

Catalog Number	Letter Recipient
0	Julie Herbau Appointed First Superior General: 1832-1838
1	Superiors at Malines
2	Superiors at Aalst
02	Marine Coulon. Superior of Brussels and Aalst
3 & 03	Marie-Anne de Ponthieux. Novice Mistress
4	Various Superiors: Unknown
5	Catherine Dal. Superior at Mouscron
6	Olympiade Derville. Vicar; First elected Superior General: 1840-1858
7	Flore Delhaye. Second Superior General: 1858-1885
8	Raphaelle Becq. Third Superior General: 1885-1900
9	Aloyse Bruycher. Superior at Holy Angels, Brussels
10	Gonzague. Left the Institute
11	Bathilde Delhaye. Sister of Flore Delhaye
12:1-8	Louise Busschaert
12:9-14	Louise Deschamps
13	Justine van Crombrugghe. Grandniece of Canon van Crombrugghe
14	Eleanore Laboulais. Mistress General of the Institute
15	Columbe Verduyn. God-daughter of Canon van Crombrugghe
16	Pauline D'Halluin
17	Clothilde Minne. Superior at Aalst, Mechelen, Brussels, Vicar of Institute
18	Clothilde van Wymelbeke. Niece of Canon van Crombrugghe, Superior at Brussels, Mechelen, Novice Mistress
19	Various Religious (Identified) Emélie Lecroat. 19:1-6 Raphaëlle Hennion. 19:7-12 Clémentine Rhenin. 19:13 Colette Wouters. 19:14, 15 Séraphine de Troch. 19:16, 35 Julie Loix. 19:17-19 Hélène Dubus. 19:20 Félicité van Crombrugghe. 19:21-23 Albertine Oden. 19:24 Apolline Delbeque. 19:25-27 Justine Beyser. 19:28, 29, 45 Flore de Mytternaere. 19:33 Flavie Serrias. 19:34 P... (Unknown) 19:35-40 Stéphanie de Jaegher. 19:41-42 Léocadie Mullier. 19:42-44
20	Unknown Religious

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO JULIE HERBAU
First Superior General 1832 - 1838
Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph 1838-18__
Died 1864
(2 Letters dated 1834 and 1835)

L.S.J.M.J

0-1

Very Reverend Mother

I cannot tell you how pleased I am to see all the blessings which, in his mercy, the Lord has bestowed on the convent of St. Joseph. You are really children of predilection; I cannot contain my joy, and the sentiments of gratitude that animate me without ceasing, and I thank God for his goodness. Let us pray our Holy Angels and Patron Saints, especially the Queen of the Angels and Saints, let us pray to them I say, to join us in thanking God for his divine mercies. My dear Mother, how much help and means of salvation and perfection we have received! You can all say that God does not do as much for others, that he has given you greater knowledge of his holy law than the rest of men. It is a genuine consolation for me to know that God is not dealing with ungrateful people. I know your dispositions well enough to dare to believe that all of you, no matter the cost, wish to remain faithful to the sacred commitments which your love of Christ has impelled you to contract, and that you will not be separated from the object of your love and gratitude either by hell or your own sinfulness. That is how I feel and think about you, Reverend Mother. I beg you to tell our dear Children this; I am sure that not one of them will contradict me, but all will agree most positively, that Jesus will be their all; and they will renounce anything that might diminish the ardor of the love they have promised, and do have for him.

Continue to enjoy in peace, the gifts of the Lord, and he will add to them the graces you need. Reject all sentiments and all thoughts which might trouble the heart where Jesus Christ is pleased to dwell. Take care not to let the enemy ever have the dark satisfaction of seeing the dwelling place of the Lord troubled by any uncontrolled passion. No, my children, let nothing disturb you that is contrary to this holy serenity which you must always keep, for the divine Spouse is justly jealous of your heart and its emotions. Beware of anything which would appear contrary to the peace which you must preserve, beware, because it is the angel of darkness; very often it is an illusion, all the more dangerous as it comes to you either through fear of evil or through love of good. Mistrust yourselves, no doubt, no agitation; but real confidence, unlimited tenderness and devotion. Oh Mary! Oh Joseph! May your adopted children walk steadily in the path of perfection; may your dear daughters triumph over all their enemies under your powerful protection and attain the goal they are striving for. May they love Jesus as much as they should, and may Jesus always open to them his Heart burning with divine love.

These are the sentiments which my heart feels it had to express to you to-day; I feel that God is the author of them and wants you to realize that he has given me the heart of a Father towards those he has given to me as Children.

Your devoted Spiritual Father,
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20 Sept. 1834

To the very reverend Mother General of the Sisters of Mary of Alost

Very reverend Mother General

It is in your hands as Mother of the Convent of Saint Joseph, the place of Mother being vacant at this moment that I give these objects, which are listed herein (a list of 18 objects follows).

I offer to the Lord all these objects, begging him through the intercession of Saint Joseph and also of the most Holy Virgin Mary, to be pleased to accept them as evidences of my affection and my devotedness to the Daughters of Mary and Joseph at the Convent of Alost, whose zeal for the honor of God and the salvation of children, is for me a subject of consolation and edification.

May the Spouses of Jesus Christ realize also with what sincerity I love them in the heart of our divine Savior, and how ardently I wish their charity to grow more and more in wisdom and in knowledge, so that they may discern what is best, and that their conduct may be pure and innocent until the day of the coming of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul spoke to the Philippians Chap. 1, v. 8 and following. My sentiments for you and your Children, seems to authorize me to use these words of the great Apostle.

And you, Reverend Mother, accept once again my felicitations on the blessings that the good God pours out on the Institute which you direct, and count on the sincere devotedness of

Your very affectionate spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th March 1835

LETTERS TO THE SUPERIORS OF MALINES 1853-1865

Superiors at Malines:

Mme Eulalie Vandemaele 1838; Mme Hélène Dubus 1849; Mme Raphaëlle Becq 1855
(14 Letters dated 1853-1865)

L.S.J.M.J.

1-1

Madame Superior

The novices may write to the mistress of novices and the mistress may write to her novices, freely, and no superior has the right to see the letters. Please tell your novices this.

When one of your novices writes to her mistress, put on the envelope: this letter is from the novice N, her name.

You will be receiving souvenir cards of our late prioress Lady Marie-Charlotte. Please send them according to the address indicated, to Coloma or Brussels. You will distribute the others addressed to you, as indicated by the address.

We are thinking of placing a small monument, a cross on the tomb of Mme. Marie-Charlotte.

I will probably come to see you soon. I give you my blessing and assure you of my devotion.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of the month of St. Joseph 1853

Madame Superior

I think you will have to proceed with much prudence with Madame (name illegible). You know that the Ladies of Mary are accused of being parsimonious. This reputation does a lot of harm, which will increase as it spreads around. I will speak about your affair with Madame Superior about this when she comes to Ghent.

You must not be too surprised to see that the number of your pupils is not increasing very much. I know on good authority that the methods of Madame Clara are not appreciated, and it appears it is not without good motives. I hope that with prudence and with zeal you will manage to put your affairs in order, but God must have a place in your interests.

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th October 1855

Madame Superior

Here is a response to the letter of your novice. It is a pity that all the novices are not in the novitiate and that their Mistress is not there, as the Rule demands. This state of things cannot go on; it does no honor to our Institute. Pray my dear daughter that these exceptions may cease.

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th July 1856

My best wishes to your Sisters.

This is the letter which I request you give to Father Bosmans yourself. You will do well to go and greet the Grande Vicaires on my behalf and request their good offices. Also go to the Sisters of Charity and ask for their prayers. They are the children of one of my great-uncles; they will welcome you warmly and you can count on the help of their prayers, as soon as you know your plans. The priests at the College will also be of great assistance.

Madame Superior

I think that Mlle Marie Louise is not going to triumph in the struggle which nature is arousing in her. But we will be able to congratulate ourselves on what we have done for her.

The sister of your lay-sister has not been admitted, as she had imagined. They assured me of this at Coloma.

On Wednesday, when Madame Superior General returns from Mouscron, I will have a chance to speak about the matter of the Mistress General which you suggested to me.

Have courage, dear daughter; place yourself in the hands of the good Lord Jesus your Spouse, your all. I am always, with all my heart,

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th October 1856

My best wishes to Madame Alexandrine

Madame Superior

Your last letters have given me real pleasure. I realize that you have understood the remarks I made to you through our dear and very venerated Superior General and that you are conforming with them and are carrying them out with entire simplicity. You will not regret it, dear child, and the divine model whom you contemplate with love, during these solemn days, will inspire you on several points which agree with the doctrine I asked her to talk to you about. So have confidence in divine goodness, be patient and humble with your own weaknesses, and renew your courage every day in the inevitable struggles of our earthly pilgrimage here below.

Let us continue to thank the Lord for the good things he has showered on us, and his fatherly solicitude will provide the help we need according to the circumstance.

To you and your dear community, very dear Lady Superior, I give you my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th December 1862

My very dear Lady Superior

Thank you for the good wishes, and above all for the prayers that you have sent to heaven for me, and for the pious family of which you have the happiness to be a member. You were not forgotten, I can assure you, especially these days, when I begged for light and strength for the superiors Josephites and Ladies] of our Convents. I hope to see you and give you the enlightenment you desire. Meanwhile, count upon my devotion and zeal in helping you by my prayers.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th May 1863

(Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J

1-7

Madame Superior

I am very pleased that you agree with the sentiments I made known to you. I do not disapprove of your wish to render service to the town of Malines. As to the means you write to me about, perhaps these could be employed; I would like to discuss them with the Madame Superior General who, I am very sure, will give the matter careful consideration.

I advise you and all your dear Sisters, to be as recollected as possible, and to rest in the holy presence of your worthy Spouse Jesus Christ, once the prize-giving is over.

(In the Founder's hand) Just a word about Mme Kostka: You know the different bonds that attach me this dear child. Her extreme youth, poor health, and the various distractions she has had on account of prize distribution and also by the Congress; all these must have affected my god-daughter. Try to enable her to have some recollection and to walk once more in the presence of the good God. Recollection, prayer, turning to Jesus, must help our weakness, to prevent the fire of charity from burning out. In the example of our divine Master, the Superiors must draw aside, into solitude, those of their subjects whose distracting occupations may have caused them to lose their recollection and the precious calm of the religious heart.

I ask the good God, my dear daughter, to lead you by his grace, along the different paths you may have to follow as Superior, as a mother. I also very cordially give you my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd August 1863

(Letter Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J.

1-8

Madame Superior

I am very pleased with the sentiments you expressed to me in your letter of the day before yesterday; accept my sincere thanks.

I think, Madame, that it will be necessary to follow closely the indisposition of Mme Kostka. I am led to believe that it somewhat resembles neuralgia. You know that I (correction) I do not have reasons to have confidence in the ills of this gender.

(In the Founder's hand) My niece will pardon me for not writing to her at this moment.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd February 1864

(Letter Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J.

1-9

Madame Superior

Your letter of Saturday assured me that the generosity of Madame Superior General has pleased you. I am most satisfied also with the other details you give me about your house. The zealous activity of your beloved Sisters edifies me and fills me with joy. Please tell them this quite simply.

My health is improving, thanks to the good God, but I am still deprived of the happiness of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Your (word illegible) Father,
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th July 1864

(Letter Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J.

1-10

Madame Superior

I know the sincerity of your sentiments and I appreciate the good wishes you sent me. I hope that the good God will listen to your requests for your Superiors. For my part, I also pray fervently that our Heavenly Father may bestow his most precious blessings on us, my dear daughter, and on the whole flock confided to us.

The news you give me is very consoling; I thank the good God, in particular, for the relief he has given to Mme Victoire. Like you, I hope she will return to full health, for she is able to render great service to our religious family.

What you tell me of the visit of your reverend Mother General is very edifying. I conclude that your whole community appreciates the zeal of our worthy mother and that her visit has left happy impressions.

I share your sentiments concerning the pupils of your free class. I join my prayers with yours to ask the blessing of the divine Infant Jesus on your poor children.

(In the Founder's hand)

I still call myself very sincerely

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th October 1864

L.S.J.M.J.

