he wrote to a Sister:

“As to meditation you will make progress by accepting the invitation of your divine Spouse who tells you to learn from Him that He is gentle and humble of heart, and it will be not only in meditation, but in all the practices of religious life.”⁶⁶

We are invited to allow ourselves to take on the sentiments, the reactions of Christ; to know Him so well, to be so one with Him, that it is Christ alone that we bring to those with whom we live and work.

“Rely on Him whom you carry in your heart, whom alone you seek. Great is the mystery of charity! Jesus Christ works with your hands, speaks through your mouth; thus your works will be precious and your words will touch souls.”⁶⁷

C. LIVING IN CHRIST

1. Spouse of Christ

To be an instrument of mercy in the hands of the Lord, to be free to be used in whatever way He wishes, means to become more and more one with Christ. The Founder wrote to one of the mistresses of novices:

“You are blessed to have to form privileged souls destined like you, to serve the Church of God, to occupy distinguished places in the Heart of Jesus Christ, to be the instruments of His mercy, to be His spouses.”⁶⁸

If we are not totally attached to Christ, it is not possible to serve His Church in the way that we have been called to do. It is this that van Crombrughe underlines, whenever he wrote of being a ‘spouse of Christ’, the term that he used to express intimacy with Christ. He meant by it that the heart is given totally and completely to Christ, that He is first in our affections, love and life. The

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64 (34).

⁶⁶ ADMJR/ 19 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Emélie Lecroart, 18 October, 1831: “*Quant à la méditation, vous y ferez des progrès en vous rendant à l’invitation de votre divin Epoux qui vous dit d’apprendre de lui qu’il est doux et humble de cœur, et ce ne sera plus seulement dans la méditation, mais dans toutes les pratiques de la vie religieuse.*” (Trans: BATTEN, B., *op. cit.*, p.16.) For the full text of this letter see Appendix VIA.

⁶⁷ BATTEN, B., *op. cit.*, p.23, from ADMJR/ C - 17.

⁶⁸ ADMJR/ 18 - 116, letter of van Crombrughe to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 3 April, 1859: “*Vous êtes heureuse d’avoir à former des âmes privilégiées, destinées à servir, comme vous, l’Eglise de Dieu, à occuper des places distinguées dans le cœur de Jésus-Christ, à être des instruments de sa miséricorde, à devenir ses épouses?*”

Founder made it clear that this is not a sentimental, meaningless expression, but that if it is to be proved true it must be seen in the reality of the person's life.

“I do not ask that you have an affective love all the time, but that this love be effective, that is to say, real. Go on, my dear daughter, go where the Spouse calls you, follow His voice and fear nothing.”⁶⁹

To be a spouse of Christ, as this is understood by van Crombrughe, is to be free from fear and sadness, without any looking back on the past, or any fear of present demands and difficulties. It is to allow Christ to freely dwell in the heart in love.

“Never stop either at sad ideas, nor at the sight of faults committed and so on; but rejoice in Jesus Christ your divine Spouse, who must be everything for you, here and in heaven.”⁷⁰

To be able to rejoice in this relationship with Christ means to be given primarily to Him without division or sharing of affections.

“The Son of Mary would have the undivided heart of the young lady who is destined to serve His Church in the family of ‘Mary and of Joseph His foster- father.’”⁷¹

In using the expression ‘spouse of Christ’ van Crombrughe was following in a long tradition of the Church which reaches back into Scripture and is full of meaning. In the Old Testament the name “beloved” meant literally, “she has obtained pity” or “she is loved in mercy”, which the prophet Hosea proclaimed as the new name⁷²

“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness; and you shall know the Lord.”⁷³

This theme is taken up again in the New Testament by John the Baptist when he proclaims himself

⁶⁹ ADMJR/ 02 - 28, letter of van Crombrughe to Marine Coulon, 19 August, 1836: “*Je ne demande pas que vous ayez un amour affectif en tout temps, mais que cet amour soit effectif, c'est-à-dire, réel. Allez, ma chère Fille, allez où l'Époux vous appelle, suivez sa voix et ne craignez rien.*”

⁷⁰ ADMJR/ 18 - 11, letter of van Crombrughe to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 12 May, 1837: “*Ne vous arrêtez point non plus à des idées tristes, à des vues des fautes commises, etc.; mais réjouissez-vous en Jésus-Christ, votre divin Époux qui doit vous tenir lieu de toute chose ici et dans le ciel.*”

⁷¹ ADNJR/ 6 - 360, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 1845: “*Le Fils de Marie qui veut avoir le coeur, sans partage, de la jeune demoiselle et qui la destine à servir son Église, dans la famille des filles de Marie et de Joseph son Père nourricier.*” For the use of the term “undivided heart”, see Vatican Council II, The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, ed: FLANNERY, A., O.P., The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1975, “Lumen Gentium”, Chap.5, paragraph 42, p.401.

⁷² Hosea 2:1; “Ruhama” = “She has obtained pity” or “She is loved in mercy”. See Dives in Misericordia, p.19; see also KOEHLER, art. cit.

⁷³ Hosea 2: 19 - 20.

the friend of the bridegroom, “who stands and hears him and rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice’⁷⁴

Throughout the tradition of the Church, especially the Fathers, the name “spouse’ has been applied to both the individual’s relationship with Christ and the relationship between Christ and His Church. The first to apply the title “spousa Christi” to the consecrated virgin was Tertullian and in the third and fourth centuries the usage was very common.

What makes the virgin the “spouse of Christ” is not the fact of her vow of chastity, but rather it is her relationship with Christ which includes and demands virginity. She can have no other spouse than Christ. To speak of her as a spouse of Christ speaks of this profound relationship with Him⁷⁵

For van Crombrughe the term ‘to be a spouse of Christ’ meant intimacy with Christ, to be totally given to Him, in a self-giving that will never change.

‘You belong to Jesus Christ forever.’⁷⁶

The Founder sums it up in the Constitutions when he writes:

“You are the spouse of God. Your sole occupation is to love your divine Spouse... you have your being, you act, for God alone.”⁷⁷

This love of God will be expressed in service of our brothers and sisters but is none the less a personal love, an expression of our relationship with Christ. In other words, in his direction of the Sisters, van Crombrughe did not describe a mystical type of spiritual experience but rather a mysticism of action. St. Francis de Sales describes this type of experience as an “ecstasy of action” and he contrasts it with the ecstasy of the intellect and of the affections.

“As regards ecstasies, they are of three kinds: the first is in the understanding, the other of the affection and the third in action the first is in splendour, the second in fervour, the third in deeds; the first is made by admiration, the other by devotion and the third by operation.”⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Jn. 2:30

⁷⁵ ADNES, P., “Manage Spirituel”. *D.Sp.*, Tome X, col. 388-408. See also LECLERCQ, “L’expérience mystique d’après S. Bernard”, *Studia Missionalia*, t.26, 1977, pp.59 - 71. Saint Ambrose used the expression both with reference to the individual’s relationship with God as well as that of the Church. For the individual virgin he frequently used also the expression “spouse of the Word”.

⁷⁶ ADMJR/19 - 21, letter of van Crombrughe to Félicité van Crombrughe, 9 August, 1848: “*Vous êtes à Jésus-Christ pour toujours!*”

⁷⁷ *Constitutions 1891*, Official English Text, p.77 (41).

⁷⁸ St. FRANCOIS DE SALES, *Traité de L’Amour de Dieu. Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales*, édition complète d’après les autographes et les éditions originales, enrichie de nombreuses pièces inédites, publiée par les soins des religieuses de la Visitation, d’Annecy. Monastère de la Visitation, Annecy, 1892 - 1964, Vol.27, VII, 4, p.21: « *Mais quant aux extases sacrées, elles sont de trois sortes: l’une est de l’entendement, l’autre de l’affection et la troisième en l’œuvre ; l’une se fait par l’admiration, l’autre par la dévotion, et la troisième par l’opération.* »

This means a total going out of self; everything that is done is in Christ, for Christ, through Him and with Him. It is based on a total abandonment of self to the Father. Francis de Sales tells us that these people are really blessed who are taken out of themselves in this third way, the ecstasy of action, but who, possibly, never experience any special phenomena in prayer.

“Many are the saints in heaven who were never in ecstasy or rapturous contemplation. How many martyrs and great saints, both men and women, appear in history who had no other privilege in prayer than that of devotion and fervour? But there was never a saint who did not have ecstasy and rapture of life and work, gained by overcoming himself and his natural inclinations.”⁷⁹

This expresses well what van Crombrugge, nearly two centuries later taught his daughters. Relationship with Christ has its value in terms of service. It is basically the “Contemplation in Action” of St. Ignatius.⁸⁰ Finding God everywhere, in the whole of creation, in each person that we meet, we serve Him. In the Constitutions, the Founder wrote:

“It is God who preserves us, who upholds us, who prevents us falling back into nothingness whence He has taken us. It cannot then be difficult to find Him in whom we live and without whom we should cease to be. Accustom yourselves to find God everywhere”⁸¹

Van Crombrugge had already underlined this when in writing of love of one’s neighbour, he reminded us that Jesus Christ takes the place of our neighbour; thus, in serving our neighbour, who ever that may be, we are serving Jesus Christ⁸².

⁷⁹ ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES, op. cit., Livre VII, p.31:

“*Plusieurs Saints sont au Ciel, qui jamais ne furent en extase ou ravissement de contemplation; car, combien de Martyrs et grands Saints et Saintes voyons-nous en l’histoire n’avoir jamais eu en l’oraison autre privilège que celui de la dévotion et fervour? Mais il n’y eut jamais Saint qui n’ait en l’extase et ravissement de la vie et de l’opération, se surmontant soy même et ses inclinations naturelles.*”

⁸⁰ For a complete study of the meaning of Ignatian contemplation in action, see CONWELL, J.F., Prayer Proper to the Society of Jesus, accords a to Jerome Nadal, Spokane, 1957. There are many studies made of this theme central to Ignatian spirituality. See also:

DE GUIBERT, J., *La Spiritualité de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Institutum Historicum, Rome, 1953. See also the recent study of MEJIA, R. La dinámica de la integración espiritual, *Buscar y hallar a Dios en todas las cosas*, Roma, C.I.S., 1980.

⁸¹ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.160, “The Presence of God”, pp.35-36 (16-17).

⁸² Ibid., Art.160, “Means of Acquiring the love of our neighbour”, pp.30-31 (14). Note that Article 160 contains 8 sub-articles.

2. Returning love for love

The basic understanding of Canon van Crombrughe is beautifully expressed in a long letter he wrote in 1836, when he himself was apparently passing through a time of difficulty⁸³.

“The basis of your love for all created beings must be in the love of God. Now, by the grace of the Saviour, divine love reigns in your heart. Yes, Jesus Christ possesses your soul and it is in Him that you wish to love: may divine love rule all the loves that you have towards creatures. If this is not so, if you love them otherwise, you would be looking for your own interest, your taste, in a word your love of self and not the good God, nor your neighbour. The means of loving reasonably and at the same time in a saintly way, is to love according to God; it is to love God in all that we love.”⁸⁴

For the Founder, to love God without returning that love in a practical way through love of ones neighbour, puts in question the whole spiritual life of the person and its vitality. This is made evident in all his writings both as a Founder, in the Constitutions and Spiritual Instructions, and privately in his letters to the Sisters. It is only through love, through charity, that it is possible to become an instrument of mercy.

“Pray for the gift of charity. Fulfil the obligations imposed by charity, and the God of charity will be your reward. You will be the instruments of His mercy; your labours will be crowned with the blessings of heaven. For those who know how to love are capable of great things.”⁸⁵

For van Crombrughe charity meant both a very warm, affectionate love, and a practical love shown to others, be they Sisters, students, those with whom we might work or come into contact in daily life.

⁸³ See Part I, Chap.4, B: Spiritual Journey, p. 136-144,

⁸⁴ ADMJR/ 20-3, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown religious, 28 December, 1836: “*Le fondement de votre amour pour les créatures doit être l’amour de Dieu. Or, par la grâce du Sauveur, l’amour divin règne dans votre coeur. Oui, Jésus-Christ possède votre âme et c’est en lui que vous voulez aimer; que le divin amour règle donc tous les amours que vous portez aux créatures. S’il n’en était par ainsi, si vous les aimez autrement, vous y recherchiez votre intérêt, votre goût, en un mot, votre amour propre et non le bon Dieu, ni votre prochain. Le moyen d’aimer raisonnablement et même saintement c’est d’aimer selon Dieu ; c’est d’aimer Dieu en tout ce que nous aimons.* »

⁸⁵ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.160, “Friendships that are contrary to charity”, pp.32-35 (15-16).

“Love each other as I have loved you, says our divine Master. Yes, Jesus Christ has loved us with an effective and real love, a persevering love and truly sincere. So that is how you must love each other, that is to say more in effect than by words, without allowing imperfections and even faults to diminish your mutual affection, because it must come from God consequently it must be warm, that is to say, from the heart.”⁸⁶

These themes are repeated over and over again by the Founder⁸⁷, but always with some practical hint offered to help in the difficult day to day task of really loving the person who may irritate us to distraction. For example, van Crombrugghe wrote about what it means to put into practice the recommendation of Christ that we should do to others as we would wish them to act towards us. The test is really quite simple.

“Consult your own heart; how does it prompt you to act in matters that concern your own interests? Well, as you would do for yourself, you must do to others. Here, in this matter, be your own judge.”⁸⁸

There is little doubt left in one’s mind about appropriate action after such a criterion has been offered. This is part of the effective love that van Crombrugghe recommended. He quoted St. John Chrysostom as saying:

“Charity does not consist in words only, not in an empty interchange of external civilities, but in acts of real kindness.”⁸⁹

He then added that we should draw some practical conclusions and apply them to ourselves.

In speaking of a man who used Scripture so freely and who was clearly at home in both the Old and New Testaments, it is rather presumptuous to point out one text that might be called his

⁸⁶ *Instructions Spirituelles*, 11, “Affection réciproque », (29 January, 1834): “Aimez vous les-uns les autres, ainsi que je vous ai aimés d’un amour effectif et réel, d’un amour persévérant et vraiment cordial. Voilà, donc, comme vous devez vous aimer les uns les autres, c’est-à-dire, bien plus par effets que par les protestations, sans que les imperfections et les défauts même diminuent votre affection réciproque, car elle doit être cordiale, c’est-à-dire, venir du cœur.”

⁸⁷ See for example, ADMJR/ 34, letter of van Crombrugghe to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux 10 December, 1837; ADMJR/ 17-46, letter of van Crombrugghe to Clothilde Minne, 31 March, 1838; ADMJR/ 19-33, letter of van Crombrugghe to Flore de Myttenaere, 4 October, 1861; ADMJR/ 02-8, letter of van Crombrugghe to Marine Coulon, 19 August, 1838, etc..

⁸⁸ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art 160, “Obligations imposed on us by Charity”, pp.25 - 28 (11 - 12).

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.25 - 28 (11 - 12).