1-11

Madame Superior

This morning, at 4 o'clock, I was getting ready to come and see you. But before 5 o'clock, the time for departure, a slight indisposition caused me to give up the project which has been appealing to me for some time. I cannot tell you what day I will have the pleasure of beginning my preparations for the journey again. I want it to be soon, one of the days in the near future, for example, if possible.

Meanwhile, let us, with zeal, occupy ourselves with the means of procuring the good of souls, through the exercises of the month of Mary, our good Mother.

You know how devoted I am to my children in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th of Mary's month, 1862

[Letter same as No. 18-145 addressed to Mme Clothilde Van Wymelbeke]

(Letter Number duplicated)
(Letter Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J.

1-11

Madame Superior

You may be quite sure that I recommend to the good God, the enterprise you told me about in your last two letters.

I was delighted to see that your finances are gradually improving. I am also pleased with what you tell me about your pupils and classes, and especially about the health of your dear Sisters, and I thank the Lord, for the blessings he continues to bestow on your community.

Please thank Msgr. (illegible) when you have the opportunity, for his kind remembrance and give him my good wishes of the season; I offer them most cordially.

Receive my blessing, very dear Mother. I also give it to all your dear Sisters.

(In the Founder's hand) My dear child, you must improve your handwriting. You write too quickly.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd February 1865

(Letter Dictated
J.M.J.

1-12

Madame Superior

I thank you for all the kind things you say in your letter of the 1st of this month. I firmly hope that the month of the Sacred Heart will bring to completion the gifts which divine goodness has in store for you, for your dear Superiors, all your well-beloved Sisters and your pupils.

In a few days, on the 15th of this month, I think, my dear god-daughter will have the happiness of seeing her sister Louise enter your very pious Institute. So I recommend her to you, Madame Superior, and to all your charitable Sisters, this entry of my niece Louise.

Receive my best wishes and my sincere blessing

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th June 1865

(Letter Dictated
L.S.J.M.J.

1-13

Madame Superior

I will be so happy to fulfill my obligation of recommending you and your well-beloved children to our divine Savior, on the occasion of the renovation of your vows. I am consoled to see that you appreciate this solemn occasion. I am also consoled to know that the poor prefer the spiritual nourishment you give them to the material advantage which they are losing on account of their zeal for the faith of their fathers. The good God will reward those good sentiments.

I give you and all your dear Sisters my blessing.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th September 1865

LETTERS TO THE SUPERIORS OF ALOST
(15 Letters dated 1859 to 1865)

L.S.J.M.J.

2-1

Madame Superior

Having mutually examined your business, I have to come to the conviction that we must suspend indefinitely the execution of our plans. Consider the present circumstances, the animosity against convents, etc. of the anti-religious party, etc.

You understand, and this is for you alone, that your situation in regards to the sisters who have left and who figure in the deeds as co-owners is not regular and that serious disagreements could arise from this. In order to prevent them, it would be prudent to build elsewhere, if the opportunity arises.

Receive me dear daughter with my blessing and the oft-repeated assurance of my very affectionate devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th January 1859

Madame Superior

The extreme haste that is being put into the business which occupies us for your convent makes it my duty to not as yet give a yes, and I do not like saying no, without knowing all the details.

I hope to get the notary Mr. (illegible) to go to Alost today, and that he will be prevailed upon to pronounce a definite decision. In the meantime, pray, Madame, and if the negotiations fail, rest assured that we will have no reason to be worried about that. I will recognize in that refusal new proofs of the care which the Lord takes of us.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th February 1859 6:30 in the morning

Madame Superior

In spite of my good will of which you are well aware, I have not been able to obtain for you the immediate decision about which you wrote to me from Malines. The notary, Mr. Lammens, in whom I have great confidence and without whose advice I do not undertake anything of importance, will be going to Alost next Tuesday, in order to get more information about the time when we will be put in possession of the property which we wish to acquire. I regret that the occupations of Mr. Lammens do not allow him to leave here any sooner. Will you please ask Mr. Van der Smissen not to refuse us this delay, which by no means depends on our wish to shorten.

You understand, Madame Superior that I am not insensitive to the embarrassment which the affair causes you about which I have been talking with you since the month of September. I hope that your faith and your submission to divine providence will merit for you the accomplishment of your pious wishes to extend your means of doing good and of multiplying your merits for eternity.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th February 1859

Madame Superior

Your guess was right. We have not been able to accept the last proposal of Mr. Vandersmissen.

If the circumstances become better and if Mr. Vandersmissen is inclined to resume negotiations, we will be perhaps, happier than we are to-day. We desire this sincerely.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th February 1859

Madame Superior

It seems quite evident that the better choice to make, when the good God allows us to build, would be that of following, except for some modifications, the plan of the street behind.

I see with pleasure that Mlle Din (illegible) has settled down and that she appreciates her good fortune. Her arrival among you will be an advantage for our Eugenie and vice versa.

Let us pray our good St. Joseph for the Holy Father the Pope, for our Institute and for the whole Church. We are passing through one of the strangest periods produced since the first centuries of Christianity. Would to heaven that these trials may not continue for a long time.

I am thinking of the well-being of your house during this (illegible) of St. Colette. I pray also for our good sister Colette.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th of the month of St. Joseph 1861

Madame Superior

I am strongly in debt to our dear Lady Felicie for the grace which the good God has given to me of perceiving a strong desire to contribute to the building of the convent of St. Joseph. It was when I learned of the death of that pious Child that the thought of this good deed came to me. Until then I had not given it any thought. May the Lord be praised! This is another effect of his mercy that my assent was not delayed.

It will be necessary, my dear daughter, that the gift I make remain between us. For the moment my family must not know of it.

Please communicate this last point to Mme Eléonore and to Mme Euphrosine.

I am very pleased with the letter from Mlle D'Halluin. You were right to tell me it would be reasonable to write her a few words soon.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd October 1861

Madame Superior

I hope to have the pleasure of visiting you on Monday. It would be useful to see firsthand the project of the convent already approved. I will go to Brussels tomorrow, and count on returning home around 7 o'clock in the evening. Perhaps, I will see our architect. In the morning, I will be at the Holy Angels, in the afternoon at (illegible).

Please ask Mme Euphrosine to inform the chaplain at the hospital, of my plan to be in Alost on Monday.

While awaiting the pleasure of seeing you, I have that of giving you my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Mailing date? -10-61

Madame Superior

Here is what the notary told me: considering that Florentine Gregoire is interested in the most important real estate, enquiries should be made on this person, before making the deed of (illegible) or the mortgage deed. We are therefore at a standstill for the moment. All actions, without the intervention of this person will be void. Let us hasten the enquiries.

I like to think that Mme Ursule will persevere in her efforts to conquer herself and that the health of Mme Bathilde will improve.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11 December 1861

Madame Superior

Thank you for your last two letters to which I am replying without any delay. I, as well as you, recognize that the departure of the teacher from the Lace-making School could have unpleasant consequences. I would be deeply sorry if that school, which has been for 30 to 40 years a model school, should suffer on the part of a few teachers, in its perfection, especially at this time when lace-making affords such modest returns for our poor workers. I would be very glad to know if your Sister Pélagie is directing a school of lace-making with the Ladies at Schaerbeek, and whether she herself is able to do so with the same success as at your place.

As for the rest, Madame, I congratulate you on seeing all your dear Sisters contributing to the happiness of the pupils whom the good God sees fit to entrust to you.

It would be much to be desired if divine Providence would be willing to grant us a property suitable for the aim of your Institute of the Ladies of Mary. According to your remarks and those which have seriously occupied me for some years, the property of M.V.D.S. should no longer be thought of. Let us keep hoping that our all powerful patron St. Joseph will give us new proofs that his eyes are on us and that our filial confidence in him will triumph over every obstacle, no matter what.

I would like to have more definite information about the plan of which you spoke to me in your last letter.

(In the Founder's hand)

What you told me of the drawbacks of the situation in the property of V.D.S. struck me. That is the absence of a way or a street for the school for the poor. How could anyone have gone so far, as to both time and negotiations, since such reasons greatly influence against that property as regards the double usage to which we destined it?

I will join with you and your community to ask for the help of our all-powerful Patron. We are convinced that we will not succeed if we are left to our own strengths. Let us count then on St. Joseph.

Receive my blessing and the assurance of my affectionate devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th February 1863

Madame Superior

The weekly news which Mr. Soudan communicates to me is very satisfying and gives me the hope of our having a fine, solid and very suitable convent at Alost. In it may we make known to many young persons the Father whom they and we have in heaven!

I recommend that you always have the payments ready at the required and agreed upon time. As I am ignorant of the value of your resources, I cannot outline the amounts which it will be necessary to realize as priorities. Please write about this to Malines. This is a very important point.

I think it would be good to give Mme Pharaïlde the honorable privilege of laying the first stone of our convent dedicated to St. Joseph. Evidently she has rights to this and I consider it to be a real joy to thus give her those privileges which may be mine. The Superior, by virtue of her office, should also exercise the same privilege either before or after Mme Pharaïlde; you will decide. This point depends on the degree of knowledge that those around you have, of the devotion which this Lady and her sister Mme Julie, have to St. Joseph, to make our convent in Alost.

Since you will be writing to Malines in order to be assured that the payments to be made will not be delayed, at the same time kindly ask that the deeds be sent to me which substitute Mme Flore for Florentine, in the rights of the latter and the note (deeds) of the different owners of our properties in Alost, the note which I recently spoke about to Madame Superior General. We will need those documents next Thursday at the latest. I will be meeting with the Josephite, Mr. Stanislaus and another person who is learned in law, to examine again our affairs. These affairs occupy my thoughts almost exclusively. Although my health is improving, I have been deprived for the last week of the happiness of offering the Holy Sacrifice. I am afraid that this privation will last for a while longer. I adore the will of God.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th July 1863

Madame Superior

I see nothing to hinder you to make known to Madame Superior General the proposition about which you wrote to me. However, it must be you who makes the proposition, and not another.

It seems to me to be more and more evident that Mme (illegible) merits our complete confidence. That is a true blessing. For that let us thank our good Patron St. Joseph.

Please convey many good wishes to all of your dear sisters. I am very cordially devoted to them as well as to you, Madame Superior.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21 July 1863

(Dictated Letter)

Madame Superior

I read with interest your notes on the expenses of your house. If you have sent the same information to Malines, I think they will not carry out the projects, not even a small part of them, about which you had written to me.

Mr. Soudan has spoken to me about an iron cross, in the Gothic style, which it seems, would fit nicely in your chapel. Do you think I would do well to write about this to Mme Pharaïlde? Give me a word of reply and ask Mr. Soudan to bring it to me, so that I may be able to speak to him about it.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th April 1864

(In the Founder's hand) I was honored yesterday by a visit from the Cardinal of Malines, accompanied by Msgr. our Bishop and of Msgr. (Illegible) the Rector of the Catholic University.

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

2-13

Madame Superior

Here is the prospectus. Be so kind as to read it very attentively and return it to me with your remarks. Tell me also the number of printed copies you would like. You will recall that the greater the number of copies requested, the less expensive the individual copies will be.

(In the Founder's Hand)

I have just seen the explication that you furnished to Mr. Soudan. I am very satisfied with it. It is simple and without exaggeration. He could have pointed to other excuses which added to the expenses. But that would have been useless. Explanations should be given on the spot. My congratulations for having so skilful and honest an architect.

Ask for no further explanations; they would be useless. The facts are there.

As I intended to give 1500 to 2000 francs to honor the Blessed Sacrament in your chapel, I will use them to help you out in this matter. What do you think?

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st April 1865
I do not have the prospectus yet.

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

2-14

Madame Superior

Msgr. the Bishop has charged Msgr. the Dean to bless your chapel and tabernacle.

I unite my wishes with yours as regards our divine Savior, for whom we have tried to prepare as best we could, a worthy dwelling place.

The request you made for the new sacristan and yourself are granted.

Madame Superior, accept the blessing of your Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th May 1865

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

2-15

Madame Superior

I congratulate you on the happiness which God has given to you and to all your community, by allowing the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to be celebrated in your chapel. It is a consolation for me to know that this new sanctuary is rightly appreciated, that it is regarded as a little paradise where one may be recollected without effort. After having ended the beautiful month honoring our august Patron Mary, and having attracted her motherly eyes on your house, you will adore with this divine Mother, the adorable heart of Jesus, her son, during the coming month. This devotion is a precious way of attracting abundant blessings on you, Madame, on your beloved sisters and on the happy children confided to you.

Accept the wishes of your very devoted spiritual Father, as well as the blessing which I very cordially bestow on you.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd May 1865

02-0 "Collection of letters addressed by the Very Reverend Founder of the Ladies of Mary to the religious of his Institute, 1853"

The letters are probably addressed to Madame Marine Coulon.

(B. Aug 31, 1815; P. May 6, 1836; D. Dec. 14, 1894) The correspondence between CVC and Madame Marine in 1840 seems to indicate that Mme Marine was the recipient of the letters. The HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF THE INSTITUTE: states, "Before her departure for Malines, the Superior General appointed Madame Marine as Superior of the Convent of St. Joseph" (p.47) In a letter from CVC, Dec. 5th 1840: "Tell me in your next letter when you began the Sunday Schools in Alost and Grammont. Mlle Colette and Mme N. will inform you. Tell me also when our Sisters obtained the house next to the Parish Church in Alost." In Letter #02-37 Madame Marine wrote, "Mlle Colette could not remember the day on which the Sunday school at Alost was begun; she knows it was towards the end of 1818, the one at Grammont was opened on February 2nd 1819. The house facing the church was bought by our sisters on October 1st 1817." ***The letters were not copied in their entirety.***

02-1

I am very pleased with your letter because it sincerely reveals to me that heart I want to see belonging to God alone, and I find at the bottom of that heart goodwill and the desire to submit to what I prescribe.

I thank the Lord who is the author of all good, my child, and then urge you to let yourself be guided with simplicity. In dwelling upon yourself as you are doing, you are forgetting our good God too much, and from that comes that discouragement you are complaining about. There are so many subjects for discouragement in us, when we do not look towards the goodness of God and the merits of Jesus Christ, that the sight of them is overwhelming; so take care to cast your eyes on the Lord who loves us however wretched we are, and we will more and more marvel at his mercy, which will arouse in us the love of God and sentiments of generosity towards him. That, my dear child, is what I think I have to tell you and what I urge you to meditate upon calmly; you will draw out of your corrupt nature humility and the love of God. That is how you will convert evil itself into good and you will soon be cheerful gentle, simple and persevering. Have confidence in Sister N., and do not talk about your conscience to any other Sister; you would be exposing your-self to the danger of going astray, as the others do not have the grace to guide you in these matters.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of one who wants the greatest good for you, the love of God, and the graces needed to become a true Spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your devoted Spiritual Father

Ghent, 27th June 1834

You would find it profitable to read the 21st chapter of the 3rd Book of the "Imitation".

I thank our good God, my dear Child, for granting you a little relief through my ministry, and I congratulate you on following the counsels I gave you with reference to him who is asking you for your heart, that is to say, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

But I am sorry that you did not stand firm against your cowardliness and against the enemy of your soul. What have you to fear seeing that you are under the protection of an Angel, under that of the August Queen of Angels and under the eyes of him who is preparing you to become a Saint, to be his Spouse?

Whatever may happen to you whether in imagination or in the body, do not worry; see God present and your Angel and the divine Mary, and despise the powerless efforts of the devil. He is a chained dog, he barks and snaps but can only bite those who want him to do so by willingly approaching him. Oh, my child, if you knew how our good God loves you, you would not count on yourself but on him who has made an arrangement according to which you will never be tempted beyond your strength united to that of grace. Novice in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph, learn to have in your mind and in your heart the thoughts and sentiments of confidence that must distinguish the Children of the very Blessed Virgin. Try and learn to meditate and pray well mentally, and your fears will no longer torment you during the time of those precious exercises.

Finally, my poor child, I will pray the Lord to deign to give you the strength to carry your crosses and not to take all crosses away from you. I would not love you as I must, if I wanted you to be without any cross and unlike him to whom I hope I will have the pleasure of uniting you with indissoluble bonds. Say from time to time: Lord Jesus, deign to make me meek, humble and chaste; Holy Mary, show that you are my Mother; St. Joseph, please pray for this poor sinner.

There, dear N. this is the best that can be said to you by him who loves you in God and wants to be one day and for ever,

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 1st December 1834

I am more and more pleased with your writing. Cultivate that talent for the greater glory of God. Do not neglect grammar.

I am very touched by the good wishes you sent me for the pleasant feasts of Christmas and the Circumcision. I thank you, dear Child, for your good wishes and the prayers you offered to Heaven for me. I have not failed to commend you to the Divine Child; it is from him that I expect to obtain for you that simplicity, that confidence, that generosity that I would like to see in you for the good of your dear soul and the usefulness of our Institute.

Do not worry any more about those thoughts that are troubling you so gratuitously. If you could win yourself over to no longer fearing them and to despising them, you would have taken a great step towards that peace that Jesus Christ came to bring on earth and that the Angels announced to men of good will. Believe me, my poor child you are upsetting your mind uselessly. Have confidence in Jesus, in Mary, in Joseph, in that Angel charged with looking after you, and also in your Superiors, and soon you will triumph over the attacks of the enemy. Do not be afraid any more and the demon will be afraid in his turn.

May the sweet cheerfulness of the Children of God reign among you; it is a balm that spreads around the religious, that odor of Jesus Christ that edifies all those who have the happiness of coming into contact with them.

Receive, my dear Child, with my blessing, the assurance of the devotedness with which I wish irrevocably to be

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 19th January 1835

A few words, my dear child, to tell you I am satisfied with your dispositions. With confidence, simplicity and cheerfulness, one overcomes all the difficulties that may present themselves on the road to perfection. I hope I will be able to admit you.

Your writing is gaining in perfection. However, like many other sisters in your convent, you make an ugly capital V - this V does not fit in with any of the other letters you write. Tell the sisters from me that I do not like this V.

All yours in our Divine Master Jesus Christ while waiting to be your devoted Father in that same Jesus Christ.

Ghent, 5th February 1835

Now that the endeavors of the enemy have become useless, since your heart belongs to Jesus Christ, I will content myself, my dear Daughter, with telling you, you are wrong to listen to your fears and to dwell on the vagaries of the imagination. Let those silly ideas that present themselves go by; do not even do them the honor of looking at them. Cast a loving glance at your divine Spouse and remain in peace. Do not insult him by doubting his affection for his Spouses, or the power he has to defend them against the attacks of his enemies.

Come, dear Child, generosity, simplicity, and confidence. These dispositions will lead you farther than all the inventions of a self-love that hides itself beneath the outward appearances of one virtue or another.

Take care of your education. Apply yourself to your handwriting and the other things I have told you to learn. One must go rather deeply into things to understand them well enough to be able to teach them.

I am always without restriction,

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 14th June 1835

I am delighted, my dear child, to see you advancing in the way of perfection. The fears that come from time to time to trouble your soul are unfounded. No, your heart is not divided; it belongs to its divine Spouse and I can assure you that you are striving to consecrate it to him without sharing it in any way. Believe a Father who would say with the same frankness, if it were necessary in order to be sincere, things less encouraging to a child whom he wishes to see belonging entirely to Jesus. Love then, dear Sister; love Jesus by working with confidence to do his holy will always. There lies the proof par excellence of true love. So do not worry so much about certain thoughts or certain movements that come to you against your will. Obey and you will have the proof that you love your divine Spouse.

Give me a detailed resume of all your occupations from morning until evening, so that I may understand what you are doing and what you know; I know what you are worth. These details must be for me alone. You must not make them known to anyone.

Receive the blessing of your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Ghent, 20th February 1836

If you find consolation, my dear Child, in opening your heart to your spiritual Father, I can assure you that I feel it also at the sight of that goodness of the divine Spouse for a weak creature, a child of Adam like all of us. We experience daily that God is good! Let us then love him generously and without dwelling on feelings of fear or on sad thoughts. It is those misplaced fears that make you occupied with yourself instead of occupying yourself with the object of your well-considered love. The experience you have had of your wretchedness, my good Child, must make you mistrust your own strength and not the love of your heavenly Spouse. So count on it and count also on the zeal and devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th June 1836

You give me great pleasure, dear child, by informing me of the graces our good God is giving you and above all by telling me that you are repaying the love of your divine Spouse. I do not ask for you to have affective love all the time but for that love to be effective, to say, real. Go forward, my dear daughter, go where your Spouse is calling you, follow his voice and fear nothing. Who can harm you, Spouse of Jesus Christ? Detach yourself from all that is created, renounce your will in order to follow only that of God and you will go far in perfection.

Cultivate good manners. I make this a special duty of yours. Let yourself be tied up, bent, tormented as much as Sister N. likes. I allow you to complain, but you must obey.

Good-bye, my dear child, all yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ.
Ghent, 19th August 1836

Your letter, my dear Sister, is a new proof for me that your divine Spouse has special plans for you. The little tribulations will vigorously purify that heart he wants without having to share it, and then the workings of his grace will be marvelous. So be confident as Jesus invites you to be by so many special favors he has done you since your childhood. Be generous, doing the work of the divine Spouse in yourself and outside you. Holy obedience is that voice one must follow blindly. Do not reason with anxieties, but ignore them by confidence in me who represents Jesus Christ for you.

It is in him that I am
your very devoted Father.

Ghent, 17th October 1836

I see clearly, dear Child in Jesus Christ, that your divine Spouse loves you tenderly. So, have confidence in him. Who can harm you if Jesus is with you? Fear nothing; be cheerful and meek; never fearful, not sad, not too pensive. The spirit of your Holy Rule is a spirit of meekness and simplicity in imitation of Jesus, whom it is advisable above all for us to follow in his childhood.

As for dryness, distractions and that abandonment so painful to a loving soul like the one God has given you, think of the position of Mary and Joseph who lost the presence of the divine Child and were deprived of it for three days. We know that loss happened through no fault of their own. Now, dear daughter, is it reasonable to complain if a similar withdrawal of sensible devotion happens to you? So let us be submissive and wait with confidence and patience until these moments of trial are over. Let us imitate Mary and her Holy Spouse; let us seek Jesus without that human anxiety that often spoils the best of things.

I find it good that you ask your Reverend Mother for acts of humiliation to practice. Practice that basic virtue. You know, dear Child, how keenly I desire to see you a true Spouse of Jesus.

So count on the prayers I will offer to Heaven for you.

Your very devoted Father

Ghent, 22nd February 1837

Your letters always give me great pleasure, my dear child. You keep me up-to-date on the state of that soul I want to see happy, and you give me proof of that confidence that is precious to me for the fulfillment of the ministry of mercy that I am called to exercise in regard to you. Even though I do not give you an answer, do not be less zealous in writing to me with that outpouring your heart needs. Our good God, dear child, is forming you little by little to that life of faith, to that generous practice of self-renunciation; it is in this way that he will render you conformable to the image according to which he wishes you to form yourself, as is said in my manual, p. 84 in Part 1. Moreover, that model must be very dear to you; it is the divine Spouse himself, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

That you continue to have filial fear I consent, my dear child, but love for your Spouse must render it holy and perfect. I urge you not to narrow that heart in which Jesus Christ dwells; let freedom rule in it, as is right for Spouses of the Lamb. You know from experience how this lack of liberty, which you meet from time to time, hinders you from hastening after that most tender of friends and Spouses. I will continue with pleasure to give you the help you have been accustomed to get from me; I owe it to you, it is one of the sweet duties of

Your devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 26th October 1837

In spite of the endeavors of corrupt nature and of the corruptor, the beloved of your soul remains the sole master of you! I give thanks to him for the loving care he lavishes on you and urge you to make yourself more and more generous and abandoned to his divine Love. Oh, how useful it is, even how sweet it is, to want what God wants and as he wants it! Do not be anxious, dear Child, you know that I know you, and it is because I know your case that I am giving you the assurance that you want to be what your heavenly Spouse wants you to be. So go forward, despise your imagination, do what holy obedience requires, and rest in peace on the heart of Jesus. Nothing is capable of disturbing your rest, if you do not disturb yourself. Stop the anxieties as soon as they make themselves felt; at that moment you are still mistress of them. Do not give them time to gain strength by dwelling on them, but throw them off the scent by turning your attention to objects more worthy of you. Apply yourself to those branches of knowledge that will make you more and more suitable to render service to the Church in the humble family of Mary and Joseph.