“favourite”, but, because of direct commentary and implied reference, one could argue that it is Chapter 13 of Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, the hymn of love. ‘If I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor and if I should deliver my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing’

It was probably in the article on Charity in the Constitutions, in commenting on this hymn of love, that van Crombrughe best spelt out what it meant to be an instrument of mercy. Having quoted St. Paul, giving the characteristics of charity, that it is not proud and so forth, he continued by stating that it is by raising our minds and hearts to God, that we learn practical charity which becomes patient and kind. He continued:

“Kindness bears with insult, drives away all vengeful feelings, allays resentment and by the tact and tenderness which animates all its acts, heals the secret wounds of those of whom it has to complain.”⁹⁰

Charity, love, is the effective way of bringing God’s mercy and His healing love to others. Through charity we can rejoice in the good things that happen to another and feel joy with them “thus providing an antidote to the poison of jealousy”⁹¹ that can so easily creep into our lives and ruin relationships. As van Crombrughe wrote further on in this article:

“Never let a feeling of coldness towards anyone, no matter who the person may be, take possession of you. Never let any impression contrary to charity remain in your mind, the results of such may be a festering sore that would cause great suffering to your soul.”⁹²

At the same time, effective love does not mean being blind to the faults of another. On the contrary:

“Such a child is passionate, jealous, disdainful; such a Sister is too sensitive, shows want of judgement, weakness, partiality. But are these reasons for treating them less kindly, for being less attentive to them?”⁹³

Again, there is the reminder that it is Christ that we meet in our neighbour, but while van Crombrughe wrote:

“It is Jesus Christ who is the object of your ill-humour, your impatience, your want of charity.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.160, “Charity and Union”, pp.20 - 25 (8 - 11).

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., Art.160, “Means of acquiring the love of our neighbour”, pp.30 - 32 (13 - 15).

⁹³ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.160, “Obligations imposed by Charity”, IV, pp.25 - 27 (11 - 12).

⁹⁴ Ibid., Art.160, “Means of acquiring the love of our neighbour”, pp.30 - 32 (13 - 15).

he also wrote that it is

“Christ Himself who gladly receives the tokens of love that you offer Him in the person of your Sisters in religion, of a pupil, even of one who is a stranger to you.”⁹⁵

In a unique way, each person holds within herself the gifts of God and it is the recognition of this which leads to love⁹⁶. Only God is perfect charity and, as van Crombrugge wrote, if we wait for the other to reach perfection before loving them we will never begin to love⁹⁷. It is only God who can triumph over our natural attractions and antipathies. We need to rely on Him both to lead us and teach us in this. Van Crombrugge ended this particular letter by writing to the Sister that to love, to really love, is to be purified, to be caught into the fire of divine love. In the Constitutions the Founder expresses this very clearly:

“As a forest on fire is completely purified from all elements of decay, so when charity sets a soul on fire, it consumes in it all that might injure the seed of divine grace: it fertilises this seed and causes it to germinate the most precious fruits in great abundance.”⁹⁸

This is why von Crombrugge said to his daughters, “pray for the gift of charity”, that the seed of divine grace might be fertilised and grow in each one. This is the only gift for which the Founder insisted that we should pray. Where other gifts are concerned he recommended that we ask the Lord for them, but regarding charity he places an obligation on us to ask for it, to pray for it.

“Trained as you have been in the school of our Lord and admitted to intimate union with your divine Spouse, you will ask of Him, who is its source, to grant you charity.”⁹⁹

We can only recognise Christ in others, grow in charity, when we have learned to know Him and the only means to that knowledge is by giving time to Him, being with Him in silence and prayer.

“There must be a void within oneself, an absence of distraction, for God to fill in each one of us. In this silence and solitude God speaks to the heart.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.30 - 32 (13 - 15),

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Art.160, “Conversation”, pp.36 - 38 (16); also ADMJR/ 20 - 3, letter of van Crombrugge to an unknown religious, 28 December, 1836

⁹⁷ Both the letter and the article on “conversation” continue in this way.

⁹⁸ *Constitutions 1891*, Official English Text, Art.160, “Friendships contrary to charity”, pp.32 - 35 (15 - 16).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, Art.160, “Charity and Union”, pp.20 - 25 (8 - 11).

¹⁰⁰ BATTEN, B., *op. cit.*, p.16; ADMJR/ List E, p. 9.

There is a jealousy of God that calls each individual to Himself:

“God wants to make us feel that He alone is our true consoler; He is rightly named a jealous Spouse of our souls.”¹⁰¹

While always and effectively encouraging the Sisters to real, effective charity and to generosity in the service of others, and while making clear through the invitation to be an instrument of mercy that apostolic activity is an essential of their vocation, van Crombrugge insisted on the absolute necessity for each Sister, to give place to the Lord in her life; otherwise it is impossible to be that instrument, to place ourselves in God’s hand and to be used as He wills.

“The divine Spouse must have the first place; He must, in a sense, entirely occupy heart.”¹⁰²

3. Prayer and solitude

Although Constant van Crombrugge did not write frequently of solitude and recollection and rarely uses the word “contemplation”, they are an essential part of his understanding of the apostolic religious life. What he has to say is very clear. In the Spiritual Instruction on the subject which he gave in 1836, he insisted on the necessity of silence in the life of each Sister, in order that the work of education (in which they were wholly involved during that period) may be fruitful. In other words, silence is an essential element of apostolic ministry. He reminded us that without silence, a true silence that brings us close to God, we are like the sounding brass and tinkling cymbal that St. Paul speaks about.

“You must nourish the taste for withdrawal and silence so indispensable to this life hidden in God with Jesus Christ.”¹⁰³

Further on in the same Instruction he insisted:

“The work of instruction demands great recollection, infinite patience because those who are impatient, or are dissipated in instruction make useless efforts.”¹⁰⁴

Silence is essential in order to listen to God more especially if we are to speak of Him to others.

¹⁰¹ ADMJR/ 20 - 4, letter of van Crombrugge to an unknown religious, 15 October, 1838:

“*Dieu voulant faire sentir que lui seul est notre consolateur véritable, il est à juste titre un époux jaloux de nos âmes.* »

¹⁰² ADMJR/ 02 - 14, letter of van Crombrugge to Marine Coulon, 17 July, 1838: “*La divin Epoux doit avoir la première place; il doit, dans un sens, occuper votre coeur tout entier.* »

¹⁰³ Instructions Spirituelles, 18, “La solitude et le recueillement”. “*Vous devez nourrir le goût pour la retraite et le silence, si indispensable à cette vie perdue en Dieu avec Jésus-Christ.*”

¹⁰⁴ Instructions Spirituelles, 18, “La solitude et le recueillement”:

“*Le travail de l’instruction demande bien plus on grand recueillement, une patience infinie, car qui s’impatiente ou se dissipe en instruisant fait des efforts inutiles.* »

“Never when we speak of God, are our words so impressive as after we have been listening to Him speaking Himself, and when we are filled with His Spirit.”¹⁰⁵

Silence, not for the sake of silence, but in order to listen to God. As van Crombrughe wrote more simply one time to Olympiade:

“You will always become more powerful in word and work when you become like the echo of the voice of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰⁶

In the same article in the Constitutions we read:

“Recollection, real silence, the fixing of the mind, the thoughts on Jesus Christ dwelling in your heart - these supply the fuel for that sacred fire and nothing on earth can justify the risk of allowing it to wane, for then it must die out altogether.”¹⁰⁷

There is no doubt that it is in the Constitutions that we find the Founder writing most clearly about solitude. In the Instruction, as we have just seen, he established the need for recollection, but in the Constitutions, he spoke explicitly about this need. Silence is the means of acquiring the recollection necessary for both prayer and activity.

In silence, too, we learn to know ourselves:

“It is in the silence of this solitude of the mind and heart that the soul learns to know herself, to purify herself.”¹⁰⁸

And in silence we find peace, the gift of the Holy Spirit, that this may be given to others. For van Crombrughe peace was a clear mark of the work of the Holy Spirit and he taught that all effort should be made to remain in true peace. This is not a peace for its own sake, but the kind of peace that Christ calls blessed in the Beatitudes, that peace that warrants the name of child of God. In fact, van Crombrughe wrote, people who are filled with the peace of the Spirit, are marked by the characteristics of the Father, there is a family resemblance and that is why they are called the children of God.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.175, “Dissipation of Mind”, pp.53 - 54 (28).

¹⁰⁶ (106) ADMJR/ 6 - 360, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 1833:
“*Vous serez toujours aussi puissante en paroles et en œuvres, quand vous serez comme l'écho de la voix de Jésus-Christ.*”

¹⁰⁷ (107) Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, *loc. cit.*, pp.53 - 54(28).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Art.159, “Recollection”, pp.18 - 1.9 (6 - 7).

¹⁰⁹ ADMJR/ 5 - 38, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Sister, Superior of Mouscron, at an unknown date:
“*En effet, ils porteront les glorieux caractères d'enfants de Dieu, par la ressemblance qu'ils auront avec le Père qui n'a que des pensées de paix.* » For a full translation of this letter and a photocopy of the original, see below, Appendix VI, D.

The Founder wrote of peace as a particular mark of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, and saw it in terms of a triple peace:

“Peace towards God, to submit all to His will, Peace towards one’s neighbour, a life of gentleness and patience, Peace with oneself, a life of humility and trust in Jesus Christ.”¹¹⁰

Recollection is to be found both in the midst of activity as well as during the time set aside for prayer.

“Amidst the multiplicity of your occupations and the cares of your office, take care that your heart ever watches before God.”¹¹¹

It is in coming close to the Lord that we find both the strength and the support needed:

“Have recourse frequently to your divine Spouse. He is near you: He commends your efforts to please Him; He encourages you; His divine hands are ever raised to bless you.”¹¹²

In silence and solitude the mind has the opportunity to enter into communion with Christ and at the same time discover the mercy of the Lord. The heart becomes the place where Christ establishes His throne of love and mercy:

“It is in recollection... that Christ establishes within them (His spouses) the throne of His mercy that He makes them in some sort the dispensers of His gifts.”¹¹³

It is only through allowing ourselves time and silence to be with Christ that we may be transformed by Him into instruments of mercy for others. This is what van Crombrughe was explaining when he wrote:

“Thus you will become an instrument of divine mercy: you will really love God and you will be in the hands of the merciful one a means of drawing others to this same happiness.”¹¹⁴

To be an instrument of mercy means to live a life of love expressed through prayer and service.

¹¹⁰ Instructions Spirituelles, 10, “Amour de la Paix”, trans. BATTEN, B., op. cit., p.18: “*La paix avec Dieu; soumettre en tout à sa volonté. La paix avec le prochain; pratiquons la douceur et la patience. La paix avec nous-même, habituons-nous aux obligations que nous imposent l’humilité, la confiance en Jésus-Christ.*” The same ideas are expressed in the letter cited above (5 - 38, note 109).

¹¹¹ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.159, “Recollection” pp.18 - 19 (6 - 7).

¹¹² Ibid., Art.175, “Dissipation of Mind”, pp.53 - 54 (28).

¹¹³ Constitutions, 1891, Official English Text, Art.159, “Recollection”, pp.18 - 19 (6 - 7).

¹¹⁴ ADMJR/ 7 - 1, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, 20 September, 1834: “*Ainsi vous deviendrez un instrument de la miséricorde divine: vous aimerez Dieu réellement et vous serez entre les mains de la miséricorde, un moyen pour en attirer d’autres au même bonheur.*”

“Love God and serve Him generously as we are asked by infinite goodness; isn’t that all we could desire? I do not know a more real perfection that would be less subject to illusion.”¹¹⁵

For the Founder, prayer was basically abandonment of oneself into the hands of God who is all-merciful and loving; therefore we always pray with confidence, even in times of dryness and darkness or any other difficulties.

“In so far as the absence of Jesus Christ troubles you, in so far as you fear to have displeased Him, be certain that His love is in your heart, that you are His friend and that you will experience (His presence) when the trial is over.”¹¹⁶

He often wrote about spiritual dryness, giving encouragement and trying to build up confidence. At the same time he insisted that it is God whom we seek in prayer, not His consolations. Once he wrote to the novice-mistress to tell one of the novices who was being disturbed by dryness:

“That is what it is to serve God for God and not for felt consolations.”¹¹⁷

Van Crombrughe pointed out that one of the dangers in prayer is that we make of it a matter of routine. He went on to explain the danger:

“Avoid routine - it cripples all prayer. It is all the more dangerous because it blinds us to the uselessness of what we are doing, and gives us a false security - that of having fulfilled an external obligation.”¹¹⁸

In his correspondence there are no instances of van Crombrughe’ writing about how to pray, that is, he offered no method, but he did tackle the question by outlining some of the problems and offering encouragement. One aspect of prayer that he wrote about is prayer as a means of discerning the will of the Father.

“But how, you will ask me, how may I know the will of God? By prayer, by meditation; by that interior voice which He lets us hear

¹¹⁵ AMDJR/ 6 - 289, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 30 December, 1842: “*Aimer Dieu et le servir généreusement comme nous y engageant les infinies bontés qu’il a pour nous, n’est pas la tout ce que l’on peut désirer? Je ne connais pas de perfection plus réelle est qui soit moins sujette à des illusions.*”

¹¹⁶ ADMJR/ 13 - 16, letter of van Crombrughe to Justine van Crombrughe, undated, but somewhere between 1863 and 1864: “*Tant donc que l’absence de Jésus-Christ vous afflige, tant que vous craignez de lui déplaire, soyez certaine que son amour est dans votre coeur, que vous êtes son amie et que vous les sentirez quand l’épreuve sera terminée.* » For the full text of this letter, see Appendix VI, C.

¹¹⁷ ADMJH/ 03 - 17, letter of van Crombrughe to Anne-Marie Pouthieux, 24 March, 1835: “*C’est là servir Dieu pour Dieu et non pour les consolations trop sensibles.* »

¹¹⁸ BATTEN, B., *op. cit.*, p.16; ADMJR/ C - 17.

from time to time; the directions of a director or a confessor.”¹¹⁹

Here we may recall too, that the director that van Crombrughe normally envisaged for the sister was her own superior. So in this instance he was linking prayer and obedience as a means of discernment of the will of God. Another time, one Christmas season, he wrote to Olympiade suggesting that she fix the ‘eye of the heart’ on the star, whether that be interiorly through inspiration, or exteriorly through other people, but to follow the star and like the Magi, it would lead her to Jesus¹²⁰.