Also always count on the devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 18th December 1837

Yes, my dear Child, you will have a special share in my prayers. The favors your divine Spouse is granting you are guarantees of that love with which his heart is burning for you and of the graces he still has in store for you. Repay that ineffable goodness by proving in moments of combat that you have unlimited confidence in Jesus Christ. Adorable will of God, I want to conform to your designs and in everything I want what you want. That is an aspiration that will be useful to you. Oh! my child, if you could understand the good you will do in Holy Church when you no longer have any other views, any other desires than those of your Spouse! With what zeal you will hasten to meet all that your Holy Rule requires of you, when your heart is really empty of itself and filled only with divine love.

Be brave, dear child, be generous, be cheerful. Avoid recurrences of timidity; forget yourself in order to fix your attention on God and on what he wants of you.

I am more and more pleased with your style and your handwriting. You cannot be so with mine (writing) but you are pleased, I think with the heart of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 9th February 1838

I have been reflecting, my child, on the trial that God has allowed and have recognized the trap the enemy is laying for you. You must see the order of the Lord in the affections you are to allow yourself. Your divine Spouse must have the first place; he must, in one sense, occupy your heart entirely. In that sole friend, you must love your spiritual Father, Superiors, Sisters and pupils and you must make your affections conform with the degree of respect you owe them and with faith. Fear is depriving you of a part of the help that confidence obtains; it takes away that freedom in your affections and the enemy, knowing what good a holy friendship can do you, disturbs you and prevents you from drawing the advantages that attachments, in the order of grace, must produce in your soul. You remember how your dear sister N. behaved; what simplicity, what naivety there was in her affections! What sincerity in her sentiments! She loved Jesus more than anything else, and in Jesus, she loved her Superiors truly and very cordially. Look at her and imitate her.

So leave aside those childish fears; go on in all simplicity, and to punish yourself for your hesitation and lack of openness, say for eight days beginning on Saturday, Sub tuum praesidium to our divine Mother, and in order to obtain (also) a pure heart and an upright spirit. I will ask for with for you. You know how sincerely I want to see you perfect and to prove to you that I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 17th August 1838

I find some progress, my dear Child, but it is not rapid enough, because you are listening too much to fear, and you do not clearly enough distinguish feeling from consent. You are still going on in a manner that is too materialistic. Read with renewed attention the chapter on temptation in the excellent work: Instruction for Pious Souls by Fr. Quadrupani. In it you have what I have often said and written to you. I pray Jesus, my Child, to make you understand better the secrets of true spiritual childhood. It is for you the only way to reach the heart of your divine Spouse and to find that peace which the Angels at the birth of the Savior, announced to men of good will.

I am convincing myself that you are making progress in those fields of knowledge required by your state. I am pleased with your writing, but your V and a few other letters are of the old kind used at Mouscron but not in the best samples of calligraphy.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 22nd December 1838

Do not write Divine Spouse, but divine; epithets are not written in capitals. Your y, p, x in addition are not all formed according to the principles either. Practice your writing sometimes in order to avoid bad habits.

I noticed with keen satisfaction that your sentiments are being uplifted and that, forgetting yourself a little, you are becoming more useful to the dear family of Mary and Joseph. The heart remains small as long as one is crawling on the ground; but as soon as it raises itself towards the divine Spouse, it soars up in a way one did not think it capable of doing. Then one flies, one becomes really spiritual; one turns everything one touches into gold. Rejoice with me, dear Child, at what Jesus Christ has deigned to do for you. The cross of the Savior is beginning to produce its fruits in his docile, generous spouse.

Cast your eyes now over the whole boarding-school and replace Mme N. with courage, counting on him whom you bear in your heart and whom alone you are seeking, while apparently forgetting yourself. How wonderful are the mysteries of love! Go, dear Child, or rather run, fly after the perfume of your divine Spouse. Jesus Christ will work through your hands, he will speak through your mouth and your work will be precious and your words will convert souls. You will have no desire except to make him loved who is willing to make use of you to do great things. I can do all things in him who strengthens me, said St. Paul, and you too will be able to do all that this God, who is as powerful as ever, is willing to do through his pitiful servant. The smaller you are, the more obvious will it be that it is God that one has to attribute what is done through you. That is what you are told by one whom the Lord gives you as his interpreter. You know my voice; it is that of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 10th February 1839

I am pleased with your letter, my dear Child; however, there reigns in it a rather cold tone that I attribute to your too excessive fears. Go on more wholeheartedly; our good God does not disapprove of outpourings of the heart in the bosom of a Father. He himself has established the relationship that exists between you and me. Moreover, I am pleased to see that grace is making you discover all that does not please your divine Spouse, and that it is giving you the strength to resist every impulse contrary to the wishes of that tender friend.

From your submission to our desires I am expecting you carefully to form in yourself that distinguishing tone that is suitable for members of the Institute. Practice the rules of deportment, even of gymnastics.

I am pleased to continue giving you the help of my prayers. Pray also for me that you may always find me a

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 10th December 1839

I have been pleased to see, my dear child, that at all costs you want to triumph over the fault I have been pointing out to you for a long time. Be simple and you will rise above that difficulty.

Love your divine Spouse effectively and do not torture yourself with what concerns sensible affection. Jesus is a God of truth, a loving, generous Spouse and not one who imperiously exacts what it does not depend on us to grant him in all events. Take great care of your appearance for the sake of God and of the Institute.

Your ever devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 4th February 1840

The adorable designs that Providence has on you and a part of which he was pleased to manifest to us last week, have been the object of my thoughts and lively gratitude these days. I like to persuade myself, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that you have persevered in that touching abandonment to the good pleasure of your divine Spouse, in which I found you at the moment of trial. You know the heart of your spiritual Father towards you, and will always count on him in all circumstances. Go forward generously and without anxiety, dear child; hold the hand of Mary and of Saint Joseph. Fix your eyes on the heart of Jesus and your steps will always be firm, no danger could stop you. You will go from triumph to triumph, and all the glory of them will belong to God alone.

On Friday week, I hope to have the pleasure of coming to see you and to enjoy the pleasure of seeing you settled in your new office.

Receive, Madame Superior, the blessing I give you with a big heart.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th of Mary's month, 1840

The sentiments that our good God gives you are a subject of great consolation to me. Try and walk constantly along the way on which grace has set you and your administration will be a happy one. You can count on my good will in helping you with my prayers and advice.

Mme. N. will not call at Alost; she will go directly to Malines. It will perhaps be hard for you to provide a Lady to take the novices. The matter is not absolutely necessary. You will do as you judge right.

I am easily convinced that it would be better if Monsignor would come to your place to confer the Sacrament of Confirmation on your pupils, but I do not know what arrangements His Lordship has made for that journey, and whether at the moment, that great ceremony would not cause you inconvenience. Consult your Council and also get the advice of Mlle. Colette. If you decide to send your pupils to the parish church, that charitable Lady could be useful to you. You Ladies may not go out.

My journey will perhaps be postponed for a few weeks. We will all gain by that; my stay with you in that case would be a little longer.

Mme. N. will do well to profit by the opportunity that is being offered to learn the English language. Please tell her I will do her errand at Malines, and that I am pleased with her letter and the zeal with which she is responding to the designs of her heavenly Spouse.

Let Mlle. S. not hurry anything but weigh in the scales of the sanctuary the motives for and against the religious vocation. The Lord likes generosity in our undertakings when he is the motive or the object.

I am always, in Jesus Christ, your devoted Father

Ghent, 8th of Mary's month, 1840

I am rejoicing with you at the favors that our good God is granting you with a kind of prodigality that must arouse keen and lasting gratitude in you. They told me that Msgr. was able to say Mass at your convent today and that his Lordship would do you the honor of accepting your invitation to lunch. So there you are initiated into embarrassments of all kinds. I will try and arrange the matter of the confessor as best as possible. Would the Dean not suit you? Look into the matter and write to me what you think about it at the end of this week. I will not be at home before Saturday evening.

The novice A. has indeed left the bill for her expenses here. It seems that this person will need to be examined attentively. She might be too weak in mind and body to become useful. All the same let us not be in any hurry.

Mme. De Brandt gave me the money intended for Madame Superior General and not for me. I will try and get it to her.

Receive, my very dear child, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 17th of our Mary's month, 1840

The marks of esteem that Msgr. shows you will be a fresh source of prosperity for your house. I urge you to exploit that mine well. Arrange for your pupils to write to their parents about the honor they have had of receiving the Bishop etc. That gets the convent known and will attract pupils, postulants, etc. Mary will give us still more marks of the love she has for her children.

I have talked about your affairs with Monsignor, and I realized that we must ascribe to His Lordship the fact that you have been deprived of the happiness of receiving a visit from him, etc. There is no change as regards the confessor, unless the Dean wishes the extraordinary to replace him sometimes. That need not give rise to any difficulties.

One must not give in to the odd temptations of Sister N. Let her be forced to follow the customs of the house, without too much ceremony; the common way is the only one suitable for that Sister. The same observation applies to the novice A., who however, must give proofs of sufficient health and good judgment before being admitted to profession. Try and get all of them to understand that when anyone shows ardent desires and asks for permissions with too much insistence, she is wresting consent; whence it follows that it is then no longer the simple will of the Superiors, or that of God that one is doing but one's own to which those of the Superiors are giving way.

As for you dear child, forget yourself, not to the prejudice of the watchfulness that is inseparable from the love of your divine Spouse, but as regards anxious reflections of timidity or imagination.

May the feast of tomorrow obtain for you, my dear daughter, and all your community, a fresh degree of detachment from creatures, and of zeal for the interests of your heavenly Spouse. Be the interpreter of my sentiments to your Sisters.

You have known for a long time how sincerely I can call myself

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 27th of the month of our good Mother Mary, 1840

With great pleasure I have received the good wishes you offer me in your name and that of all your dear Sisters. May the Lord deign to answer all your prayers, and you will all experience the effects of your filial piety. I will make it my sweet duty to share with you the favors I receive. I also pray the Holy Spirit to enlighten you, and give you the strength and the sentiments you need to respond to the designs of Mary, Joseph and above all your divine Spouse. May you spread the sacred fire of divine love among your pupils in the fullness of your hearts!

I am delighted to learn that holy cheerfulness, joy of heart and the love of your divine Spouse always reign among you. I thank God for it and urge you to keep yourselves in these precious dispositions. I like to think these graces will obtain for you that of seeing yourselves in a position to make yourselves useful to a larger number of pupils.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

(Not dated)

I am always pleased to learn that your dear Sisters and pupils give you the consolation of being able to praise you for their zeal in fulfilling their respective duties. May our good God be praised for that!

On Monday I am going to see my dear brethren at Roborst and Grammont, so I cannot tell you when I will come and rejoice with you at the blessings the Lord is shedding on your house. If I am not mistaken, the Garden Fete is being held at Alost on the Sunday after the feast of St. Peter. From that I may conclude that a good fortnight from now you might well see me. If you have the wherewithal to give back what A. has the right to claim, you may let her go. From what Rev. Mother N. has told me about her, A. (Sr. Angela) does not have the intelligence to become a religious. So do as seems good to you.

I like to think that the effects of this feast day will make themselves felt at your house and that your soul, in particular, will experience a renewal or rather a redoubling of those tender and generous feelings for its divine Spouse that will stifle the vain fears you tell me about from time to time. Think of Jesus; occupy your heart with that sweet, amiable yoke that the best of friends has laid on you to give you the means of proving your love to him and heaping up merits in his sight. Pass lightly over certain awkward thoughts that scratch one's head as soon as one presses on them. Eh! my dear child, would you knowingly want to displease Jesus? I am very certain that nothing is farther from you. So, no fear; no anxiety; but great confidence, joy and cheerfulness.