To conclude, we see that van Crombrughe’s attitude towards prayer, silence and solitude, was that each is essential to, and at the service of, apostolic ministry. Prayer or solitude are not luxuries but essential elements of the type of vocation that the Sisters are called to live, essential therefore in becoming a suitable instrument for the Lord to use to bring His mercy to others. The Founder expresses it thus in the Constitutions:

‘The active life is of service to our neighbour, but it is so only with the aid of the contemplative life, which is moreover necessary to ourselves.’¹²¹

To use a favourite expression of the Founder:

“Without Jesus we labour in vain.”¹²²

4. The Lordship of Christ

“May Jesus Christ be our support, our guide, our hope and all our love”¹²³. With these words, Constant van Crombrughe proposed that Christ be totally central in the life of the religious, that He be Lord of all, reigning over the heart, mind, the very being of the individual. While he gave place in his teaching to the Father and to the Holy Spirit it is on Christ that he focused his attention both in his formal writing and, more frequently, in his spontaneous expressions. In his use of Scripture both explicit and implied, van Crombrughe mainly used the synoptics, St. John and the letters of St. Paul. Occasionally he made references to the epistles of John and James, but

¹¹⁹ ADMJR/ 11 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Bathilde Delhay, 1832:

« *Mais comment, allez-vous me dire, comment pourrais-je connaître la volonté de Dieu ? Par la prière, par la méditation; par cette voix intérieur qui se fait entendre de temps en temps; par les avis d’un directeur, ou d’un confesseur.* »

¹²⁰ ADMJR/ 6 - 51, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 6 January, 1837: “*Ayez toujours, comme les Mages, l’œil du cœur sur l’étoile, soit intérieure, soit extérieure. ...Suivez cette étoile promptement et généreusement et ainsi que les Mages vous arriverez toujours à Jésus.* »

¹²¹ Constitutions, 1891, Official English Text, Art.175, ‘Dissipation of Mind’, pp.53 - 54 (28).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ ADMJR/ 03 - 17, letter of van Crombrughe to Anne Marie Ponthieux, 5 June, 1835: “*Que Jésus-Christ soit notre soutien, notre guide, notre espoir et tout notre amour.* »

essentially he was Pauline in his understanding of Christ and quite frequently in his letters he made use of Paul's own words. For instance, when he wrote to Soeur Julie, then still Superior General, he used Paul's words to the Philippians as his own for the Sisters:

“With what sincerity I love them, with the tenderness (in the bowels) of the divine Saviour, and how much I wish that their love may grow more and more in wisdom and in knowledge so that they may be able to discern what is better and that their conduct may be pure and blameless until the day of Jesus Christ.”¹²⁴

In a letter which he wrote towards the end of his life, van Crombrughe clarifies his vision of Christ:

“Jesus, indeed, is our mediator’.¹²⁵

Quoting the letter to the Hebrews, the Founder reminded the Sisters that Christ ever lives to intercede for us before the Father. He commented what a powerful reason it is for us to have great confidence in Jesus and to love Him. It is a source of consolation that should keep us from falling into excessive fear. In the first of the Spiritual Instructions entitled “Some reflections on Advent”, he had written on the same theme and used the same quotation.

“Jesus is also our model”¹²⁶, he continued in the same letter of 1859. He is there for us to study, to keep constantly before our eyes through meditating on the humanity of Jesus, which means, the Founder wrote, not only seeing Jesus on the mountain, but throughout all the situations of His life from His infancy onwards.

“It is therefore on this perfect example that you will regulate your thoughts, your affections, your words, your actions, everything of your inner self and of your exterior person.”¹²⁷

In the “Instruction” the list is more detailed, it is through studying Christ that we learn to regulate thoughts, desires, words, opinions, actions, tastes and inclinations. There is nothing that is not

¹²⁴ ADMJR/ 0 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Soeur Julie, Rév. Mère Générale des Soeurs de Marie, Aalst, 29 March, 1835:

“Avec quelle sincérité je les aime dans les entrailles du divin Sauver, et combien ardemment je désire que leur charité croisse de plus en plus en lumière et en intelligence afin qu’elles sachent discerner ce qui est meilleur et que leur conduite soit pure et innocents jusqu’au jour de Jésus-Christ.”

Quoting Phil. 1:8 (own translation). It is interesting to note here the choice of his text, one of the few in which the word used is “σπλαγγνα” meaning literally the “bowels” of the divine Saviour, that is to be moved with the deepest feelings possible. See above, p. 50 and p. 57, footnote 51.

¹²⁵ ADMJR/ 4 - 24, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Superior, 18 December, 1859:

“Jésus en effet est notre Médiateur. »

¹²⁶ Ibid., “Jésus est notre modèle. »

¹²⁷ Ibid., “C’est donc sur ce parfait exemplaire que vous réglerez vos pensées, vos affections, vos paroles, vos actions ; tout votre intérieur et jusqu’à votre extérieur.”

brought under the Lordship of Christ.

“Jesus is also our brother”¹²⁸. Van Crombrugge reminded the religious that it is Jesus who has placed them in this relationship with Him. In the letter he explained this by using the example of Magdalene when, after the Resurrection, Christ told her to go and announce the Good News to His brothers, that He had risen (Jn. 20: 17). In the “Instruction” van Crombrugge explains this also in terms of our being invited to be the children of God.

“Look at the love the Father has for us; He wishes us to carry the name of children of God, and that we should be such indeed.”¹²⁹

In both the letter and the “Instruction”, the Founder continues that there is one title that is special to women consecrated to God and it is the most affectionate, “Jesus is your spouse.... you are the beloved of His divine heart”¹³⁰. This needs no more comment here as we have already seen how he understood this title¹³¹.

As van Crombrugge wrote to a young sister, Christ should increasingly occupy our minds and hearts:

“Try to become used to thinking a lot about Him, to being occupied with Him, to speaking of Him to acting for Him.”¹³²

This type of text occurs very frequently in his letters; he never seems to tire of repeating the same ideas. Another frequent expression of the Founder is a concluding phrase which he used after having explained some point or other: “so love Jesus”. For him that is everything.

Devotion to the Name of Jesus, which the Founder encouraged from the earliest days of the Institute, also brings us to recognise the Lordship of Christ.

“May the Name of Jesus enlighten us, heal us, and strengthen us.”¹³³

In the Constitutions van Crombrugge explained this devotion in terms of relationship with Christ,

¹²⁸ ADMJR loc. cit., “*Jésus est aussi notre frère.* »

¹²⁹ Instructions Spirituelles, 1: “*Voyez quel amour le Père a pour nous; il veut que nous portions le nom d’enfant de Dieu, et que nous le soyons en effet.* »

¹³⁰ ADMJR/ 4 - 24, letter of van Crombrugge to an unknown Superior, 18 December, 1859: “*Jésus est votre Epoux ... Vous êtes les bien-aimées de son divin Coeur.*”

¹³¹ See above, section C,I: “Spouse of Christ”, p. 63 - 66.

¹³² ADMJR/ 19 - 28, letter of van Crombrugge to Justine Beyser, 26 May, 1858: “*Tachez de vous habituer à penser beaucoup à lui, à vous occuper de lui, à parler de lui, à agir de lui.* »

¹³³ ADNJR/ 4 - 15, letter of van Crombrugge to an unknown Superior, 19 January, 1846: “*Que le nom de Jésus nous éclaire, nous guérisse et nous fortifié.* »

Saviour and Spouse. It is here that he summed up his teaching and understanding of this relationship.

“He has never ceased for a moment to think of us, to love us ... Seated now at the right hand of His Father He watches over us, He directs us, He defends us and gives us unceasing proof of His love.”¹³⁴

Our response to this should be one of both love and zeal, that is both prayer and service, founded and rooted in Christ.

As Christ is Lord of all creation, van Crombrughe wrote, so we must allow Him to be the Lord of our hearts.

“Our heart is yours ... reign there alone as absolute Master.”¹³⁵

If really Christ is the Lord in our lives, we will allow Him to bring everything in us under His reign. Here is the centre of the spirituality that van Crombrughe offers his daughters. We are reminded that right at the very beginning of the foundation, in 1818, the Sisters were invited to make a choice, whether to serve the Lord or not, whether to enter into the battle with Him or not¹³⁶. The same invitation is still given today. To allow Christ to be truly Lord in us means that we allow ourselves to become suitable instruments in His hands. A good instrument offers no resistance to the user but is entirely fitted to the hand. It is through allowing Christ to reign in us that this is made possible, and that He is free to use us as He wishes:

“May we say with truth, that we would see Jesus reign in us without resistance and permit Him to exercise His gentle reign over our heart and over our mind, and over our words and over our actions, and over the interior person and the exterior person.”¹³⁷

D. INSTRUMENTS OF MERCY THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

If we are to allow Christ to be the Lord in our lives, so that we may become more perfect instruments in the hand of God, this can only happen through the power of the Holy Spirit. Although van Crombrughe writes infrequently about the place of the Holy Spirit in our lives, when

¹³⁴ Constitutions, 1891, original text, Art.191, “The Holy Name of Jesus”, pp.76 - 78 (40 -41).

¹³⁵ Constitutions, 1891, original text, Art.191, “Du Saint Nom de Jésus”, “*Notre cœur est à vous ... Réglez-y, réglez-y seul en maître absolu.* »

¹³⁶ See Part I, Chap.3, p.102.

¹³⁷ ADMJR/ 6 - 37, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 16 March, 1837: “*Puissions-nous dire avec vérité, que nous voulons voir régner Jésus en nous, sans résistance et lui permettre d’exercer son doux empire et sur notre cœur et sur notre esprit, et sur nos paroles et sur nos actions, et sur l’homme intérieur et sur l’homme extérieur.* »

he did so it was very clear and incisive. In 1835, Anne-Marie de Ponthieux was novice-mistress in Mouscron and the Founder wrote to her about this. Because of its clarity and importance we will examine his letter in full.

I like to believe, dear Sister, that you will take measures for preparing the way for the Holy Spirit in the souls which I have confided to you in the name Mary and Joseph and of the Spouse Himself. I address my prayers to God the Saviour to obtain that the gifts of the Spirit which He has promised us, will find no obstacles in us. It is thus that we will become perfect instruments in the hands of divine mercy and that we will serve Religion. May all fear, may all sadness be banished from your hearts. Jesus Christ and His holy grace must dwell there. May Jesus Christ be our support, our guide, our hope and all our love. The Holy Spirit will speak, will find in us the disposition He needs in order to work in us according to the divine plan.”¹³⁸

This letter offers the clearest explanation of how van Crombrughe envisaged our response to the invitation to become Instruments of mercy in the hand of God. First, it is for us to be open to the coming of the Holy Spirit.

“Open your soul to the merciful working of this Spirit of strength and of light.”¹³⁹

More formally in the Constitutions the Founder writes:

“The lights and other graces of the Holy Spirit are of particular necessity to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph because, apart from their own perfection, they must lead others in the ways of salvation, enlighten and form the students which God has confided to them. They will therefore give every Monday to the third Person of the Holy Trinity for obtaining the gifts and fruits which are proper to Him.”¹⁴⁰

The Founder goes on to remind the Sisters to study the movements of their soul, so that they will

¹³⁸ ADMJR/ 03—17, letter of van Crombrughe to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, 5 June, 1835: “*J’aime à croire, chère Sœur, que vous aurez pris des mesures pour faire préparer les vies à l’Esprit Saint dans les âmes que je vous ai confiées au nom de Marie et de Joseph et de l’Epoux lui-même. J’adresse mes vœux au Dieu Sauveur pour obtenir que les dons de l’Esprit qu’il nous a promis, ne rencontre point d’obstacle en nous. C’est alors que nous deviendrons ces instruments parfaits entre les mains de la divine miséricorde et que vous rendront des services à la Religion. Que toute crainte, que tout chagrin soit banni de vos cœurs. Jésus-Christ et sa sainte grâce doivent y habiter. Que Jésus-Christ soit notre soutien, notre guide, notre espoir et tout notre amour. L’Esprit parlera, trouvera en nous les dispositions dont il a besoin pour opérer selon les vues divines.* »

¹³⁹ ADMJR/ 02 - 82, letter of van Crombrughe to Marine Coulon, 6 May, 1845: “*Ouvrez votre âme aux opérations miséricordieuses et cet Esprit de force et de lumière.* »

¹⁴⁰ Constitutions 1891, Art.190, “The Holy Spirit”, p.70 (40).

always be ready to follow the impulse of the Spirit. It is also to the Holy Spirit that they should turn in moments of weakness, of fear, of doubt or in any other need. There is no place for fear or sadness. If one is fearful it is not possible for the Lord to use us as He wills. But more importantly, because the heart is the dwelling place of the Lord, there is no place for fear. As van Crombrughe wrote on another occasion:

“Watch over yourself carefully so that sadness never comes to trouble the heart where Jesus has chosen to dwell. Be tired, even ill, but never sad!”¹⁴¹

Returning to the letter that van Crombrughe wrote to Anne-Marie, we see that it is in this way that we may become “instruments in the hands of divine mercy”, and that the Daughters of Mary and Joseph may give the particular service to the Church to which they are called.

It is Christ who is our support, our help, our guide and love, who opens us to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Constant van Crombrughe, in offering the invitation to become instruments of mercy, knew the demands of such a vocation and prayed for his daughters and continues to pray.

“I have asked in particular for you that Jesus deign to send His Holy Spirit who enlightens, who purifies, who sanctifies, that He would make of you the instruments of His mercy.”¹⁴²

E. CONCLUSIONS

In 1839 van Crombrughe wrote to one of the superiors in preparation for the feast of the Assumption:

“May heavenly grace fall in abundance on our religious family and may all, without exception, become the instruments of mercy in the hands of divine Providence.”¹⁴³

The Founder envisaged that each Sister was called to be such an instrument, without any exception.

It is the Lord who chooses the instrument that He wishes to use, who forms it for Himself. Moses was chosen as the vessel or the instrument of God’s mercy¹⁴⁴ (144). Paul, too, was chosen as

¹⁴¹ ADMJR/ 11 - 8, letter of van Crombrughe to Bathilde Delhay, 11 June, 1834: “Veillez soigneusement sur vous, afin que la tristesse ne vienne troubler un coeur où Jésus a choisi sa demeure. Soyons fatigués, malades même, mais jamais tristes.”

¹⁴² See above in this chapter, p. 39.

¹⁴³ ADMJR/ 4 - 8, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Superior, 11 August, 1839: “*Que les grâces célestes tombent en abondance sur notre religieuse famille, et que tous, sans aucune exception, nous devenions des Instruments de la miséricorde entre les mains de la divine Providence.*”

¹⁴⁴ See above in this chapter, A: “God, all-merciful, all-compassionate”, p. 39 - 52.

an instrument, as the Lord told Ananias:

“He is a chosen instrument of mine, to carry my name before the Gentiles.”¹⁴⁵

The “instrument of mercy” is chosen by the Lord to proclaim the God who is all-merciful, all-compassionate. This proclamation is made both through one’s way of living and through speaking, bringing the Lord’s mercy and compassion to others.

However, as Paul explains, this vessel is earthen “to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us”¹⁴⁶. So the “instrument”, while continuing to rejoice in the merciful love of God¹⁴⁷ needs to grow in awareness of personal frailty and limitations, true poverty of spirit. From the knowledge, profoundly experienced of one’s humanness, comes the possibility of reaching out to others who are suffering, who experience their fragility and weakness, and to help them to recognise the mercy and compassion of God, who is not only filled with compassion for His children, who is not only as a tender mother, but who is so much more.¹⁴⁸

Van Crombrughe, as Founder of the Congregation, has guided us to see that the focus of mercy is in the heart of Christ. In the recent Papal encyclical on the mercy of God, the relationship between mercy and the Heart of Christ is underlined:

“The Church seems in a particular way to profess the mercy of God and to venerate it when she directs herself to the Heart of Christ. In fact, it is precisely this drawing close to Christ in the mystery of His Heart which enables us to dwell on this point -- a point in a sense central and also most accessible on the human level -- of the revelation of the merciful love of the Father, a revelation which is constituted the central content of the messianic mission of the Son of Man.”¹⁴⁹

It is this profession of the mercy of God that van Crombrughe underlined in making devotion to the Sacred Heart central in the Congregation, especially through his having consecrated it to the Heart of Christ.