Be everywhere, in your convent, except in the dark (brown) reflections that become black when you turn them over. You know how devoted I am to you in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 26th June 1840

My kind regards to all the dear family I very much wish to come and see.

By the arrival of the Novice, you have seen that I have been zealous in getting you the relief you needed at your convent, my dear daughter. If the trials your house is experiencing have distressed me a little, I have had to thank the Lord for the happy dispositions in which I found your souls. That is, indeed, a great thing, and I admit to you that there is hardly anything more consoling for one who sees things with the eyes of faith. So let us be at peace, cling to the holy and ever adorable will of God, but take great care to draw down nothing but blessings by the wisdom of our zeal and the pious activity of all our conduct.

Here is a letter from Madame N. to one of her former pupils. By its form and content, this letter seems to me incapable of producing a good effect. There is even a mistake at the beginning. You will do well, I think, not to send it to the young lady concerned.

Ever yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 18th July 1840

I am very touched by the signs of your filial piety and of that which animates all my dear children at the Convent of St. Joseph. I thank you from the depths of my heart for the good wishes you sent me for the feast day of my patron. We must hope that our good God will answer the prayers we offer to him for our mutual happiness. He is himself that heavenly Father, the source from which emanates our reciprocal love and it is towards him that our desires and the wishes we sent each other go up. Yes, it is grace that has formed the bonds that unite us; and it is his glory that is the object of our efforts. May that grace grow in us and daily produce fresh fruits of salvation in conformity with the designs of our common master who has admitted us into his vineyard and whose interests we have the happiness of looking after.

I thought it would be useful, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for you to make a novena in honor of Mary and Joseph. We should ask God for the continuation of the good spirit that reigns in your convent and an increase in the number of pupils, after the holidays. We would begin that novena on the 1st of August and it would end on the 9th. Each day we will say one Our Father and one Hail Mary in honor of our two great patrons and, on the last day, we would receive Holy Communion. As I am sure that you agree to my proposal, I will not await an answer; I will join you and your dear community from the 1st of next month. God is so good, Mary and Joseph are so favorable to us, and they are so powerful in heaven! So let us count on the success of our pious undertaking; we will not be disappointed in our expectations.

Receive, very dear Child, my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 28th July 1840

I have just finished your novena with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass that I offered to the Lord in honor of our great Patrons, Mary and Joseph. I hope that our good God has answered our prayers, that the spirit in your house will be more and more perfected, that the hearts of some persons will be changed and turned towards us ... and that new pupils will be granted to us.

It seems to me that the request of Mme. N. is reasonable and that you will do well to make the change she desires. As for the use of the candles, you must wait; the matter presents difficulties.

Here, my dear Child is the seal of your convent: S.J. that is to say: Sanctus Josephus.

I will not have the leisure to write for some time. So Madame N. will kindly receive my answer to her letter, through her Reverend Mother.

Receive my good wishes for you and all your community on the occasion of the feast of the Assumption of Mary.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 9th August 1840

I am much obliged to you for the lovely and very pleasant letter you have just written to me. Your sentiments towards your Superiors have been known to me for many years; but good things can sometimes be repeated. It is a relief in this valley of tears to see our devoted attentions mutually appreciated and acknowledged with simplicity. I have not failed these days to offer our divine Mother the hearts of all my children. May that offering draw compassionate glances on the part of Mary.

It is very doubtful whether I will be able to come to your prize distribution. However, if the Dean cannot preside at that ceremony which is so important for your house, try and let me know in time; in that case I will do all that is possible to render you service.

I do not have the leisure to give detailed answers to your novices. Please, make them understand, as well as the two Ladies who wrote to me, that I have done all I could, and that the few words I am addressing to them are proof of my very good will.

As for you my dear daughter, go forward with courage. Holy obedience and abandonment to your divine Spouse will guide you more surely than all those meticulous precautions that subtle self-love helped by natural timidity often inspires in certain persons. Love Jesus and his adorable will without reserve; let your heart reach out and do not worry about anything.

The errand at Wacken is done, and the sum of 120 frs. is credited to the account of the Superior General.

I am always in Jesus Christ

Your devoted Father

Ghent, 17th August 1840

Tell my dear children not to write to me; they are overburdened with work and I myself must admit that I lack the leisure to answer them.

I am very pleased with the sentiments you express in your last letter. That is how I want people to ask me for services; I am fond enough of being useful to you, but I have to plan my different duties and then act according to what God seems to want of me. If I cannot attend your prize distribution, I think I will not be less useful to you if I pray for you wherever my duties detain me at the time you would like to see me at your convent.

All yours in Our Lord

Ghent, 29th August 1840

I am very pleased to know that the prize distribution went off well and that you are persevering in the wise confidence that our powerful patron will obtain fresh blessings for you. Yes, Saint Joseph will show you that he is your Father.

You do well not to inform Madame Euphrosine that you have written to me about her business. You must leave her all latitude to open her heart in her outpourings to you. Show her you have confidence in her, point out to her the snares of the enemy and, as she has a discerning mind, she will not fail to understand you and you will even be able to hope that you will enable her to overcome the difficulties with the help of grace. Try and get to know the cause of her woes, then inform me about them, and, if necessary, I will point out the course to follow later.

I am praying our good God to help you specially during the retreat and to shower down his favors abundantly on our dear children of the convent of Saint Joseph.

Receive my blessing, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ and believe that in all circumstances I want to be to you

A very devoted Father in Our Lord

Ghent, 4th September 1840

Arrange for all your religious to get some rest and spiritual consolation after the tiring time they have just had.

We have decided, the Superior General and I, to give the job of sacristan to Mme. N. (Clara) and that of linen Lady I forget to whom. I think you will do well to take this last job from Mme. N. unless you prefer to leave it with her and to name Mme. N. economise; do as you think good, but without showing any feelings of fear of Mme. N.; handle her carefully because of her weakness.

For the rest I am delighted to learn that you are pleased with the reopening this year. Let us rely with confidence on our good God and our powerful Patrons; our affairs will make good progress.

Give my compliments, I beg you, to all your dear children and receive the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th October 1840

I thank you with all my heart for the sentiments you have just expressed to me. May our good God deign to return you the hundred-fold of what you are doing for me. I am looking forward with pleasure to seeing you next week, if the weather is bad, and the following week only if the weather is good those days. In the last case, I will go first to Mouscron, where I go as easily as to your house, in the bad season.

Ever yours very cordially in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 17th October 1840

I like to hope that the good dispositions I left with all your dear children are being maintained, and that on the occasion of the solemnity of tomorrow, they will experience a new increase. It is not without any efforts that the saints finally obtained that happiness which is the very just objective of our ambitions. We will not tire either of doing violence to ourselves to overcome the difficulties and triumph over obstacles whatever they may be. The blessed friends of God, as witnesses of our combats, will help us with their prayers even more than with the examples they have left for our imitation. So we will also reach that kingdom in which truth reigns sovereign; where love directs everything, and the certainty of its duration sustains the enjoyment of it. May that hope remain with us and nothing will stop our progress in the way we are following.

I recommend to the prayers of your community the soul of my niece, Mme. Henri who died last night.

I have always the pleasure in calling myself

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 31st October 1840

Please tell our dear invalid I am making it my sweet duty to commend her frequently to our good God, that her sufferings will come to an end and that the recompense of Heaven will never end. I will also pray especially for your zealous infirmarian, Mme. N. whose loving care edifies and consoles our suffering children.

It seems to me that you could put off without inconvenience, the exposition due on Saturday, 21st of this month, till Sunday.

I am delighted to learn that everything is going on well at your convent. May our good God be blessed for that!

Please allow Mlle. N. to learn from this letter that our good patron St. Joseph has lent a kindly ear to our prayers. Last Saturday I began my prayer with our dear novice and already on Monday two pupils presented themselves for the boarding school of our Holy Patron. One will come to you in about ten or fifteen days' time, the other in two or three months. Let us persevere with confidence; we will have still other proofs to testify to our filial piety, to our faith and humble devotedness to the family of the children of Mary and Joseph. Let us go on calmly, with simplicity, with submission and great courage, taking care to set aside all that could put an obstacle in the merciful designs of the Lord.

I am also adding a few words for Mme. N. A word of encouragement from me to our dear invalid and to Mme. N. who certainly deserves it for all the attentions she gives to our suffering children.

I am ending with a big blessing for Madame Superior

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th November 1840

Here is the child of St. Joseph. I have given her a hundred francs for which you will give her a receipt. This girl does not have the goods of this world, but she has received more precious gifts from God. Let us try and cultivate in her the good qualities the Lord has bestowed on her and they will one day be used to glorify their Author. To stimulate her gratitude you will allow her to write to me from time to time and to send me your receipt. This is for you alone.

I am very glad to learn that you continue to be pleased with all your children. May the good God be praised for that! As for what you call your woes, I entreat you not to dwell on them with anxiety. They are perhaps great mercies in the eyes of your divine Spouse. You think, you say, that it is your temptations that give rise to your fears; say rather that it is your fears that give rise to your temptations and draw the conclusion from this reasoning yourself; no, your heart will not elude you.

My kind regards to your invalid. Let her offer her sufferings often to God for the whole Institute. She could not more usefully serve that Institute she loves so much and so rightly.

Please, give my compliments to all your dear children; I give them my blessing.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 14th November 1840

I like to think that you will have nothing to take away from the good accounts we have been given on the child of St. Joseph, but that the more you know her, the more you will also be able to give me a good report of her. You could also urge Mlle. ... to give me news of her. It will be an opportunity for your novice to write to me. The other novices have already done so. You may give the receipt as the pupil wishes you to do, but it will be appropriate for her to send it to me to express her gratitude for it. You know how keen I am on the young people getting accustomed to fulfilling duties relating to that virtue! I imagine that she will tell you she got from me the hundred francs she gave you.

I share your opinion relative to the study of poetry of Mme. N. Try and make that Lady understand that she will find real happiness only in complete subjection of judgment and will. The smallest recess of secret will or of ownership she reserved for herself would sadden the Holy Spirit and distress her soul; while complete surrender will set her free and lead her very far towards perfection. You see that I take pleasure in concerning myself about your Madame N.; it is because I think God is calling her to great sanctity, in spite of the opposition that grace meets in her.

Please, give Mlle. Colette the enclosed pictures. Keep for yourself the one in which the hand of the Lord is leading a person who is abandoning herself to him with confidence. Follow that lesson in all your behavior, you will find it useful. Nobody must ever be more sincerely devoted to you than

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 28th November 1840

I think you do well to humor Mme. Euphrosine a little. You will do well to go on getting her to understand the usefulness of the behavior of Mme. N. towards her. You will also tell the latter to humor the weakness of her sister, and cleverly to take advantage of the circumstances in order to underline her successes, so as to inspire confidence and prove that our sole objective is the good of the children, the mistresses and the glory of God. These two Ladies have something alike both in their characters and in a certain seriousness of expression; apart from that they resemble each other less.

In the receipt signed 18th November 1840, you state that you have received a term's fees that fell due on the 18th of February 1841. Ought it not to be that are to fall due?

For the rest, Madame Superior, like the child in the picture always hold the hand of God Almighty who does not need either to calculate our strength or to count on our means in order to lead us to the end he sets himself and to do with us, when it pleases him, very great things.

In my name tell your invalid all that your heart prompts you to do. I do not fail to pray for her. I also send my compliments to all your other children, all of whom I love in Our Lord.

Tell me, in your next letter, when we began the Sunday schools in Alost and Grammont. Mlle. Colette and Mme. N. will inform you. Tell me also when our Sisters obtained the house next to the parish church in Alost.

I am always as I must be

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th December 1840

The tender devotion of Mlle N. to our patron Saint Joseph is a subject of great consolation to me. You will try and foster that precious disposition in her. The status of Spouse of the Mother of God is the mainspring of the grandeur of Saint Joseph. It contains the most magnificent praises, since it presupposes the most sublime virtues in that saint; it is because of it that he is the head of the family of Jesus; that he has a type of authority over all it contains; that he is responsible for the education of the Son of God; that he cherishes that adorable flesh which is the victim for the world; that he is the witness of the actions of that God conversing with me. What motives for venerating that Holy Patron, for having confidence in him, and having recourse to him in our difficulties, etc.

Independently of what I have told you, of the necessity for Mme N. of that complete renunciation of all self-will, here are a few other truths that you will remind her of when the opportunity arises: good things in the natural order and in the order of grace, talents and acquired qualities, all these belong to God. It is much less to our work than to the liberality of the Lord that we owe them. God gives us the use of them but keeps the ownership. We can therefore dispose of these good things only according to his good pleasure and for his glory ... if these good things deteriorate in our hands through our fault, if they do not increase through our good administration, if we appropriate something from them for ourselves, we become unbelievers, neglectful and unfaithful servants...

As for you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, you may safely refer to what I have been telling you for a long time. Yes, I know you in depth and can make decisions with full knowledge of the facts. Without worrying, let go of all the thoughts that come to you, all the feelings you experience in spite of yourself. Love your divine Spouse tenderly and go forward, whatever happens. Remember that child who lets herself be guided by the powerful hand of Providence. That is your case, that is how you must let yourself be led. Who can harm you, when Jesus Christ leads you in his heart and loves you with all his powerful love? Interest yourself gently in the coming solemnity and urge all your children to nourish themselves also on the mystery of the birth of Jesus. Draw from that rich source of graces and consolation.

No one is more sincerely than I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th December 1840

I have received the parcel and your letter. I thank you for your attentiveness and the prayers you are offering for me. I am also trying to acquit myself of the sweet duties of charity that our good God has put into my heart for you, my dear daughter, and for all my other Children. Yes, indeed, the moment is favorable and we will again experience in these days of grace how good and generous the Lord is towards those who seek him. I wish all your community a happy feast.

It seems to me that the practice is good in itself but does not suit us, as it causes divisions and categories among the Sisters, whereas the Holy Rule does not recognize any.

Mme. N. is all on fire at the moment; you have rightly judged that she must not be allowed any retreat other than the one prescribed by the Rule. As for poetry, I leave the matter to your decision. But in whatever way you decide, do not show any hesitation in expressing your mind.

Let our dear Sister C. unite herself more and more to the suffering Jesus and frequently with him, commend all the pious family of which she is a member, to the divine mercy. I am delighted to learn that your postulant is going to be clothed in the livery of Jesus Christ.

Take care of the appearance of all your Children. You know how important that matter is for you religious as well as for the pupils. By exercising them physically at the same time as morally, you will obtain for them the advantage of uniting to good health and a pleasant appearance a cultivated mind and sound judgment. I like to think that you also lay great importance on handwriting and that your mistresses are zealous in supervising that part in all the classes.

As you must be very busy at the moment, you will be content with your last letter, in which you sent me your wishes for the coming feast; I will not expect any other.

I am always as I must be

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 23rd December 1840

Your letters, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, have been delivered to me in due course. I have not answered the first, because I foresaw that the messages that the Rev. Father Rector of the College so kindly undertook, also had to have an answer from me and I wished to attend to them in a single letter. I beg you to thank Mlle. V. for her good wishes and to tell her I am pleased with her. Give her ten francs as a New Year's present; I know that one sometimes has to pay for little things and that cannot be done without money. I see that you are following Mme N with prudence; go on teaching her the practice of obedience, without which the impressions of grace would be turned into poison for lack of real humility which makes itself noticeable above all when natural tastes are opposed.

As for you, my dear child, go forward without hesitating too much and without worrying about the trials that your divine Spouse causes you to undergo, since they are the fruit of a great love for you on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have noticed that our good Father Superior of the Josephites is a little concerned that the interest payments reach him with such difficulty from Alost. You are perhaps hampered yourself by the state of your finances, but you could appeal for help to Madame Superior General, and then you have the right to ask the Superior at Brussels to reimburse you for the expenses caused by her invalid being at your convent.

Give my compliments to your dear children and especially your invalid and receive my blessing for you and for them.

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 25th January 1841

You would do well to let me have a letter from your novices before long. It is good for me to follow them up closely -and that before long and with some latitude. Are there not any postulants offering themselves?

I had to say a few words to you in answer to your second last letter, my dear daughter; here they are: it is fairly ordinary behavior on the part of the Lord to hide himself, so to speak, sometimes from us, by depriving us of his sensible presence. It is not always to punish us; it is often to try us, to purify us, revive the ardor of our desires, instruct us, make us live by pure faith. Jesus Christ behaves thus towards the persons dearest to him. Were not Mary and Joseph themselves left a prey to their alarm for three days during their pious journey to Jerusalem? So let us not be frightened if we happen to be treated with apparent harshness by the divine Spouse. Let us live for the God of consolations, without attaching too much to his consolations. Let us know how to await his sensible visits but let us realize that we are unworthy of demanding them. That, my dear child, is what I had to say to you; accept it for yourself and the souls you have to guide.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 29th January 1841

I do not know whether I am mistaken; but it seems to me that the handwriting of our St. Joseph's girl has not become better since that pupil has been at Alost.

I must warn you that it is not permitted to add to the litanies of the Blessed Virgin anything that has not been authorized by Holy Church. The Bishop of Ghent has obtained permission to add after 'Queen of all the saints' - Queen conceived without sin. Please tell that to Madame Superior General; I think I remember that we used to add 'Mary our Mother', or something similar. It must be left out. You must remember that at the end of Lent we have to take a collection for the Catholic University in all the chapels of educational establishments as they do in the churches. It is decreed thus for the diocese of Ghent.

The news that you sent me gave me great pleasure. Above all I was glad to see with joy that the holy cheerfulness and devotedness of your good Children leaves nothing to be desired, and that you yourself have resumed your office with a courage less tangible than real. May God be praised for that!

You could tell Mlle. V. that you have received some money for her. That gives one courage.

As I hope to have the consolation of celebrating the feast of our Holy Patron at your convent, I am putting off answering the letter of Mme. N letter until my arrival in your midst. Please tell that dear child so and say to her that I am very pleased with the sentiments with which she has received the arrangements we made in regard to her. No way leads more directly to real good than that of the Gospel and humble obedience.

Before having your prospectus inserted in any papers, I wish to talk to your Reverend Mother Superior about it and get to know her opinion about the boarding fees that I am of the opinion to reduce to 350 frs. Write to me about this matter within a week.

May the Lord continue to give you his favors, my very dear child, may his love, more real than tangible, guide you and may our Holy Patron give you fresh proof of his powerful protection during the month we consecrate to him.

I give you all my fatherly blessing. Be my interpreter especially to our dear invalid.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 24th February 1841

Twenty-four years ago today our religious family was born in your town of Alost. I will say the Holy Mass in thanksgiving for the innumerable blessings our good God has showered down on us during this quarter of a century. Let us try and redouble our zeal in the service of that good Master and arouse in ourselves lively sentiments of gratitude. May pious joy render us pleasing to God and man.

I will say by word of mouth what has been decided as regards the boarding school, for which we will not make any change in price, and as regards the confessor. Meanwhile ask the extraordinary to hear your confessions until the feast of St. Joseph.

Tell your invalid to submit generously to all that our good God is pleased to send her. There is much to be gained by humble resignation and a sincere will to do what pleases the Lord.

The judgment that Mme. N. has passed on Mlle. N. seems to me very harsh. Don't worry about it.

I wish Mlle. Colette a happy feast and I pray for her with zeal. That generous friend of our Institute has the right to our gratitude. Will I not have the pleasure of seeing her at Ghent during the octave of her Holy Patron?

The letter of Mme. P. gave me pleasure; it is well written, well drawn up and contains good sentiments.

While awaiting the pleasure of seeing you, I have that (pleasure) of repeating to you that I am always, and I ask through the intercession of St. Joseph, to become more effectively daily,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, feast of St. Colette, 1841

In accordance with our decisions regarding Mr. D., I have submitted the matter to Msgr. and His Grace has judged it appropriate to nominate a Director in conformity with what is given as a ruling in the former arrangements for our Convents. Mr. D. is, or will be, nominated as your Director.

The boarder from N. will arrive immediately after Easter. You will have a very good pupil in that girl, especially as regards her character.

I repeat to you the expression of satisfaction I experienced during the three days I spent among you. Yes, you are children cherished by St. Joseph. I commend you all with confidence to that holy and powerful friend about whom we talked with so much pleasure. Give my compliments to your dear Sisters and tell your good boarders that I am making it my sweet duty to pray for them that the Lord will continue to give them his favors and that they may become more and more worthy of them.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 27th of the St. Joseph's month, 1841

My dear child, I have read your details about your interior life and have not found anything in them that need inspire you with the least anxiety, nor that merits a special reply. It is the repetition in other terms of what you have told us a thousand times and to which we have only to say: shun your fancies and the fears that result from them, or produce them. Consult reason and faith, these are your guides; and do not worry about the rest, about what would make you feel any other cause whatever.

Always yours forever in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 28th of our Holy Patron's month, 1841

I am very touched by your attestations of filial piety. Accept my thanks for your good wishes and those of your dear Sisters. You and all the members of your community have been the special object of my prayers during the days of salvation we have just celebrated. I hope our divine Savior will answer our prayers and that we are going to walk with courage and generosity in the footsteps of our good Master. Do not let thoughts contrary to your peace of mind trouble you any more; do not dwell on them.

Do whatever you think good in the case of Mme. N.; but it will be necessary to assure her that I am pleased with her.

I was pleased to see the good sentiments of your chaplain. He is a very respectable man. His short stay here has given me very great pleasure. We have not decided anything about his salary; it seemed to me that he thinks little about it and that it will arrange itself.

I had thought I should these days be seeing your new boarder from N. and, thinking I should have to say a few words to you about her, I put off sending you my letter till this evening. Not seeing that person arrive, I conclude that she will go direct to Alost without stopping at Ghent. So, I am sending you my letter.

I wish your good pupils abundant blessings for the feast of the Resurrection of Our Lord; I also want them to enjoy themselves during the holidays they have at the moment. Say many pleasant things for me to your dear invalid and to her dear Lady N. who will take so much care of her.

Receive, my dear child, my blessing and believe in the sincere devotedness of
Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 14th April 1841

Here is some music that is sent to you from Mouscron, I think. You will find in the same roll a portrait that will remind you of a person who thinks he has some rights to your benevolence; that is at least what he thinks in his simplicity. If you have this portrait framed, it will be advisable to make the frame fairly large so that the margins around the picture may be large and in good proportion to the whole.

I count on setting out for Malines tomorrow. I will give you news of what is decided there.

Please, remember me to your dear children and receive for yourself, my dear child, and all your community, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 25th April 1841

I congratulate you, my dear child, on seeing you at the Convent of the Holy Angels. There you will find less of that sort of work that prevented you at Alost from getting sufficient rest at night. Mme. N., on the contrary, will be better at Alost for herself than at Brussels. Thus this change will be a double benefit. I fully approve of it. Do not worry about feelings; when the effects of blind obedience are to make you resemble a passive instrument, they are what they must be before God and your Superiors. It is in fact a disposition like that one that you must always try to preserve; for it is not subject to illusions.

You will tell your Ladies that I hope to see them in the summer but that will not happen immediately. I like to think that I will find them all as I wish them to be, both exteriorly and interiorly. The classes must be well conducted; you can render service there; not having the same duties as Mme. N., you can give classes for more time that she did. The pupils are docile, but need to be constantly stimulated.

Count for sure on my not forgetting you in my prayers; you know how much I like to prove to you that I am zealously

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent 7th June 1841

Your letters always give me great pleasure, my dear child. I also answer them very exactly, as you know. Today, however, you must let me be concise. I have just come from Roborst and tomorrow I count on going to Tirlemont, from where I will again call on our Ladies at Malines. The news you give me is very satisfactory and makes me hope for complete success in your new position. Yes, indeed, deeds must be joined to precepts. Train your subjects in humility as well as in the other virtues; you will benefit from it and your Ladies as well as your novices will be grateful to you for it.