It is in the Heart of Christ that we learn true love, charity and that we also learn humility and

¹⁴⁵ (145) Acts 9:23. Luke underlines that it is for God to choose, and Paul also when he wrote of his own vocation in Gal.1:15. Usually the word “σκευός” is used in a passive sense, as in the case of Moses (see above, p. 50 - 51) Here, though, it is used (uniquely) in an active sense; the Lord is going to use Paul actively to proclaim His Word. He is an instrument in God’s hand. See MAURER, C., art. cit., p.369.

¹⁴⁶ 2 Cor. 4:7. Again the word used is “σκευός”

¹⁴⁷ See above in this chapter, A, “God, all-merciful, all-compassionate”. p. 43.

¹⁴⁸ See above, ibid., p. 49 - 50.

¹⁴⁹ Dives in Misericordia, Encyclical letter of John Paul II, 1980, Vatican Polyglot Press, pp.64 - 65.

gentleness. It was for this purpose that the Founder recommended to his religious to put themselves in the school of Jesus Christ who is gentle and humble of Heart. We learn there to accept ourselves as we are with our strengths and weaknesses, and at the same time to accept and to love others as they are, gifted by the Lord in their particular way, with their unique “earthen vessel”. This is all part of being an instrument of mercy in the Lord’s hands.

The Lord, having chosen the instrument, forms it through the power of the Holy Spirit. As van Crombrugghe wrote:

“May it please the Lord to allow us to know the effect of His tender love and to animate us more and more by His Spirit so that we become worthy objects of His special affection and as such, good instruments of His mercy.”¹⁵⁰

Above all, to become an instrument suitable for use by the Lord, means an act of total abandonment into the hands of the Lord. It is for this that van Crombrugghe prayed:

“I pray that one day you may be an excellent instrument of His mercy... Respond to the ways of divine Spouse, gently abandon yourself into His hands and remain in gentle joyfulness which helps others and which acts like a spiritual balm for them.”¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ ADMJR/ 19 - 3, letter of van Crombrugghe to Emélie Lecroart, 1831:

“*Plaise au Seigneur de nous faire éprouver des effets de son tendre amour et de nous animer de plus en plus de son Esprit afin que nous devenions des objets dignes de son affection spéciale et comme tels de bons instruments de sa miséricorde.* »

¹⁵¹ ADMJR/ 9 - 4, letter of van Crombrugghe to Aloÿse Bruycher, October, 1833: “*Je prie... qu’elle a soit un jour un excellent instrument de sa miséricorde. Répondez aux vues de votre divin Epoux, en vous abandonnant toujours doucement entre ses mains; et en vous conservant dans une gaieté douce qui aide le prochain et qui répand un baume spirituel.*”

CHAPTER SEVEN : INSTRUMENTS OF MERCY IN THE HAND OF GOD

For an instrument to be of value to the user it needs to be kept in good condition and to really fit the hand. So it is for an instrument in God's hand. Constant van Crombrugge explained this when he wrote to Flore on one occasion:

“Yes, you are destined to be an instrument of mercy in the hands of Jesus Christ. So polish this instrument with care so that it works according to the hand which guides it.”¹

It is the care of the instrument, the “polishing” of it, which is the subject of this chapter. As we have seen, according to van Crombrugge there are two means of doing this; through gentle abandonment into the Lord's hands and keeping oneself in gentle joyfulness², in order to be of service to others. Polishing the instrument should not be something that makes for sadness; on the contrary it should lead to joy.

A. ABANDONMENT TO THE WILL OF GOD - OBEDIENCE

In the Constitutions there is an Article on obedience where van Crombrugge began by reflecting on the obedience of Christ towards the Father. He wrote:

“Jesus Christ was obedient unto death, even the death on the Cross. My meat’, says this generous Saviour, ‘is to do the will of Him that sent Him’ Therefore He listens with respect to the voice of His Father: He makes it the rule of His judgements and His affections. He conforms all His desires to it. He performs all that it prescribes to Him. Such should be the obedience of His spouses.”³

Van Crombrugge saw all obedience as centred in the obedience of Christ. Christ's obedience meant that He was totally given to the Father and lived out in His life the will of the Father. This is what van Crombrugge insisted on as being the basis of religious obedience. In a letter which he wrote to Catherine Dal he explained this at length.

“Among many other graces which I have asked for you all during these days, by the mediation of the august Mary and her Blessed Spouse, I have insisted on your obtaining a generous readiness to obey.

It is the example of our great model that has urged me. On

¹ ADMJR/74, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhayé, 15 August, 1836: “*Oui, Vous êtes destinée à être un instrument de miséricorde entre les mains de Jésus-Christ. Polissez donc avec soin, cet instrument afin qu’il opère selon la main qui la conduira. Purifiez de plus en plus vos vœux et sanctifiez vos affections.* »

² See above, Chap.6, p. 96.

³ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.246 - 256 “Vow and virtue of Obedience”, pp.128 - 133 (69 - 72)

reflecting on that which Jesus Christ teaches us since His entrance into this world, that, scarcely born, He gives the world the astonishing sight of a God dependent on men, that, from His circumcision, He began the long series of acts of submission which led up to the greatest of all, by His obedience to death, death on the cross I feel myself led to invite you to courageously practise a virtue of which your divine Spouse gives you such great and frequent examples. Whatever we do, we cannot avoid authority; but you, by your happy attitude in imitating Christ, can diminish the pain, the difficulty of your obedience, and grow in merit. That which for many men is a subject of sadness, you may make an object of consolation.⁴

Through reflecting on the mystery of God's submission to man, in the person of Christ, we become obedient ourselves. It is also by this looking at Christ and submitting as He did, that the natural pain of obedience is diminished.

Van Crombrughe in writing of obedience, proposed an attitude of listening as Christ listened to the Father. He invited his religious to live the obedience of Christ towards the Father, to be obedient to death, even death on the cross⁵:

“The holy and always adorable will of God, generous obedience to this divine will: there the fixed point and the summary of perfection.⁶

In the Constitutions, van Crombrughe pointed out three illusions which can prevent us from living in true obedience⁷. The first of these is imagining that disobedience consists solely in disobeying the will of the Superior. The Founder quoted St. Paul as saying, “obey in all things... not serving to the eye as pleasing to men. Whatever you do, do it to the Lord and not to men⁸. Obedience does not mean pleasing man, or pleasing the person of the Superior, it rather means

⁴ ADMJR/ 5 - 36, letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal, 2 January, 1841: “*Entre beaucoup d'autres grâces que j'ai demandées ces jours-ci pour vous toutes, par l'entremise de l'auguste Marie et de son Bienheureux Epoux, j'ai insisté pour vous obtenir une généreuse disposition à l'obéissance. C'est l'exemple de notre grand modèle qui m'y a engagé. En réfléchissant sur ce que Jésus-Christ nous apprend dès son entrée dans ce monde, qu'à peine né, il donna à la terre l'étonnant spectacle d'un Dieu dépendant des hommes, que depuis sa circoncision, il commença la longue suite d'actes de soumission qui n'a fini que par le plus grand de tous, par son obéissance à la mort, à la mort de la croix; je me suis senti porté à vous engager à pratiquer courageusement une vertu dont votre divin Epoux vous donne de si grands et de si fréquents exemples. Quoique nous fassions, nous ne pouvons nous soustraire à l'autorité; mais vous pouvez, par votre heureuse position, en imitant Jésus-Christ, diminuer la peine, la difficulté de l'obéissance, et en augmenter la mérite. De ce qui, pour beaucoup d'hommes, est un sujet de chagrin vous pouvez faire un objet de consolation.* »

⁵ Constitutions 1891, Art, 246 - 236, p. 130 (70): (Phil. 2: 4 - 8).

⁶ ADMJR/ 4 - 3, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Superior, 14 December, 1837: “*La sainte et toujours adorable volonté de Dieu, l'obéissance généreuse à cette volonté; voilà le point fixe et l'abrégé de la perfection.*”

⁷ Constitutions 1891, loc. cit., pp.130 - 131 (70 - 71).

⁸ Ibid., quoting St. Paul (Col. 3:22).

doing all that we do for the Lord.

In stating this, van Crombrughe raised an important issue. In his letters he often used the term blind obedience, as, for example, when he wrote to Marine:

“As for you, be blind in obedience and generous in love.”⁹

In the Constitutions he made clear what he meant. Obedience does not and never can mean pleasing the Superior. Obedience is an act of will made in response to the will of the Father, as expressed through another, the person of the Superior normally. In the same article the Founder clarified this even further, when he wrote that under certain circumstances the individual should state her opinions respectfully, while leaving the final decision to the Superior¹⁰. Blind Obedience, for van Crombrughe, does not mean a passive, unthinking act, but rather an active, intelligent submission to the will of God as it has been expressed through the Superior.

The second illusion of which van Crombrughe wrote is when we persuade ourselves that we are being obedient, after having manipulated the Superior into accepting our point of view. Here he used St. Bernard to support his argument:

“It is not he who is obeying them (the superiors), it is the superior who submits, in thus yielding to the will and caprice of his subject.”¹¹

This illusion is clear and needs no further comment.

The third illusion is to go to excess in work of some kind, either mental or physical.

“The third illusion is that which under the pretext of following their attraction or inspiration, would lead some people to exercises apparently opposed to nature and pleasing to God, but which are contrary to the Constitutions and to the decisions of the Superior.”¹²

The question of excess was one that occupied van Crombrughe a great deal. We have already seen this in his letters to Olympiade. He was completely clear that obedience had nothing to do with excessive behaviour.

⁹ ADMJR/ 02 - 64, letter of van Crombrughe to Marine Coulon. 23 November 1842: “*Quant à vous, soyez aveugle dans l’obéissance, et généreuse dans l’amour.*”

See also ADMJR/ 6 - 34, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, Easter, 1836; ADMJR/ 02 - 9, letter of van Crombrughe to Marine Coulon, 17 October, 1836; Constitutions 1891, loc. cit., para.5, p.132 (70): “...*their only desire being to obey blindly and to correspond in all things with the designs of God.*”

¹⁰ Constitutions 1891, loc. cit. p. 130-132 (70-71).

¹¹ Ibid. No precise reference to St. Bernard is given, but the quotation is attributed to him in the text (and is from *Sermones de Diversis*, 35:4, P. L. , ed. Migne, 183, 636 AB).

¹² Ibid.

“No more imprudence, no more of these small excesses, I beg you; moderation, gentleness, confidence in the tenderness of the divine Spouse, these must be the means that you use.”¹³

On another occasion he wrote to Catherine Dal,

“Mortify ourselves with prudence, and exercise interior mortification above all.”¹⁴

Van Crombrughe’s letters are full of such remarks, recommending moderation in all facets of life, especially concerning health and rest. He found physical exercise essential and would write giving advice along these lines. He also insisted that the Sisters followed the advice of doctors, when that had been given. However, he saw all this as being part of the will of God, and that will came before all else. As he wrote to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux:

“I know how to appreciate health, but faith teaches us to put above all else the most holy will of God. This submission is often even a more efficacious remedy for recuperating strength than the remedies of doctors.”¹⁵

The Founder had a sense of humour about excessive behaviour and would tease people out of it. In a letter He wrote to Olympiade he described how one day, when he was making a train journey, he found himself in the same carriage as one of the “Dames” and a “Soeur Converse”. He described their clothes so that Olympiade could recognise the two. Apparently they were sitting right next to him from Mechelen to Gent and never once said a word. He continued:

“It seems they were keeping the great silence on the journey. That seemed to me a bit excessive.”¹⁶

In true obedience there is no place for excessive behaviour.

To conclude, obedience, in the writings of van Crombrughe, means listening to the voice of the Father, rather than seeking to please man; abandoning oneself to the will of God, rather than working for one’s own satisfaction; caring for the gift of one’s being through living moderately. To

¹³ ADMJR/ 6 - 91 - 96, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 28 February, 1838: “*Plus d'imprudence, plus de ces petits excès, je vous en prie; modération, douceur, confiance en la tendresse du divin Epoux, tels doivent être les moyens que vous emploierez.*”

¹⁴ ADMJR/ 5 - 14, letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal, 6 March, 1838: “*Mortifions-nous avec prudence, et exerçons surtout la mortification intérieure.* »

¹⁵ ADM.JR/ 3 - 10, letter of van Crombrughe to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, unknown date: “*Je sais apprécier la santé, mais la foi nous apprend à mettre au-dessus de tout la très Ste. volonté de Dieu. Cette soumission est même souvent un remède plus efficace pour récupérer les forces, que les remèdes des médecins.*”

¹⁶ ADMJR/ 6 - 223 letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 23 July, 1840: “*Il paraît qu'elles gardent le grand silence en voyage. Cela m'a paru un peu excessif.* »

arrive at this the Founder proposed:

“Imitate Mary your Mother and the most powerful helper in heaven will accompany you. Be a docile instrument in the hands of God and you will have the happiness of obtaining the glory of your divine Spouse.”¹⁷

The instrument the Lord wants each one to be will vary enormously and each will have their unique place within the plan of the Lord.

“The enchanting music produced by a well-trained orchestra is the effect of the exactitude, the perfect unison of the instruments, the performers watching and responding to the slightest gesture of their leader which they obey with such marvellous promptitude as to suggest to the listener that the whole orchestra consists of but one man. Thus should the Daughters of Mary and Joseph work together in perfect harmony and unison, with but one mind, one will.”¹⁸ **Error! Bookmark not defined.Error! Bookmark not defined.Error! Bookmark not defined.**

B. POOR IN SPIRIT AND POOR IN FACT

When the Founder wrote his long letter to Flore about obedience he said:

“To renounce that which you have is the slightest part; to renounce what you are and to continue at each moment to renounce it, there is what is required to complete the sacrifice and to make you ever more pleasing to Jesus Christ. It is therefore, a holocaust which you offer.”¹⁹

In writing this the Founder is not diminishing the value of poverty, but rather speaking of that poverty of spirit demanded in the total emptying of oneself, of complete and total abandonment into the Lord's hands.

In the Articles in the Constitutions concerning poverty, van Crombrugge wrote that poverty is the first lesson which Christ gave “by being born in a stable where a poor manger served Him as a cradle; and it was the last He gave us when dying on the Cross, destitute of everything earthly”.²⁰ Throughout the Constitutions, the only Beatitude quoted is that of the poor in spirit, which

¹⁷ ADMJR/ 4 - 3, letter of van Crombrugge to an unknown Superior, 14 December, 1837. *“Imitez Marie votre Mère et le secours tout puissant du Ciel Vous accompagnera. Soyez un instrument docile dans les mains de Dieu, et vous aurez le bonheur de procurer la gloire de votre divin Epoux. »*

¹⁸ Constitutions 1891, loc. cit. , p. 133 (72)

¹⁹ ADMJR/ 7 - 28, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhaye, 16 November, 1844: *“Renoncer à ce que vous aviez est la partie la plus légère; renoncer à ce que vous êtes et continuer, à chaque instant à y renoncer, voilà ce qui est requis pour compléter le sacrifice et vous rendre toujours agréable à Jésus-Christ. C’est donc un holocauste que vous offrez, “*

²⁰ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art.227 - 241, “Vow and virtue of Poverty”, p.124 (67).

highlights the important place this held in the Founder's teaching.

In a letter van Crombrugge wrote to one of the Sisters he explained what he meant:

“The more you empty your heart of creatures, the more the Creator will be pleased to fill it with His divine love. What riches you will find in this poverty of spirit and of heart. Empty it, empty this heart and this spirit of all worldly affection and Jesus will take up His residence there and with Jesus, happiness will dwell in your soul ... So go on with confidence and with simplicity.”²¹

Emptying of the heart, of oneself, is what van Crombrugge meant by poverty of spirit. Another name for this is humility. The Scripture text on which the Founder based his view of the obedient Christ was that of Paul's letter to the Philippians. It reads:

Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.”²²

This same text is the basis of van Crombrugge's teaching concerning poverty of spirit and humility.

One time in writing to Flore the Founder encouraged her to speak often of the humility of Christ, of His poverty of spirit, because that is, he wrote, a powerful antidote to pride²³. Van Crombrugge did not in any way see humility as a false opinion of oneself. He wrote about this very emphatically to Olympiade:

“If you, or all the others who could be elected Superior General, had assisted at our conferences, you would have been astonished to learn that the Jesuits and other people who are the most eminent in knowledge and holiness would not be able to give the name of virtue to your repugnance. You would be humiliated at the title that they would give it.”²⁴

²¹ ADMJR/ 19 - 43, letter of van Crombrugge to Léocadie Muller. 23 October, 1837: *“Plus vous viderez votre cœur des créatures, et plus le créateur se plaira à le remplir de son divin amour, Quelle richesse vous trouverez dans cette pauvreté d'esprit et de coeur. Videz, videz ce coeur et cet esprit de tout affection terrestre et Jésus y établira et avec Jésus, le bonheur séjournera dans votre âme ... Allez, avec confiance, avec simplicité. »*

²² Phil .2: 4 - 8,

²³ See ADMJR/ 7 - 16, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhaye, 6 January, 1842.

²⁴ ADMJR/ 6 - 205, letter of van Crombrugge to Olympiade Derville, 11 February, 1840: *“Si vous, ou toute autre qui pourrait être élue supérieure générale, avait assisté à nos conférences, vous auriez été étonnée d'apprendre que les Jésuites, et les personnages les plus éminents en science et en sainteté, ne pourraient donner le nom de vertu à votre répugnance. Vous seriez humiliée de la qualification qu'ils y donneraient. »*

The conferences mentioned in this text were those held between the Founder and the Jesuit who at that period helped him with the drafting of the Constitutions (see Part I, p.146). There are no rough drafts kept of the Constitutions, making it difficult to trace what is of van Crombrugge himself.

Faults and human weaknesses, even sin, are never a reason for discouragement, which, van Crombrugghe remarked, is often the result of pride, but on the contrary help us to grow in true humility. That is to say, humility is an acceptance of oneself, with faults, weaknesses and strengths. The Founder wrote beautifully about this to a young Sister, Stéphanie.

“Have a special care to keep this heart in peace where Jesus Christ has chosen to dwell. May nothing trouble it, despite your weaknesses... Is not Jesus all powerful? So, go on with courage; you will triumph over all the obstacles that come. This weakness will bring humility, that fundamental virtue of which, more and more, I recognise the need, in order to please Him who would that we learn of Him who is gentle and humble of heart.”²⁵

On another occasion he wrote in a similar way to Olympiade. He explained how even after our ‘spiritual resurrection’ it is possible to find sinful tendencies in ourselves, even deliberate inclinations of the will, but that it is only an occasion to grow in humility, not to be troubled or disturbed. He concluded the letter by writing that these do not essentially disturb the beauty of the soul that has been handed over completely to the Lord²⁶

For van Crombrugghe humility meant having a realistic view of self. At various times he wrote to different people that he knew they were not perfect, but that did not disturb him at all. This realisation of one’s weaknesses and imperfections is all part of becoming a more perfect instrument; it is all part of the polishing process, or to use van Crombrugghe’s own metaphor of the orchestra, humility is part of the tuning process, recognising the weaknesses of the structure of the instrument so that they may be overcome (by the Lord and His grace) and produce even more beautiful music.

“Go on with courage, with joy, with humility to labour at the work of your sanctification and you will become a worthy Daughter of Mary, a true spouse of God the Saviour, and an instrument of mercy for the salvation of many.”²⁷

If Canon van Crombrugghe accented the need of poverty of spirit he did not neglect the need of actual poverty in the life of the religious. In his opinion material poverty and simplicity of way of life are essential. At one time the Sisters had bought some new furniture for the parlour. The

²⁵ ADMJR/ 19 - 41, letter of van Crombrugghe to Stéphanie de Jaegher, 20 April, 1838: “*Ayez un soin tout particulier de conserver dans la paix, ce coeur que Jésus-Christ a choisi pour sa demeure. Que rien ne puisse le troubler, malgré votre propre faiblesse... Jésus-Christ, n’est-il pas tout puissant? Allez donc en avant, avec courage; vous triompherez de tous les obstacles de quelque part qu’ils viennent... Cette faiblesse, vous obtiendra l’humilité, cette vertu fondamentale dont je connais de plus en plus la nécessité pour plaire à celui qui veut que nous apprenions de lui qu’il est doux et humble de coeur.*”

²⁶ See ADMJR/ 6 - 292, letter of van Crombrugghe to Olympiade Derville, 28 March, 1842.

²⁷ ADMJR/ 18 - 6, letter of van Crombrugghe to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 10 November, 1844: “*Continuez avec courage, avec gaieté, avec humilité à travailler à l’oeuvre de votre sanctification et vous deviendrez une digne Enfant de Marie, une vraie épouse du Dieu Sauveur, et un instrument de miséricorde pour le salut de plusieurs.*”

Founder thought that what they had bought was unsuitable, that it lacked simplicity. He concluded the letter:

“The Ladies of Mary must love religious simplicity. I cannot take it on myself to allow that luxury be introduced into your Institute.”²⁸

Similarly in the Constitutions when the Founder wrote:

“In spite of appearances to the contrary, to which the decorum due to their state obliges them to submit, they must, in all that concerns the spirit of poverty, be second to no other Religious Institute, not even the most austere.”²⁹

We may recall that in the earlier days of the Institute before the religious began to wear a habit, he had recommended that they be neat and tidy and never put on anything that would offend the poor with whom they worked³⁰. There is no reason to believe he changed that opinion, because, for van Crombrugghe, poverty, both poverty of spirit and material poverty, had to be real.

“Because Jesus Christ wants you to be poor, take care to be really poor, poor in spirit and poor in fact.”³¹

As he wrote to one of the Sisters, his niece Félicité:

“May the Saviour’s emptying of Himself lead you to love poverty.”³²

C. FAMILY SPIRIT

1. Mary and Joseph

When Canon van Crombrugghe wrote to Catherine Dal about obedience³³, he invoked the intercession of Mary and Joseph.

Their obedience, unique in each of them, is our model.

The obedience of Mary was the subject of a letter the Founder wrote to one of the Superiors:

²⁸ ADMJR/ 4 - 16, letter of van Crombrugghe to an unknown Superior, 10 March, 1847: “*Les Dames de Marie doivent aimer également la simplicité religieuse. Je n’ose pas prendre sur moi de permettre que le luxe s’introduise dans votre Institut.* »

²⁹ Constitutions 1891, *loc. cit.* p. 124 (67).

³⁰ See Part I, Chapter 4, A: “The Congregations Episcopal Approval”, (1830), p. 121 - 130.

³¹ ADMJR/ File M, E - 6, p.63.

³² ADMJR/ 19 - 22, letter of van Crombrugghe to Félicité van Crombrugghe, 23 December, 1848: “*Que son dénuement vous fasse aimer la pauvreté.* »

³³ See above, this chapter, A, “Abandonment to the Will of God - Obedience”, p. 99.

“I see with pleasure that you would be a child of obedience... Look at Mary, our Patron. As soon as the decrees of heaven were known to her, she responded by that wonderful Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. The most sublime function ever confided to a creature, the most extraordinary consequences, the suffering, the most unheard of humiliations nothing is capable of stopping the consent of Mary for an instant. God wishes; God desires: I wish to know nothing but that, fiat, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. There the great model; study it.”³⁴

In a letter addressed to Flore, van Crombrughe spelt out more clearly what Mary’s “fiat” meant.

“She gave herself without any restriction; the thoughts of her mind, the working of her will, her desires, her inclinations, her body, her time; all is for God and that for ever.”³⁵

The Founder once challenged Olympiade to such a total response:

“After all, since you have said with all your heart: ecce ancilla Domini, go on: fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.”³⁶

Whenever he wrote of Mary, van Crombrughe linked her with one attitude above all other, that of confidence and trust, stating that we should have the same confidence as Mary, or that we should go to her with confidence.

Mary’s own confidence was extraordinary; as we saw in van Crombrughe’s letter above to one of the Superiors, she said her ‘fiat’ without knowing the consequences. We have come to know the event of the Annunciation so well that we become blind to the implications of the message. But as the Founder pointed out, she only needed to know what was the will of God for her to say “yes”.

In the teaching of van Crombrughe, it is Mary who will obtain the gift of confidence for us:

“Mary will help us; we can count on it. So, count on it; throw yourself into the arms of this tender Mother and do not be disturbed... It seems to me that I can already hear you saying to me that you have more courage, more strength and above all, more confidence.”³⁷

³⁴ ADMJR/ 4 - 3, letter of van Crombrughe to an unknown Superior, 14 December, 1837; “*Je vois avec plaisir que vous voulez être enfant d’obéissance.... Voyez Marie, notre Patronne; dès que les décrets du Ciel lui sont connus, elle répond par cet admirable Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. La fonction la plus sublime qui fut jamais confiée à une créature, les conséquences les plus extraordinaires, les souffrances, les humiliations les plus inouïes, rien n’est capable de suspendre un seul instant le consentement de Marie. Dieu le veut; Dieu le désire; je ne veux savoir que cela: fiat, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum! Voilà le grand modèle; étudions-le.*”

³⁵ ADMJR/ 7 - 28, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, 16 November, 1844: “*Elle se donne sans aucune restriction ; les pensées de son esprit, les opérations de sa volonté, ses désirs, ses penchants, son corps, son temps; tout est à Dieu et le sera irrévocablement.*”

³⁶ ADMJR/ 6 - 8, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 26 March, 1835: “*Enfin, puisque vous avez dit de si grand coeur: ecce ancilla Domini, ajoutez-y: fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*”

³⁷ ADMJR/ 10 - 10, letter of van Crombrughe to Raphaël Hennion, 17 August, 1838: “*... Marie nous aidera; nous pouvons y compter. Comptez-vous donc ; jetez-vous entre les bras de cette tendre Mère et soyez sans inquiétude... Il me*

Van Crombrugge wrote in the style of his day and practised the devotions to Mary that were common, such as devotion to the Immaculate Conception³⁸, and dedication of the month of May to Our Lady. However, it is this deeper attitude towards her that is the basis of his recommendations to the religious. Mary abandoned herself in confidence and in true poverty of spirit, into the hands of the Father, to be used as He wished; thus she is the model for her Daughters. As a daughter takes on the characteristics of her mother, the Sisters are invited to take on those of Mary.

Towards the end of his life, the Founder, in writing to Flore, clarified the position Mary should have in our devotion. He had been writing about the place that the love of Christ should have in our hearts and about the fact that Christ had given Mary to us as our Mother. He continued:

“Our confidence, our affection for Mary must not diminish those which we have for our loving Saviour, but help them to develop in our hearts.”³⁹

Mary never replaces her Son in our affection, but she leads us to Him. The Founder tells us:

“Go to Mary; you have special rights to her tenderness. She will come to help you; she will wipe out the marks which would make you less pleasing to her Son; she will adorn you with new gifts; she will offer you to Jesus Christ.”⁴⁰

From the time of the foundation of the Congregation, van Crombrugge had placed it under the patronage of St. Joseph, husband of Mary; in fact, it began life as the Sisters of “St. Joseph”⁴¹. The Founder had discovered his own vocation under the patronage of St. Joseph⁴² and thus he made him patron of all the Congregations that he had founded. Joseph is always there, quietly, but with a strength that is remarkable.

Van Crombrugge explains the place of Joseph within the Congregation in various letters

semble que j’entends déjà que vous me déclarez que vous avez plus de courages plus de force et surtout plus de confiance.”

³⁸ The first apparition of Our Lady to Catherine Labouré occurred in July 1830. The proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was on the 8 December, 1854. On that occasion the Founder encouraged the Sisters to send an illuminated address to the Holy Father. The following March a new Sunday School for the poor was opened in Brussels in honour of Mary Immaculate (ADMJR, *Historique*, p.71).

³⁹ ADMJR/ 7 - 52, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhaye, 8 March, 1859: “*Notre confiance, notre affection pour Marie ne doit diminuer celle que nous portons à notre adorable Sauveur, mais nous aider à l’augmenter dans nos coeurs.*”

⁴⁰ ADNJR/ 7 - 28, letter of van Crombrugge to Flore Delhaye, 16 November, 1844: “*Allez à Marie; vous avez les droits spécieux à sa tendresse. Elle vous viendra en aide ; elle effacera les taches qui vous rendraient moins agréable à son Fils ; elle vous ornera de dons nouveaux ; elle vous offrira à Jésus-Christ. »*

⁴¹ See Part I, Chap. 3, C: “Founder”, p. 97

⁴² See Part I, Chap. 1, D: “Père Louis Sellier”, p. 97.

and in the Constitutions. He would often go to him with his own needs and encouraged the Sisters to do the same. For example, in a letter to Marine Coulon, he suggested that she pray for the physical healing of one of the Sisters, through the intercession of St. Joseph; when Aloÿse Bruycher was ill he suggested the same thing⁴³. To Flore he wrote that he had asked St. Joseph, for a young novice also named Flore, that he would obtain for her

“A high degree of faith, hope and charity with humility and gentleness.”⁴⁴

Joseph is considered the model of the Sisters as well as their patron and intercessor.⁴⁵ As van Crombrughe wrote to Marine:

“May St. Joseph trace again in us his humility, his gentleness, and his constant confidence in all events,”⁴⁶

But, before all else, van Crombrughe saw Saint Joseph as a father towards the Congregation and in the Constitutions underlined the fact that Joseph has so much to teach his Daughters:

“St Joseph will teach you, before all else, the love of Jesus and Mary; he will show you, in his tender care of Jesus, the zeal, the love you must have.”⁴⁷

2. Daughters of Mary and Joseph

Many times van Crombrughe insisted on a family spirit within the Congregation. His understanding of the Superior as taking the place of Mary towards the Sisters⁴⁸, the love that he expected between the Sisters⁴⁹, are all part of this. When we reflect on the place of Mary and Joseph

⁴³ See Part I, Chap.4,B: “Spiritual Journey”, p. 142.