As for you, my child, you have only to go on generously along the way your divine Spouse traces for you. You will more and more find the only true happiness in it, and you will gather abundant fruit there for Heaven. I have nothing to correct in the sentiments you voice to me. I will go on commending you to the Lord; take care to pray also for

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th February 1841

Please tell Mlle. N. I am pleased with her letter. She has only to continue with all simplicity and everything will go well.

I am of your opinion as regards your Mistresses. I will talk with Madame Superior General about it. I will see you before long, perhaps in August.

I am writing to thank you for the good wishes you addressed to me and the good information you gave me. I can see that there is progress and thank God for it. I will indeed approve of your plan for the prize distribution, if Madame Superior General also approves of it. I think it will be good not to suppress all at once a thing so pleasing to the pupils and the parents. Write to me in this vein at Malines and meanwhile do not say anything yet to the children.

You can quite safely go on along the way you tell me you have entered upon, following St. Francis de Sales. Go forward without fear.

I will pray especially for you and your dear Children, one of these days. Go on also giving me the help of your prayers.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th February 1841

I am very glad to know that your prize distribution went off to the satisfaction of the pupils and their parents. Try now to rest a little like a good religious; the Lord allows you this rest, after so much fatigue. I very much approve of the journey to Mouscron and of the plan of the Superior General of taking you as a traveling companion.

If the person I saw and about whom you wrote to me thinks her health is good enough for her to enter religion and if she has the means to pay for her trousseau and her dowry which is 700 fr. with the Sisters of St. Joseph, I will try and get her accepted and she could enter immediately.

I am always, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ,

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 27th August 1841

I think I could obtain a reduction of the amount of the dowry of 700 fr.

To satisfy the wish of the Cure, without doing harm to yourself, tell him that for several years your Superiors, to begin with the Mistress of Novices, have not stopped telling you that you are very timid; that confessors who have known you have forbidden you every repetition, etc.; then say that your fears are concerned with the perfect fulfillment of your duties, etc. Avoid coming back on what has been troubling your imagination, you could re-open badly healed wounds and return to situations very harmful to your soul and very much opposed to what your divine Spouse is asking for. You may also say that you are not worried about the past, etc.

Be firm with moderation regarding the Superior General. It is very necessary sometimes to suffer for the good of the family whose interests are entrusted to us. N. is in no way suited to you. For the rest, I will help you in this peaceful and submissive struggle.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 21st October 1841

The fear that for want of a clear explanation from me, Mme. N. may not know where she stands, obliges me to write to you again to tell you that I am asking for an exact copy of the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph just as I have written to you. You cannot write anything in the notebook in which the approbation is to be found. Another notebook of about the same format as the original must be obtained and kept carefully and for that reason it must be copied out. Let the original be handled without wearing it out and soiling it and let the copy that will be made be written carefully. The task is not urgent.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 18th December 1841

I will pay you for the expenses of all this. Perhaps some business will summon me to Brussels again before long. In that case you would have a visit from me.

Our dear Lady Clothilde having been a Lady of the Council of the Institute and a distinguished member of our religious family, I thought I must get some prayer cards printed and more specially recall her to memory. Here then are these prayer cards for your friends at Brussels. Please have them distributed among them.

I thank you for the work you have done for the Sisters of St. Joseph. Give 10 fr. to your chapel; I will reimburse you on my first journey.

I find so many good pedagogical principles in the work of Mr. Rendu that I want that book to be read and re-read very frequently so that you may be imbued with the practical truths found in it and so be capable of acting with full knowledge of the facts, in general matters as well as in individual cases. You will perhaps yourself, Madame, have already made the reflections I have just conveyed to you about that work. Try and arrange for all your dear Sisters also to have true ideas about their interesting duties.

May our good God deign to give your community abundant blessings.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 20 February 1842

I thank our good God for the blessings he has so kindly given to my advice and your faithfulness in following them. Continue with the same generosity; success will in the end crown your efforts.

It seems to me that you could take a hot breakfast, water with milk for example. As for the fast, you must ask a dispensation for yourself and all your Ladies who are not obviously strong enough to fast. You will tell the Cure that it is at my orders that you are asking for these dispensations. As it is difficult for me to judge all your Sisters as regards their physical strength, you will act without fear and allow a half or a whole breakfast as you think prudent.

If you find a capable workman who may not be too dear, you could get your statue of St. Joseph restored. If you can wait until Easter, the maker might be able to come and restore it himself.

As always, I will make it my duty to commend you specially to the Lord during the holy time of Lent.

I am always pleased to call myself

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 6th February 1842

Please get copied into a good notebook of the kind of those that have been used for writing down the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Rule I am sending you. If Madame N. write it out as she wrote the last half of the said Constitutions; the first part is written in letters that are too big and among other things the 'f's are rather mediocrity formed. Let her take great care with the titles.

You may keep for your Institute the notebook I am sending you. Madame Superior General will be very pleased to have it.

Be convinced that you are not forgotten, this month especially, in my prayers, nor your dear Sisters either. Our good and powerful Patron will make us again feel the loving sentiments he bears his children. Let us go to him with great confidence.

No one could be more devoted to you than I am.

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 3rd of St. Joseph's month, 1842

It is no doubt to St. Joseph that we owe the fact that you have had the pleasure of giving me and I have that of receiving good news. Let us try and deserve the continuation of the power help of our good Patron. I like to think that Mme. N. will also feel the effects of that protection of the foster Father of Jesus.

Let faith be enough for you and the sight of your imperfections not hinder you from unceasingly returning towards that center of all mercy, the adorable heart of Jesus.

Here is a picture that I am directing to the Lady Superior of the Convent of the Holy Angels. I think it will be a doubly useful souvenir. In accordance with your wishes I prayed for your pupils on their first communion day.

May St. Joseph be our model, as he deigns to be our Patron. Let us retrace in ourselves his humility, meekness and constant confidence on all occasions.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 15th of St. Joseph's month, 1842

Now the beautiful month of Mary is drawing to its close. How many graces have been granted to us in it and how many means of advancing more successfully in the beautiful career to which divine goodness has deigned to lead us! Let us rejoice, my dear children; it is so appropriate for the friends of the Queen of Angels to be content and generous. Our failings must not stop the course of our happiness; that they make us humble, well and good, but not faint-hearted. The knowledge of our weakness must increase our confidence in the one whose power with her divine son is infinite and whose love for us is boundless.

I like to think that my last remarks have produced a salutary effect physically and morally. I keenly desire it to be so and I earnestly ask your loving Mary to make it so.

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, the last day of Mary's month, 1842

Although fairly long absences and different circumstances have seem to me reasons for putting off answering your second last letter, I am obliged to recognize that this time I have exceeded the length of time appropriate in this matter; I therefore apologize to you, my dear daughter, and hasten to make up for my fault.

You cannot fast yet. There is no need for the tabernacle to be blessed again. The Blessed Sacrament may rest in it and you may in the circumstances have Mass in the other house. I may come to Brussels next week and then we will decide about the questions you still have to submit to me. Please tell Mme. N., so that she will allow me not to write to her at the moment.

One sentence alone in your second last letter: "I love my divine Spouse, I wish to please him, so I hope he will take care of me", says enough for me to congratulate you on that wise disposition, console myself before our good God and rejoice in his blessings. Persevere, dear child, in these good sentiments and believe in the sincere devotion and unchanging devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 7th July 1842

I am fully convinced that the sentiments you express to me are those of your heart. So I always receive them with true pleasure, blessing the Lord for obtaining for me such sweet gratification for the little I do. Accept my dear daughter, my sincere thanks for the wishes you sent me and, above all the prayers you are offering for me. I will redouble my zeal in helping you, especially also by praying for you. Please assure all your dear children of that.

If you were to have major repairs done to the tabernacle, it would have to be blessed again. It would be better to do only what is strictly necessary, all the more as you will only be able to use it provisionally.

I am very pleased to learn that Mlle. N. is recovering. She has the makings of a good Child of Mary, but it will need a little patience on our part and generosity on the part of the novice.

Receive my blessing once more and believe me, as you have been doing for so long, and try and get your dear children convinced, that I am with all my heart,

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 27th July 1842

I always receive with fresh pleasure the wishes you send me, my very dear daughter; they come from a heart so imbued with fine sentiments. May our very dear Sisters also accept the expression of my thanks for the testimony of their pious affections. I often think of my Children in Jesus Christ, when I read in the Office of the Blessed Virgin these words of the great Apostle and it seem to me that my heart tells me that it understands what they mean: The jealousy that I feel for you is the jealousy of God himself; I have given you in marriage to one spouse, presenting you as a chaste virgin to Christ. You will feel from that that you will have a big share in my prayers on the day when we celebrate the glorious triumph of the very august Queen of Heaven, our sweet and loving Mother Mary. With what zeal I will beg her to shower down her favors in abundance on her children of the Convent of the Holy Angels and, in particular, on the one she has put at their head to govern them in her name!

Courage, my dear daughter! Little by little you will triumph over yourself and you will love Mary and her divine Son greatly and generously in spite of your weaknesses. Amen. Amen.

Your Father in Jesus Christ always very devoted

Ghent, 13th August 1842

Your good wishes are always dear to me. I accept them gratefully and pray God to receive them and answer us. Our heavenly Father knows the heart that formulates these wishes; he knows that the glory of his name is the aim of your desires as well as of your work and I think I am authorized to conclude that I will feel the effects of your pious prayers.

The news you have sent me is of the kind to reassure us about the dispositions of some people who seemed to be unfavorable to us.

I am delighted to learn that your efforts to be generous are bearing fruit. Persevere, my dear daughter. Your divine Spouse will bless your efforts as he has always done when you have forgotten yourself in order to think of him and act with his grace.

Give my complements to your dear Sisters. I have been praying very much for all of you for some time. The Lord knows my feelings for the spiritual children he has deigned to give me.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 18th October 1842

I too count a great deal on the continuance of your feelings of filial piety. On this matter I have received protestations so often repeated and coming from so pure a source that I could not doubt but that grace formulates them and sanctifies them. Now, the works of grace are worthy of the attention of God, and will eternally remain in Heaven, after having here below made the souls that were given them bear fruits of salvation. Your good wishes will therefore always please me and they will be very useful to me. I will also constantly make it my duty to offer prayers to the Lord for you until at last we find ourselves inseparably reunited in God in the abode of the elect.

I urge you to read with your Sisters what I say in my "Manual" p. 228, and to say together the prayer that is to be found there. What you tell me about your community gives me very great pleasure. Let us all try and persevere in the way of God's love. I give you my blessing, dear daughter in Jesus Christ and beg you to count on the devotedness of

Your affectionate spiritual Father

Ghent, 31st October 1842

I was expecting to receive the news that all your dear Sisters and even your novices, each in her own way, have profited from the feast of the Presentation of our august Patroness. I prayed for you on that day and even several days beforehand with all the zeal I could find in my heart.

As for you, be blind in obedience and generous in the love you owe your divine Spouse. That is the summary of all I wanted to say to you at the moment.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 23rd November 1842

I always receive with fresh pleasure the wishes you send me. I am so perfectly acquainted with the heart that formulates them that I need only receive them without examining them and thank you without limitations. You, too, have and will continue to have a special share in my prayers. May you obtain from our loving Savior all you need in order to go forward generously in the way of perfection.

You are right, my dear daughter, in order to judge one must have knowledge; and so as not to pass on rash judgments, one must be sure of what one decides. Timidity hampers the actions of the Spirit. Act then with humble boldness. Love our good God and you will with more fruit and more merit do all your duties require. I have no other interest than your perfection and the good of the souls the Lord deigns to entrust to your solicitude.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 28th December 1842

The care I specially bestowed on your community, during my last journey, and the detailed explanations I provided you with, as much for your personal instruction as for the direction of the others, make me desirous of having news of you. I am longing to know whether you have understood in a practical way what I explained to you. The state of mind of Mme. N. also merits you telling me something about them. The latter was very uselessly worrying about her confessions. Have you succeeded in making her hear reason? And has your health profited from the remedies I have been pointing out to you for a certain time? Give me a few words in reply and believe, dear child, in the true zeal of

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 4th February 1843

I was very pleased, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, with the sentiments you expressed to me in your last letter. It is indeed the great proof that one is acting with the grace of the divine Spouse, when, in the depths of one's heart, one preserves blind submission and contents oneself with the decisions of one's superiors so as to silence all the repugnances of nature.