⁴⁴ ADMJR/ 7 - 93, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, 25 February, 1864: “*Je prie St. Joseph d’obtenir à Melle. Flore, à un haut degré, la foi, l’espérance, et la charité, avec l’humilité et la douceur.* »

⁴⁵ The late nineteenth century saw a revival of devotion to Saint Joseph which had waned after being very strong in the 17th and 18th centuries. Van Crombrughe clearly developed his devotion, rather ahead of his time, under the guidance of the Fathers of the Faith (especially Père Sellier) among whom this devotion was prominent. The Founder was possibly influenced by the writing of St. Francis de Sales who also had a well developed devotion to Joseph. See GAUTHIER, R., “Joseph (Saint)” in *D.Sp.* t.VIII, 1974. col. 1308 - 1316. St. Joseph is also the patron of Belgium, a fact that was not forgotten by van Crombrughe; see ADMJR/ 7 - 37, letter of van Crombrughe to Flore Delhaye, 1 March, 1848.

⁴⁶ ADMJR/ 02 - 57, letter of van Crombrughe to Marine Coulon, 15 March, 1842. *Que St. Joseph retrace en nous son humilité, sa douceur, et sa constante confiance dans tous les événements.*”

⁴⁷ *Constitutions 1891*, Official English Text, Art.193, “Our Patron, St. Joseph”, pp.80 - 81 (42 - 43).

⁴⁸ See Part I, Chap. 3, C: “Founder”, p. 105, and Chap. 4, C: “Daughters of Mary and Joseph - Rule and Constitutions, 1844”, p. 154 - 5.

⁴⁹ See above, Chap. 6, C: “Living in Christ”, p. 69 and following.

in the Institute, it brings us back again to reflect on that family spirit. The Founder often wrote to the Sisters about their being happy to be in the family of Mary and Joseph, or being the children of Mary and Joseph. It would seem that the Founders intention was that the community would be a place where a sister would feel completely at home, and able to be herself.

It is helpful to recall that this was a period when devotion to the Holy Family flourished. There are always a variety of reasons why a particular devotion is more evident at one time rather than another. The nineteenth century had witnessed a tremendous political, social and therefore economic upheaval. It has been suggested that one of the main contributing factors to the development of this particular devotion was the growing industrialisation in Europe, and the consequent move away from rural life to urbanisation⁵⁰. There was a certain fear that went with this move of breaking away from and losing family forms of life. Therefore the desire to strengthen the concept of family grew.⁵¹

Van Crombrughe, who had come from a large family, which had remained closely united (we have seen how several of his relatives entered the Congregation in its early days), had a well developed sense of family, so it was not surprising that he wanted his congregations to have this same sense of family, in a way almost idealised.

Although during the life-time of the Founder the Sisters never left the house, even to cross the road with the pupils to go to the Parish Church, this stress on family spirit was essential in an apostolic congregation, as the binding force within the community. Van Crombrughe lived before the full development of devotion to the Holy Family took place and he rarely used the term, but he frequently described the place within the Holy Family of each of its members. All is centred around the Son, the Person of Jesus; Mary is very clearly Mother, in van Crombrughe's writings, and Joseph foster-father. As Daughters of Mary and Joseph⁵² the Sisters are invited to model themselves on both Mary and Joseph, especially to learn from them trust of God the Father, and at the same time to have trust and confidence in Mary and Joseph.

⁵⁰ Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux: The charism of Pierre Bienvenu Noailles, Circular No.I, Rome, 1st May. 1980, p.3.

I am grateful to the Generalate of the Association of the Holy Family of Bordeaux for their help towards arriving at an understanding of the origins of this devotion.

⁵¹ LAGREE, M., "Religion populaire et populisme religieux au XIXe siècle, in *Histoire vécue du peuple chrétien*, sous la direction de DELUMEAU, J., Vol.2, Toulouse, Edition Privat, 1979, pp.175 - 176. The feast of the Holy Family was instituted by Pope Leo XIII.

⁵² The title of the Congregation, "Daughters of Mary and Joseph" is not unique. There is at least one other Congregation, of Dutch origin, founded a little later, in 1830. Neither is the concept unique. It was all part of the current devotion both to Mary and Joseph, that saw them as Mother and as foster-father in the family of Nazareth as well as in heaven ("Notre Mère du Ciel" etc.), who would bring those so devoted to a greater love and knowledge of their Son, Jesus. For a comprehensive study of these questions, see LAGREE, M., op. cit., particularly "Nouveau contenu: la piété ultramontaine", pp. 163 - 169

In the case of Mary she is particularly offered as the model of abandonment while at the same time being the model of all virtues. Joseph is proposed as the model of zeal and also of gentleness and humility. These are the characteristics particularly offered by van Crombrugge to his "daughters". Central to his whole concept of family spirit, are the relationships established between the Sisters and these, as we have already seen must be realistic and loving. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph are invited to be bound together in a love that is real, marked by zeal, gentleness and humility, and to abandon themselves into the Hands of God. It is thus that, in the vision of van Crombrugge, one becomes an instrument of mercy.

"I recommend you everyday to our Holy Patrons, and through them I ask that you become true daughters of Mary, good instruments in the hands of divine mercy."⁵³

D. LIVING IN JOY - JOY, SIMPLICITY, THANKSGIVING

It would seem that joy was van Crombrugge's personal gift, one that he wanted to communicate to his religious. Often, when writing to them, he concluded by saying:

"Try to be joyful and courageous."⁵⁴

When he wrote to Aloÿse Bruycher about becoming an instrument of mercy, he encouraged her to remain in gentle joyfulness which acts like a spiritual balm for others⁵⁵. He saw joy as being a means of bringing the Lord's healing and His mercy to other people. Van Crombrugge was not speaking of exuberance, but a gentleness that flows from peace of soul. In a letter to Olympiade, when he was encouraging her to be joyful, he explained what he meant by joy.

"Continue to be cheerful, the Lord wishes it. May your cheerfulness be a modest joy and of the presence of God, a simple joy which opens wide the heart and re-creates the spirit without being elated, and pours out a balm on everyone around; which sweetens all crosses and which helps the value of our work to grow."⁵⁶

⁵³ ADMJR / 18 - 3, letter of van Crombrugge to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 6 August, 1850: "*Je vous recommande tous les jours, à nos Sts. Patrons et par eux je demande que vous deveniez des vraies filles Marie, des bons instruments entre les mains de la divine miséricorde!*"

⁵⁴ ADMJR / 17 - 5, letter of van Crombrugge to Clothilde Minne, January, 1834: "*Tâchez d'être gaie et toujours courageuse.*" See also ADMJR / 15 - 8, letter of van Crombrugge to Colombo Verduyn, 1 December, 1834, and ADMJR / 6 - 3A, letter of van Crombrugge to Olympiade Derville, 5 March, 1838.

⁵⁵ See above, chapter 6, p. 69

⁵⁶ ADMJR / 6 - 6, letter of van Crombrugge to Olympiade Derville, 29 December, 1834: "*Continuez à être gaie, le Seigneur le veut. Que votre gaîté soit une joie modeste and de présence de Dieu, joie simple qui élargit le coeur et recrée l'esprit sans enivrer, et qui répand un baume sur tout ce qui l'environne; qui adoucit toutes les croix, qui augmente en tout la valeur de nos oeuvres.*"

Joy, as envisaged by van Crombrughe, is based in abandonment to the will of God. He recommended that the Sisters "keep themselves in a gentle joy based in submission to the will of God in all things"⁵⁷.

One of the reasons for this joy is because the person is given to the Lord.

"Be joyful, be courageous as it suits a religious who must prove to all who see her that Jesus Christ makes His spouses happy and that the yoke of the Lord is light."⁵⁸

Joy was so important to the Founder that he even made it a matter of Rule for the Sisters. There is an article in the Constitutions which reads:

"Cheerfulness, meekness and politeness are specially recommended to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. They should show by their frank and agreeable manner that that they are happy to belong to Jesus Christ."⁵⁹

This is followed by an exhortation of the Founder about joy, in which he set out what he meant by it. He based the article in Scripture and contrasts joy with sadness. Joy is pleasing to both God and man and leads to the well-being of soul and body, while sadness "impairs the mental powers, weakens bodily strength and vigour, depresses the soul and leaves us unable to exercise rightly our judgement; it injures all the good sentiments of the heart"⁶⁰.

In a letter the Founder wrote to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, he called sadness the "only enemy"⁶¹. In his direction of Sisters he worked particularly against sadness in any form, especially if the person tended to be of a melancholic temperament. Usually he tried to offer guidance that would help the person move beyond their sadness. For example, he wrote to Colombo Verduyn⁶²:

"The apprehension that is tiring to your spirit and which is harming your physical health is, in part, caused by this rather melancholic temperament which I have spoken to you about at times: a little

⁵⁷ AMDJR / 19 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Emélie Lacroart, 18 October, 1831: "*Tenant toujours dans une joie douce, fondée sur la soumission à la volonté de Dieu.*"

⁵⁸ ADMJR / 19 - 4, letter of van Crombrughe to Emélie Lacroart, 1831 or 1832: "*Soyez gaie, soyez courageuse comme il convient à une religieuse qui doit prouver à tous ceux qui la voient que Jésus-Christ rend heureuses Ses épouses et que le joug du Seigneur est léger.*"

⁵⁹ Constitutions 1891, Official English Translation, Art.175, "Cheerfulness, meekness and politeness", pp. 50 - 53 (26 - 28).

⁶⁰ Constitutions 1891, *loc. cit.*, p. 26 (50).

⁶¹ ADMJR / 3 - 8, letter of van Crombrughe to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, unknown date: "*Le seul ennemi est la tristesse.*"

⁶² See Appendix IV, Sisters to whom letters are addressed.

joyfulness, simple and confident, a little less turning round on yourself, a reasonable care to get rid of sad ideas and dark imaginations; more faith in the promises of God and more confidence."⁶³

Or, as he wrote to this same Sister on another occasion while she was still a novice:

"It would not be reasonable to follow Jesus along with sadness and cowardice. So courage, be cheerful. Never gloom ... If sadness, despite yourself, takes hold of you, hurry up and chase it away with prayer or conversation with your sisters."⁶⁴

In the Article in the Constitutions, the Founder stressed that joy is a gift of the Holy Spirit and so must be prayed for and desired. The gifts of the Spirit are shown to others through our manner of life. The same is true of joy.

"Thus your serene countenance, the candid simplicity of your looks, the sweet peace of your whole exterior, revealing the peace that fills your soul, may console, may cheer and encourage those who live with you, as also those with whom you come in contact."⁶⁵

Here again we find that van Crombrugghe is not speaking just about the exterior way of behaving, but a serenity and simplicity that springs up from deep within the person, from peace of soul.

Many times when the Founder wrote about joy he also mentioned simplicity, for example, when he wrote to the novice-mistress:

"Tell the novices to remain in joy, fruit of that gentle peace which Jesus has given them. Gentle and simple joy must never leave them... It is a necessary ornament for those who are destined to become the spouses of Jesus."⁶⁶

In a letter to another Sister, the Founder spoke even more strongly of this virtue:

"I would prefer that you would write to me with that simplicity

⁶³ ADMJR / 15 - 10, letter of van Crombrugghe to Colombo Verduyn, 17 January, 1836: *"L'appréhension qui fatigue votre esprit et qui nuit à la santé du corps, est en partie causée par cette humeur un peu mélancolique dont je vous ni parlé, dans le temps ; un peu de gaîté, simple et confiante, un peu moins de retour sur vous-même, un soin raisonnable de rejeter des idées tristes et des imaginations noires; plus de foi aux promesses de Dieu et plus de confiance."*

⁶⁴ ADMJR / 15 - 2, letter of van Crombrugghe to Colombo Verduyn, 2 September, 1831: *"Il ne serait pas raisonnable de suivre Jésus avec tristesse ou lâcheté. Du courage donc, de la gaîté. Jamais mélancolie... Si la tristesse s'empare quelques fois de vous, malgré vous, hâtez-vous de la chasser par la prière, la conversation avec vos consœurs."*

⁶⁵ Constitutions 1891, loc. cit., p. 51 (27).

⁶⁶ ADMJR / 3 - 8, letter of van Crombrugghe to Anne-Marie de Ponthieux, 24 April, 1833: *"Dites aux novices de conserver la joie, fruit de cette douce paix que Jésus leur a donnée. La gaîté douce et simple ne doit jamais les abandonner. C'est un ornement nécessaire à celles qui se destinent à devenir les épouses de Jésus."*

through which I recognise the Daughters of Mary and Joseph."⁶⁷
A letter addressed to Olympiade gives us some idea of the meaning van Crombrughe attached to the word. Olympiade, it seems, was having her usual problems of being too intense turned in on herself. The Founder concluded his advice to her by writing:

"You will try to act with simplicity in everything."⁶⁸

He continued by advising her not to try to find out the secrets of God (she had been preoccupied with questions about her own death because of the death of another Sister), but to go on simply with what she was asked to do each day. So the Founder went on:

"Now be at peace and yield with simplicity."⁶⁹

In this passage he equated simplicity with docile confident submission to the will of God. The result of that yielding would be that "a more pure simplicity will be reborn"⁷⁰.

Simplicity, for van Crombrughe, also meant openness: towards God and towards others. This is the simplicity of the child of God.

"I also pray to our good Saviour to grant you the light and the strength and above all the holy simplicity of spiritual childhood, so that you may fulfil the plans of the Lord in the family of Mary and Joseph."⁷¹

Children are free and without inhibitions. This is the freedom that Christ won for us on the cross; the freedom and therefore the simplicity of knowing oneself to be loved as a son or daughter of the Father. This is the source of that healing joy that acts as a balm for others. It is a simple joy, an Easter joy, which is the fruit of the passion and resurrection of Christ.

"The resurrection of our loving Saviour is a deep source of solid joy for all those who hope in humility and who work generously persevering in the service of the Lord this good Master. Let us celebrate, therefore, the solemnities of Easter with all the joyfulness which we are capable of feeling."⁷²

⁶⁷ ADMJR / 17 - 2, letter of van Crombrughe to Clothilde Minne, 26 April, 1873: "J'aime que vous m'écriviez avec cette simplicité où je reconnais les Filles de Marie et de Joseph »

⁶⁸ ADMJR / 6 - 144, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 22 February, 1839: "Vous tacherez d'aller en toute chose, avec simplicité. "

⁶⁹ ADMJR / 6 - 144, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 28 February, 1839: "Soyez maintenant en paix et soumettez vous avec simplicité. "

⁷⁰ Ibid: "La simplicité renaîtra plus sure."

⁷¹ ADMJR / 5 - 18, letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal, 22 December, 1838: "Je prie aussi notre bon Sauveur de vous accorder des lumières et des forces, et surtout la Ste. simplicité de l'enfance spirituelle, afin que vous remplissiez les vues du Seigneur, dans la famille de Marie et de Joseph." The theme of spiritual childhood is not developed explicitly by van Crombrughe.

⁷² ADMJR / 6 - 292, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 28 February, 1842: "La résurrection de notre aimable Sauveur est une source féconde de joie solide pour tous ceux qui espèrent humblement, et qui travaillent

In the same article on joy in the Constitutions that we looked at earlier, the Founder wrote:

"Gratitude forbids that you should ever grow weary of singing in your heart a perpetual hymn of thanksgiving."⁷³

Recognition of all that the Lord has done for us leads both to joy and to thanksgiving. Van Crombrugghe himself never grew weary not only of singing in his heart, but allowing others to hear a perpetual hymn of thanksgiving. His letters are remarkable in that he thanks God for everything. His thanksgiving, too, is based in his abandonment to the will of God for him and in his desire to do everything to the glory of God. Towards the end of his life thanksgiving became his dominant theme. Typical of this is when he wrote to Flore:

"Be a thousand times blessed, my God: You are the author of all this good, to you only the glory."⁷⁴

Thanksgiving, the Founder wrote, produces many good effects. It particularly keeps charity and love alive and helps the person to go on with even greater generosity, producing greater gifts in the person. But basically van Crombrugghe thanked God because thanks were due to Him.

"It is right that we recognise the goodness of the Lord, and it is a duty to show Him our gratitude."⁷⁵

He himself prayed for the gift of thanksgiving:

"I would have a generous heart, a heart as that of our holy Sister Aloÿse, to witness to God the feelings of living gratitude and tender love, true and pure, before the graces which we have received. Help me, my child; join with me and praise the Lord who so liberally gives us the gifts of His infinite mercy."⁷⁶

As he wrote on another occasion, eternity will not be long enough to thank God for His mercy and to praise Him⁷⁷.

généreusement à persévérer dans la service de ce bon maître. Célébrons donc ces solennités de Pâque... avec toute l'allégresse que nous sommes capables de ressentir."

⁷³ *Constitutions* 1891, loc. cit., p. 51 (27).

⁷⁴ ADMJR / 7 - 53, letter of van Crombrugghe to Flore Delhaye, 25 March, 1859: "*Soyez mille fois béni, mon Dieu! Vous êtes l'auteur de ce bien... à vous seul la gloire.*"

⁷⁵ letter of van Crombrugghe to Louise Deschamps, 29 September, 1842: "*Il est juste que nous reconnaissons les bienfaits du Seigneur, et c'est un devoir de lui témoigner notre gratitude.*"

⁷⁶ ADMJR / 10 - 2, letter of van Crombrugghe to Gonzague, 17 March, 1838 : "*Je voudrais avoir un, coeur généreux, un coeur comme celui de notre Ste. Soeur Aloÿse, pour témoigner à Dieu des sentiments d'une vive reconnaissance et d'un amour tendre, vrai et pur, à la vue des grâces que nous avons reçues. Aidez-moi, mon Enfant; joignez vous à moi, et louez le Seigneur qui nous accorde si libéralement les dons de son infinie miséricorde.*"

Thanksgiving and praise for all that the Lord has done, is the way that van Crombrughe envisaged that we become Instruments of mercy.

"Your thanksgiving will be an always new incentive of new graces that Jesus will be pleased to give you and from this contest of generosity and gratitude will flow spiritual treasures which make of you instruments of mercy of the Lord."⁷⁸

E. AT THE SERVICE OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

The purpose of being an instrument of mercy is simply that we are channels, means, of bringing God's love and mercy to others. Being such an instrument is intimately linked with apostolic service and in the context of van Crombrughe's spirituality as given to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, those cannot be separated. This was made evident from the very beginning of the Institute when to be an instrument of mercy was consistently linked with the fourth vow of education and with zeal⁷⁹.

Everything that has been said by the Founder about the instrument comes into focus in terms of service, and this service is without limit.

"Be at the service of the whole Church. Be there as a pardoned sinner who has found peace and rejoices in the merciful love of God."⁸⁰

We have already seen that service must be based in faith⁸¹. The person who serves needs to be totally centred in Christ in order to speak of Him effectively. Service is not a distraction from being with the Lord, but it is an integral part of being with Him.

"That which God wants done cannot lead us away from God, but it must be done as God wants it done."⁸²

We may recall that the same idea was expressed by van Crombrughe in the very first letter he

⁷⁷ See ADMJR / 18 - 3, letter of van Crombrughe to Clothilde van Wymelbeke, 11 April, 1845.

⁷⁸ ADMJR / 6 - 40, letter of van Crombrughe to Olympiade Derville, 5 July, 1836: "*Votre reconnaissance sera un motif toujours nouveau de grâces nouvelles que Jésus se plaira à vous faire et de ce conflit de générosité et de gratitude naîtront des trésors spirituels qui vous rendront des instruments de la miséricorde du Seigneur.*"

⁷⁹ See Part I, Chap. 3, C: "Founder", pp. 106 - 107; and again in Chap. 4, C: "Daughters of Mary and Joseph - Rule and Constitutions, 1844", p. 159.

⁸⁰ ADMJR / List C - 18. See above, Chap. 6, A: "God, all-merciful, all compassionate", p. 43.

⁸¹ See above, Chapter 6, particularly C: "Living in Christ", p. 69 - 77.

⁸² ADMJR / Instructions Spirituelles 18, "La solitude et le recueillement : "Ce que Dieu fait faire n'éloigne pas de Dieu, mais il faut le faire comme Dieu le veut."

wrote to the Sisters in 1818, when he told them to do what is pleasing to God and to do it in such a way that does in fact please Him⁸³. We may also remember the tremendous zeal of the young priest van Crombrughe, in his Aalst days, of the enthusiasm with which he worked at so many projects, in order to bring young people to the Lord. We recall too his invitation to the first Sisters to choose, to make a decision to enter into battle for the Lord and he offered them the sword of the Word of God. Throughout his life he lived with the same zeal and encouraged it in his religious. In the Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, he called zeal their distinguishing characteristic, while in his usual gentle but clear way he told the Sisters:

"Be zealous, but let your zeal be enlightened and prudent; let it be generous and persevering."⁸⁴

In this same article Canon van Crombrughe drew together all his teaching. As this article is the heart of the Constitutions, so it is the heart that gives life to a Daughter of Mary and Joseph.

"You are the instruments of the mercy of the Lord, to train servants for the Heavenly Father, disciples for Jesus Christ, to rear living temples of the Holy Spirit. Let no difficulty stop you in this sublime ministry. The remembrance of what Jesus Christ has done for you will teach you what you should do for Him. 'As long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to Me'."⁸⁵

F. CONCLUSIONS

Taking the metaphor of the orchestra used by van Crombrughe, we see that to be an instrument of the mercy of the Lord means first of all that one is totally available to the player. He may pick up, use and play the instrument as he wishes. The instruments vary. Some produce sound by being fully open so that the breath of the player can produce a beautiful tone. Other instruments produce sound when they are stretched to their capacity, but never beyond. Others still are moulded from wood, specially prepared, kept continually polished and the fine strings stretched across are ready to sound at the touch of the bow in the player's hand. Others yet again contain a reed that vibrates with perfect sensitivity to the breath of the player.

Each instrument has its unique sound, no two are the same. Each in itself is capable of producing a beautiful melody. But together in harmony and unison they send forth a symphony which is so much richer. The particular symphony of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, is one of

⁸³ See Part I, Chap. 3, C: "Founder", p. 100.

⁸⁴ Constitutions 1891, Official English Text, Art. 161, "Zeal for the welfare of youth", pp. 38 - 39 (18 - 19).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

joy, simplicity and thanksgiving.

In the vision of van Crombrughe, such is an instrument in the hand of God, playing the melody of the mercy of God. The full beauty of being an instrument is that it is played for others. Thus, the person called to be an instrument of mercy is called for others. The Holy Spirit forms and uses the instrument and as we are open to that formation

"we will become perfect instruments in the hands of divine mercy and we will give service to the Church."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See above, Chap.6, D: "Instruments of Mercy through the power of the Holy Spirit", p. 90 - 91.

CHAPTER EIGHT: EVALUATION AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

A. SPIRITUALITY OF CANON VAN CROMBRUGGHE

1. Characteristics of the man

In reflecting on the life of Canon van Crombrugghe, one is struck by various aspects of the man's character. Our study of his life gives us a picture of the external man, and his writings, particularly his letters, lead us to the spirit that moved him. He was a man deeply rooted in the times and society in which he lived, with the riches and limitations that these imply. An examination of the map of Belgium¹ will show that he lived his life within a very limited area. In fact the only time he moved away from the Gent and Brugge dioceses was as a boy when he went to study in Amiens.

The society to which he belonged was solidly lower middle-class, and his family was made up of businessmen who had learned how to hold their own amidst changing political structures and various regimes. Whilst the ruling class lived in uncertainty for the future, and the poor hardly survived, townspeople learned not only how to survive but to improve their standing in society. They had their own social mores which Constant followed. He learned and never lost the ability to adapt and to act with diplomacy and tact. His gift was that he was able to use this ability in the service of the Lord. His family background also influenced his attitude towards the poor, which was rather paternalistic. However, this did not stop him from offering them genuine service and care.

Already as a young man two aspects of his character are clearly defined; the exterior business man that is orderly and organised, and the interior, sensitive, rather timid person, who tended to scrupulosity.

While at Amiens he made his decision to become a priest and he went to his diocesan seminary in Gent, during a time of mounting persecution for the Church. These difficulties seemed to have strengthened Constant in his resolution. He became a zealous young priest, who took on extra work in order to bring people to the Lord. His concern both for poor and for youth were evident at this time.

His appointment to Aalst marked a big change in his life. He became the Principal and administrator of a College that had almost ceased to exist and succeeded in putting it back on its feet. This gave him the opportunity to put into practice the educational ideals he had learned during his Amiens student days.

It was during this time that he founded the Daughters of Mary and Joseph and the Brothers of St. Joseph. He was only 27 years of age. He was also in the process of setting up a second school

¹ See Appendix 1, A.

attached to the College, for boys with insufficient means to pay for their education. He had various other projects in hand to help the poor. A sense of energy and zeal is evident during this period; we see it in his 1818 letter to the Congregation (a similar letter was addressed to the Brothers at the same time). During this period “for the greater glory of God” was the motto that appeared on his letters².

When politics intervened in his life, causing the College to be closed, he began to put all his energy into working for the liberty of worship and of education. This reached a climax in 1830 with the independence of Belgium and his election to the First National Assembly. While we know a considerable amount about the externals of his life during these years, there is no indication of how he was developing spiritually. For that we have to wait until the next decade, the 1830's, when, through his letters to the religious, we can discern the spiritual dimensions of his own personal spiritual journey.

The remainder of his life was spent in Gent, where he lived for more than thirty years, working with remarkable energy in helping the development of the Congregations that he had founded. At the same time he was working in the Diocese as a Canon of the Cathedral, and Diocesan advisor; he was also involved in the local social reforms for prisoners. He continued all these activities until prevented by illness. He died in Gent in 1865, at peace with his Lord. His character was always caught in the tension between his sensitivity and his flair for organisation; between the charismatic and the juridical. He felt the need to conform to both Church and society, but his sensitivity opened him to the working of the Spirit which at times, moved him almost beyond himself. His early life was marked by zeal, his later years by love. Zeal became tempered with love and one has the impression of a most gentle, patient man. Nevertheless, this tension is evident.

What happened in his relationship with Soeur Julie may serve as an example of this. He was remarkably insensitive towards her, which seems quite uncharacteristic of him. In studying the man one is struck by his great respect for the person of the other; this he taught and lived. Yet, to all appearances, in dealing with Julie in this situation he seemed to have forgotten how she felt. The only dimension of his life that was as strong as his respect for people was his zeal to serve the Lord in the best way possible. He was steadfast and able to see a project through despite all difficulties, even, if necessary, using unusual means to do this (for example, the presence of laywomen, Mlle Colette de Brandt and his mother, Mme van Crombrugge as Mères Séculières in the Aalst and Geraardsbergen communities). At the time of the division of the Congregation it

² For the use of the motto A.M.D.G. as a letter heading see ADMJR / A - 21, letter of van Crombrugge to M. le Directeur du 2^e Pensionnat, Aalst, 2 December, 1823.

would seem that zeal dominated his character and stifled his natural sensitivity.

2. His spirituality

Recognising the tension within van Crombrughe makes the work of grace in him the more remarkable. He led a private life, rarely writing about himself. But through his letters we have a wealth of knowledge about his vision of life. We also meet the sensitive, loving man that he was. Looked at as a whole, it is as though he were caught up in the mercy and love of God. This led him to confidence and trust and the desire to search out God's will in his life.

His relationship with Christ was evident and real. As a young man he had made an election, a choice for Christ and he based his entire life on this. Christ was his Lord, Master and Saviour, as well as his Brother. Devotion to the Heart of Christ was central to his spirituality as being the expression of the mercy of God.

Other devotions important in his life were to Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and to St. Joseph. Joseph held a particularly important place, as being someone to whom he turned with great confidence. His love for Mary, whom he saw as a Mother, was also very evident. As he wanted it to be for others, his own life was marked by thanksgiving, rejoicing in all that the Lord had done for him and around him. He perceived the Gospel message in terms of mercy and of love, God's gratuitous gift.

We have seen something of the various people that influenced his spiritual development, particularly Père Sellier and Canon Huleu: how Sellier brought him to a realisation of God's love and mercy, and how Huleu led him towards an active submissiveness to the will of God. It would be helpful to reflect briefly on the sources of that influence. In general terms it may be said that the plan, the scope of the spiritual life that he mapped out for his religious, was Ignatian. Under the inspiration of St. Francis de Sales he filled in the details, especially concerning God's mercy and love.

The influence of St. Ignatius' teaching is evident in many ways, both in the Constitutions and in the letters. We should first recall the influence of the Fathers of the Faith on van Crombrughe. While studying with them he laid the foundations of his spirituality, which touched all areas of his spiritual life. They themselves had not been Jesuits. As Fathers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, they had returned directly to the writings of St. Ignatius Loyola, particularly the Spiritual Exercises, and had arrived at their own understanding of St. Ignatius' spirituality. Their response was not the same as the Jesuits before their suppression, For example, the stress they placed on community living was different, as was their accent on contemplation. They had looked at Ignatius' teaching with new eyes. They were also particularly marked by the place the Sacred Heart of Jesus

held in their devotion. So when we speak of their influence on van Crombrugghe as being Ignatian, that is not the same thing as speaking of a Jesuit influence in his life. He was influenced and helped by the Jesuits, particularly in his writing of the Constitutions, but that came later, after his own spiritual life was well established.

From the Fathers of the Faith, van Crombrugghe seems to have learned the importance of Ignatian election, of making a choice in life and if that choice were made by the person for Christ, then it had to be lived out radically. This is the source of his zeal, of his natural capabilities being put at the service of Christ.

As we have seen, van Crombrugghe had a strong sense of the presence of God, of finding God in all things, in people particularly and also in places and through events. The way he spoke of other people, his very reasons for offering respect was because he recognised them as the dwelling place of the Trinity, bought at the price of Christ's blood. The importance he placed on abandonment to God and his teaching of active submissiveness to that will, were what he himself had learned at Amiens. It had been reinforced by the direction of his uncle, Huleu, but we have reason to believe that the seed was planted by the Fathers of the Faith. His use of the Ignatian "Ad majorem Dei gloriam" for his personal motto as a young man is another element in the pattern. It was more than a motto for we have seen him insisting to his religious that the glory of God was all important. We have too, the statement of the old Sister who had known him for years, that everything he did was for God's greater glory.

The letter of 1818 which magnificently sums up the spirituality of the young van Crombrugghe is very Ignatian, with its accent on election and on zeal. Then, too, there is his desire that his religious should follow the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, if possible under the direction of a Jesuit. His personal synthesis of the spiritual life, the expression "instruments of mercy", almost surely finds its source in the Ignatian "instruments in the hand of God". Indeed van Crombrugghe uses this expression frequently enough for it clearly to be part of his thought.

Van Crombrugghe's use of the word "mercy" leads us to the second influence in his spiritual life; St. Francis de Sales. It would seem likely that this influence came chiefly through his uncle, Canon Huleu. We traced back, during the course of this study, possible influences through Arvisenet's *Memoriale*. More importantly, we have van Crombrugghe's own admission that he had always modelled himself on Francis and would have wished to have been like him³. In fact he underlines the attitudes that attracted him to Francis de Sales: gentle confidence, charity and moderation. He even based his directions for receiving the sacrament of penance on the teaching of St. Francis⁴.

³ See ADMJR / 6 - 55, letter of van Crombrugghe to Olympiade Derville, 26 January, 1837

⁴ ADMJR / A - 21, Extrait sur les confessions. St. François de Sales ; Directoire pour les Sœurs de la Visitation, art. 2.

The type of spirituality that van Crombrugghe encouraged in his religious seems to be a blending of the teaching of these two masters of the spiritual life: not looking for extraordinary prayer experiences, going forward peacefully, in confidence, trusting in God's love and mercy, with simplicity, joy and thanksgiving; finding God everywhere, loving Him through those who have in turn been taught to love Him; totally abandoned into God's hands and at His service and that of His Church. These are the characteristics of van Crombrugghe's personal synthesis of the spiritual life. It is simple, uncomplicated, filled with gentleness and love and at the same time capable of inspiring one with zeal and courage in the service of the Lord.

There were naturally many other influences on the spirituality of van Crombrugghe, of which three are particularly worthy of our consideration. First is that of Fénelon, the Archbishop of Cambrai⁵. Quite definitely Fénelon's principles were those the Founder used in regard to education. He states this explicitly at the beginning of his Instructions concerning education and educational methods⁶. The mentions of Fénelon in his private correspondence are rare, there being only three in his letters to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph⁷ and there Fénelon is held up as a model of good style. There is however one notebook kept in the Josephite archives in Melle, where the Founder copied some extracts from Fénelon concerning prayer. Reading them one is reminded of van Crombrugghe's own teaching. For example he copied:

"Try to savour God, never look upon Him as a powerful and inexorable judge who constantly keeps watch in order to reprimand us and to compel us on every occasion. See how gentle He is, how He adjusts Himself to our needs and has pity on our weaknesses. Become familiar with Him as a tender and compassionate Father."⁸

Certainly this and the other extracts that he copied from the same source are very much in tune with van Crombrugghe's own ideas on prayer. However the question remains how much did Fénelon influence him and how much did he merely serve to confirm what van Crombrugghe had already arrived at himself. It is difficult to say and maybe of no great importance. What is important to note

⁵ See Appendix II, Biographical Notes, s. v. Fénelon.

⁶ See ADMJR/ E – 10, De l'Instruction et de l'Education chez les Dames de Marie.

⁷ ADMJR / 6 - 33, letter of van Crombrugghe to Olympiade Derville, 3 March, 1836; ADMJR / 19 - 13, letter of van Crombrugghe to Clementine, 9 October, 1837; 6 – 230 - 243, letter of van Crombrugghe to Olympiade Derville, 16 October, 1840.

⁸ ADMJR / B - 16; GARCIA, G. C., Image of a merciful God through prayer, Weybridge, 1979, in which this passage is quoted (trans. Garcia). Taken from AJM / I - M, 31; "Réflexions sur l'oraison tirées d'une lettre de M. Fénelon à une Dame sur l'éducation de sa fille", p. 10. The original text of Fénelon reads: « *Tachez de lui faire goûter Dieu: ne souffrez pas qu'elle ne le regarde que comme un juge puissant et inexorable, qui veille sans cesse pour nous censurer et pour nous contraindre en toute occasion ; faites lui voir combien il est doux, combien il se proportionne à nos besoins, et a pitié de nos faiblesses. Familiarisez-la avec lui comme avec un père tendre et compatissant.* » (*Œuvres*, Paris, J. A. Lebel, 1823, Tome XVII p. 126)

is that the Founder is largely in tune with the ideas of Fénelon and therefore this may be a further source of understanding van Crombrughe.

Second, A Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* was another favourite of the Founder and some of his "Instructions Spirituelles" conclude with a proposed reading⁹. Again, these are of importance to us inasmuch as we have a certain insight into what was worthy of note in van Crombrughe's thought.

Third, and finally, it is interesting to notice the place that St. Teresa of Avila had in his writing. He does not quote her concerning prayer, as might be expected, but concerning humility. Practically an entire "Instruction" that van Crombrughe gave concerning openness of heart towards the superior is based in Teresa's writing¹⁰. He appears to admire her common sense.

There must have been many other influences, as there are in the lives of all, but these were the most distinct.

Before leaving the question of van Crombrughe's view of the spiritual life, we may perhaps ask how original was his thought. In general terms it was not. There is little that is new about what he has to say. But the personal synthesis which he offered to the Congregations was stamped with his character. The expression "instruments of mercy" though known to have been used once by Père Sellier, does seem to have the special mark of van Crombrughe. Others use variations of the expression, as does van Crombrughe himself, such as "instruments of peace" and "instruments of reconciliation"¹¹, but "instruments of mercy" is his particular expression and synthesis of the spiritual life. In this is his originality. We come then to the question of whether this is of value to others and if so to what extent.

B. AN EVALUATION OF THE SPIRITUALITY OF CANON VAN CROMBRUGGHE

1. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph (1817 - 1865)

For the spirituality of a man to be truly that of a founder of a religious congregation, it needs to be more than a personal synthesis. Each Christian, consciously or not, has his own way of reading the Gospel, of perceiving reality and bringing the two together in a suitable response. When the Holy Spirit moves someone with a particular gift of foundation, others are moved to join the

⁹ See Appendix V. C. for the text references.

¹⁰ ADMJR / Instructions Spirituelles, 19, "Sur l'ouverture du coeur".

¹¹ ADMJR / 5 - 3, letter of van Crombrughe to Catherine Dal, 29 June, 1836: "instrument of peace", also "instrument of reconciliation". For "instruments in the hand of God" see Appendix III, A.

Founder in his understanding of the spiritual life. Our question would be, did the members of the Congregation during the first fifty years of its existence experience that particular gift of the Holy Spirit which van Crombrughe had tried to share with them? From the study that has been made the answer is in the affirmative, with one distinct hesitation regarding the question of service of the poor.

As we have seen, at the beginning of the Congregation, Sisters made a fourth vow of education of the poor. Linked with this right from the start was the recommendation to zeal and the invitation to be an instrument of mercy. We have tried to explore the meaning of the term "instruments of mercy" in the writings of van Crombrughe, as it is of evident importance. It offers a synthesis of van Crombrughe's spirituality, drawing together the aspects of abandonment into the hands of the Father who is all-merciful, all-compassionate, and allowing oneself to be used in His service to bring His mercy to others. For the first years, certainly from 1818 to 1830, possibly till nearly 1840, "education of the poor" was part of the vow formula. From then on it was simply a vow of education and while classes for the poor were maintained this played a very small part in the development of the Congregation. The Founder had not only accepted this change of apostolate but had recommended and encouraged it.

It may, rightly, be argued, that the accent changed because the needs of society changed. Van Crombrughe himself had called adaptability the "great rule" of the Congregation. However, because "the poor" and "instruments of mercy" were linked, the question remains as to why the poor were almost neglected by the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, by then known as the Ladies of Mary. This was part of the reason for the first division of the Congregation, the Sisters of Mary and Joseph continuing to offer direct service to the materially poor.

While the question remains open, it is an important consideration for the members of the Congregation today. One is left with the clear impression that for van Crombrughe adaptability to the needs of society was of greater importance than a definition of the section of society that particularly needed evangelizing. This would then open the question further as to whether the Congregation is inextricably linked with education, that is to say, it puts into question whether this is an essential part of the spirituality of the Congregation.

From an examination of the Congregation during the life of the Founder the answer would tend to be in the affirmative. If, however, we are to accept the argument that adaptability is of greater importance, then the picture changes. This, it would seem, leads to the conclusion that while part of the apostolic activity will be focused on education in the usual meaning of the term, it may legitimately be understood in a much broader sense. So other types of apostolic activity, not directly linked with school education have a place within the spirituality of the Congregation. It would appear that either we arrive at this conclusion or we have to admit that the Congregation from the

late 1830's did not live in accordance with the spirituality it had been offered by van Crombrughe at its inception. We are left also with the question of why the Founder divided the Congregation, if he saw the possibility of apostolic activity of various types. We have to recall once more, the times and the place in which he and the Sisters lived. Either religious were almost enclosed, undertaking the education of children who came to them, or they were active in the field of social services. To mix them was not usual. Add to that the type of character of the Founder, who liked everything to be neat and in order, plus his continuing desire to modify, to adjust and adapt and it is not difficult to understand why he divided the Congregation into three, each with its distinctive place in the Church.

We may then say that while the fourth vow was an expression of the spirituality of the Congregation and was intimately linked with zeal and being an instrument of mercy, the material of the vow did change. This would lead us to believe that adaptability to the changing needs of society is indeed the great rule of the Congregation and an essential of its spirituality. And this the Sisters lived within those first fifty years.

Our next question would then be, did they arrive at holiness? Was the spirituality offered them by van Crombrughe a valid way for growth in the spiritual life? While there are exceptions, because holiness depends on the individual's response to God's grace, without doubt there were many holy women in the Congregation. There is every reason to believe that someone who accepted to live the particular programme offered by van Crombrughe to his Congregations, would grow in holiness and become more effective in the hands of God, a true instrument of mercy.

2. The Daughters of Mary and Joseph today.

If the spirituality of Canon van Crombrughe is genuine, then it will be of lasting value despite the changed times in which we live. Taking the understanding of mercy at which we have arrived, there is every reason to believe that it is of great value in today's world. One would say of even greater value than when first conceived by van Crombrughe. It is as though this particular aspect of the Founder's spirituality has remained almost hidden, so that it might be discovered in our day. If we recall the purpose that van Crombrughe gave for being such an instrument,

"... for forming servants of the heavenly Father, disciples of Jesus Christ, living temples of the Holy Spirit,"¹²

then we see the importance of this particular spirituality for the Church in the world today.

The Founder has passed on to the religious of his Congregations his experience of God as

¹² See Part I, Chapter 4, C: "Daughters of Mary and Joseph - Rule and Constitutions, 1844", p. 159.

all-merciful and all-compassionate. Thus they are called to reflect the mercy of God to others through their lives. They allow themselves to be used in His hands in whatever way He chooses. This is done by living close to Christ as His spouse, and growing in His attitudes of tenderness and humility, of patience and love. Like Mary, who is given as the model and Mother of the religious, they are called to speak a "fiat" every day, and so become, as she, the "womb" of God, that is, filled with compassion, moved to the depths of their being, before the hunger and suffering of people in today's world. Mary is indeed model in her act of abandonment into the Father's hands, her acceptance of His will, her launching out into the unknown. With her, the religious are invited to sing the Magnificat, a song of joy and thanks for the mercy of the Lord.

So that the Lord's mercy and compassion may be brought into today's world, the rule of the Congregation remains that of adaptability.

"In order to be always useful, our Institute, making itself all things to all men, will modify its means of action according to the new needs of society. Such will in all ages be our great rule..."¹³

Surely van Crombrughe did not know all the implications when he asked his religious to be at the service of the whole Church. He himself lived most of his life within a small area of Belgium, before the great mission expansion of the 19th century, but that does not limit his message for his religious today. Adaptability to the needs of society remains an integral part of his spirituality, which essentially combines the apostolic life with the life of prayer and contemplation. This is most demanding and needs a great deal of courage, confidence and trust in God. For this reason van Crombrughe placed the Congregation under the special patronage of St. Joseph, that they might fulfil the mission given to them.

To be an instrument of mercy is not only an invitation given to the Congregation in general but also to each Sister individually. The Lord says of her, as He did of Paul, that she is a chosen instrument of His, to carry His name to all people. The instrument is chosen despite its weaknesses, its frailty and its earthiness, even because of it, so that others may more easily recognise that the power belongs to God and not to herself. It is not her mercy or compassion that she is to show, but the Lord's.

The focus of the Lord's mercy is in the Heart of Christ, so it is there that each member of the Congregation finds strength and life, in this school of the Heart.

¹³ See Part I, Chapter 3, B: "Educator", p. 91.

C. AN INVITATION WITHOUT LIMITS

In the encyclical Dives in Misericordia, John Paul II wrote:

"The truth, revealed in Christ about God, the 'Father of mercies' enables us to 'see' him as particularly close to man, especially when man is suffering, when he is under threat at the very heart of his existence and dignity. And this is why, in the situation of the Church and the world today, many individuals and groups, guided by a lively sense of faith are turning, I would say almost spontaneously, to the mercy of God."¹⁴

A mark of the validity of van Crombrughe's spirituality is its clear relevance for today. While in many ways his ideas are traditional, his message transcends time. Constant van Crombrughe lived a century and a half ago and knew nothing atomic stock-piles, nuclear warfare and other modern expressions of man's sinfulness and need of God's mercy. He did know of political domination and oppression and gave the best of which he was capable to ensure liberty of worship and education, liberties which are precious and relevant today.

All men and women may hear and respond to the invitation that van Crombrughe offers to be an instrument of mercy in the Lord's hand. First and above all, it means being fully abandoned into the hands of the Father, allowing Him to use us as and when He wishes and not when and with whom we think best.

To be such an instrument also means having experienced the Lord's mercy. As He has received us back to Him with joy despite our sinfulness, so we allow Him to use us to bring others to receive that same mercy.

It means too, that we receive others joyfully, not being taken up by their weaknesses and sinfulness, but rather rejoicing that they are who they are. We receive them with the same love and joy with which the Lord has received us. We feel with them and respond with them to the sufferings of their life, sorrowful with their sorrow, as well as joyful with their joy.

The mercy the Lord has shown us is overwhelming, out of proportion to the individuals that we are, lavish in its generosity, totally loving and accepting. It is this that we are invited to show every person that we meet, without exception.

"You are the instruments of the mercy of the Lord... Let no difficulty stop you in this ministry."¹⁵

¹⁴ John Paul II, Dives in Misericordia, Vatican Polyglot Press, 1980, p. 9.

¹⁵ Constitutions, 1891, Official English Translation, Art. 161, "Zeal for the welfare of Youth", p. 38 (18-19).