I am counting on having the happiness of taking my good niece Clothilde to the Ladies of Mary the day after tomorrow. May St. Joseph accept the sacrifice of this young person as well as that of her respectable parents! May we again see spiritual blessings descend on them and our Institute grow in means of salvation!

You may count on my zeal in commending you to our Holy Patron, on the day of the big feast, and even all through this month. My good wishes to all your dear Sisters.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 16th of St. Joseph's month, 1843

Whatever you think about it, my dear daughter, your state has improved and in spite of the bitterness both your Superiors and St. Joseph himself cause you to experience, you have a greater resemblance to your divine Spouse than you would have in a sweeter and easier state of mind. So continue along your way and Jesus Christ will be pleased with you. Stop submitting to phantoms of that timid imagination, go on in faith, follow courageously where the grace of the Lord leads you and the bitterness will soon be to your taste, because your taste will be reformed to suit him whose good pleasure must always be everything to you.

I did not neglect your affairs when I approached St. Joseph. So count on that Holy Patron and on the goodwill of

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 28th of our Holy Patron's month, 1843

It is always with pleasure that I receive your good wishes. I thank you for all the good you wish me and I renew the assurance to you that I do not forget you in my prayers. For your consolation and that of your dear children who are still experiencing difficulties, even after their resurrection, think that our divine Master was willing to preserve in his resurrected body the holy wounds, the marks of his struggles but also of his bodily weakness. Let what miseries we find in ourselves remind us of the mercies of the Lord who has delivered us from sin, the only true evil, and humiliates us and sustains us in a generous disposition to fight for God, everywhere and always, what would induce us to alienate ourselves from him. Although our weaknesses expose us in the continual battle, we have nothing to fear, because Jesus Christ has conquered evil and his grace is promised and assured to us, if we ask for it. So be at peace, dear child, and use these considerations in directing your Sisters; in particular use them in the case of Mme. N. That will serve as an answer to her letter this time.

Ever all yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 19th April 1843

It seems to me that the motives you allege for hastening the transfer of the pupils into the new establishment are sound and may cause the plan that had been accepted to be modified. Besides the month of Mary adds to the good disposition of spirits and renders our project easy. So I adopt your arrangement. I think the Superior General will also be of our opinion.

I count on having the pleasure of seeing you in this fortnight. I hope that with you, as with the other children I will enjoy the sweet pleasure of seeing them animated with a tender devotion to the august Mother of God who deigns to be our Mother also.

It is with pleasure that I acquit myself of the duty of praying for you during this month with special confidence. I am convinced that you too are praying for

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 6th of Mary's month, 1843

Tomorrow you will receive the picture I am dedicating to the Convent of the Holy Angels. It is an adoration of the shepherds. I hope your tabernacle will not hide it. If you have not yet ordered a new tabernacle, I urge you to have your present one well ornamented and the cross must be put on it.

I like to persuade myself that my visit bore good fruit, that order, good tone and piety reign among the pupils as well as among the Ladies.

Accept, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the good wishes I am offering your convent; may the gifts of the Holy Spirit come down upon you in holy abundance.

On Saturday week, I will go to Malines again on my way back from Tirlemont; you can address there the letter I am expecting from you for the feast of Pentecost.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 1st June 1843

I was pleased to see that your efforts to introduce the tone of decency and politeness among your pupils are having some success and our good God is blessing your house with his customary generosity. I like to persuade myself that your novice will eventually triumph over the oddities of her imagination. Go on approaching the divine Heart of Jesus through the intermediaries of our august Patrons. What you have told me of your present disposition, allows me to give you the assurance that your heavenly Spouse is content with your efforts. The depths of your heart belong to God, my dear child, and that is the essential thing; the rest does not depend on us or is only of secondary value. Miseries even purify those depths of which Jesus has the right to be jealous. So have courage, be cheerful; set the example of the generosity of a true daughter of Mary and Joseph. You will more and more see the blessings of heaven come down on you and your work. Be convinced too that I commend you daily to the Lord.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 23rd June 1843

I have been very pleased to learn that you have the consolation of seeing that the retreat has had a happy effect on your dear Sisters and that your pupils give their mistresses the promise of coming up to their expectations. May the Lord deign to shower his blessings on you and on the flock entrusted to you under the protection of the Holy Angels.

I like to think that the plans relating to a school for the poor will be brought to fruition. It was entirely impossible for me to come to Brussels, as you wanted me to do, during the stay there of His Eminence the Cardinal. Have confidence in God, my dear child, and do what depends on you; as usual you will feel that your divine Spouse is watching over you, with that tenderness we have admired in so many circumstances.

Remember me to all your beloved children in Jesus Christ and always count on the devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 12th October 1843

You gave me pleasure, my dear child, by sending me good wishes. I know they come from a devoted heart. Try now to obtain from our good God that I really become what you wish me. I promise you also to pray with confidence to the Master we serve that his grace may be operative in us, as it has been in that multitude of saints we are honoring at the moment. We will be able to do what they could with that same grace; because the arm of the Lord has not been shortened, his power and his mercy know no limits.

I think it is the choir of Angels that we intended to take as Patrons of your house and to honor them in a special way.

May the question of the school for the poor obtain a solution in conformity with the designs for good that God has for your establishment.

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 30th October 1843

I am delighted to know that you are well, my dear child, and I bless the Lord for giving us the idea of placing you at St. John the Baptist (convent). Many good effects will prove the wisdom of that me a sure and your health will not be the last to show itself. Go forward with courage, generosity and simplicity.

Always count on my zeal in being useful to you.

Your very devoted Father

Ghent, 9th January 1844

Go courageously, my dear child, along the path of renunciation. That path is sure and leads direct to Jesus Christ. Then despise all that is trying to bother you; the will is needed for evil as well as for good. So nothing can make you sin without you giving your consent. Bravely fulfill the duties of your new office. You will find that occupation useful.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 1st of St. Joseph's month 1844

You are proving to me, my dear daughter, that you are profiting by the lessons of experience and are understanding better and better that one cannot entirely, in this life, avoid the vexations and impressions of our nature. I congratulate you on that success and urge you to devote yourself more and more to your divine Spouse and to what his designs for you require of you. So fulfill the duties of your office prudently, but also without restraint or human fear. Go forward with simplicity, putting yourself above any little difficulties real or apparent, and leave the success of your efforts to our good God. I zealously unite with you, dear child, in praying our holy Patron to help us to draw the Lord's blessings down on the Institute.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th of St. Joseph's month, 1844

I am always pleased to receive news of you, my dear child. I should like it to be in my power to grant you what you ask of me. But it is not possible for me to come to Mouscron next week. I will come and see you as soon as I can. I have the faculties, as I had in former times, for hearing confessions. So, be at peace and put off worrying too much about that matter until my arrival. I beg you, my dear daughter, to conduct yourself in that simplicity which prevents you from being exposed to the efforts of an imagination, the dangerous tendencies of which I have so many times pointed out to you.

I pray for you every day, my child, pray also for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 16th June 1844

Be at peace, my dear child, both as regards the past and as regards your confession with which I assure you I was pleased. So do not worry any more about yourself, that self would spoil both the natural good and the supernatural good.

May our crosses make us humble and form us like our model, the divine Spouse of our souls.

I do not cease taking you to the altar and there presenting you to Jesus Christ.

I am always

Your devoted Father

Ghent, 17th April 1844

Go on, my dear daughter, conducting yourself with faith and true charity. Whatever your worries and fears, do not torment yourself with them. Your Spouse rests in your heart, his grace is working there; your soul is being purified. What more is needed? Go forward, be generous, see God in the light of faith and be tranquil about all the rest. Count very much on my devotedness and although I do not often have the leisure to repeat it to you, be sure you are not forgotten in my prayers.

All yours in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 11th October 1844

You had no need, my dear daughter, of the long preamble with which you prefaced your letter, to obtain the permission to write to me. You have lost nothing with me of the sentiments that you know I have had for you ever since the Lord entrusted you to my direction.

The summary of your letter gives evidence that you have derived great benefits from your trials. Go forward with courage now; you will reap sound fruit from the times that have seemed dry to your rather anxious mind. You will have purified your feelings, learned how to live with less sensible help; your divine Spouse will henceforth find you more submissive and more united in charity to the heart of him who is your crucified Spouse.

I give you my blessing, my dear child, and pray for you that you will no longer put any obstacle in the way of the merciful designs of the Lord.

I find your writing rather too small; in that respect you have had no success.

Your devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 11 April 1845

I am very pleased my dear daughter, with your letters and the way you have carried out my orders. I pray our good God to give you an abundant share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Open your soul to the merciful workings of that Spirit of strength and light. You will experience the effects of the promises of God the Savior.

Pray also for

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 6th of Mary's Month, 1845

Your letter did me a great deal of good, my dear daughter, In it I find proof that time and grace gradually correct nature, and that our good God will in the end have possession of the heart you are offering him, without having to share it. You are rightly applying the principles that I have previously set before you and will reap the benefits of them, for yourself and your children. Count on my zeal in commending you to God and always proving to you that I am sincerely devoted to you in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ghent, 10th December 1845

The details you have just given me both of your woes, and of the good that grace is working in you, have been a matter of consolation for me. I see that you are understanding things better, not getting discouraged at the sight of your weaknesses nor expecting to reach perfection without a struggle, without working for it, and have more confidence in God. Go on arming yourself with courage to set aside sad ideas and to bear interior difficulties, as well as those that come to you from outside, and you will increase your merits, be more docile to the voice of your divine Spouse and see your efforts crowned with more success among your pupils and Sisters as well as physically and morally in yourself. Be cheerful as well as you can be and practice the virtue of 'entrapelie' zealously

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 29th April 1848

You may be at peace, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, your Superior will be sent back to you accompanied by a good mistress. I can imagine that the departure of Mme. N. made some impression on you; but your submission to what God decides must have made the sacrifice easy.

Do not willingly occupy yourself any more with the matter you have just written to me about, forgetting about it, and then simple common sense, will wipe out those purely physical impressions. Faith and love of Jesus Christ will cause you to triumph over your weaknesses and even if you sometimes feel that you are not dead to the sentiments of an imperfect nature, do not draw from that fact any conclusion capable of weakening your courage. Be constantly cheerful as far as that depends on you. That is a very useful disposition in view of your temperament and inclination towards a sort of unreasonable fear.

I am not forgetting you, be sure of that; I do not have the leisure for writing to you but I have that for commending you to our good Master. Every day I pray our august Patrons to take care of you and during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass you have your share in the prayers I offer for the happiness of the souls whose direction our good God has entrusted to me.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th February 1847

I understand your condition, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. You let yourself dwell too much on black thoughts; you do not grant yourself the recreation your body as well as your mind greatly needs. Your divine Spouse Jesus Christ is not pleased with the mistrust you show him. However, he has compassion on your woes, because he knows that your will has no part in those troubles. So lift up your heart, lift up your mind; offer them to Jesus and you will see the light return to your mind and calm reestablish itself in your heart. It is likely that we will see each other on the 15th of this month at Mouscron. So I stop now, we will deal with these matters in person.

Please, tell your Superior I am counting on coming to see her, as I have just told you, and I will do all in my power to prevent that plan from being upset.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd June 1847

I gladly see, my dear daughter, that reason is regaining the upper hand and imagination will again yield up the place you should never allow it occupy. May our good God be blessed for having restored strength to the judgment of my too fearful child. We have reason and faith to guide us; let us go forward with confidence in the light of those torches. Let us see our Father in Heaven dealing with us and always granting us the strength needed to do his adorable will. Let us avoid substituting our phantoms, the vain products of a sick imagination, for those angels of peace Heaven sends to help us, as faith teaches. Make efforts constantly to preserve cheerfulness in the sight of God, in the sight of your neighbor and in view of your own need.

I always make it my pleasure to commend you to Our Lord Jesus Christ, especially at the Holy Sacrifice; that is especially how I wish to prove my devotedness to you.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 25th October 1847

I learn, my dear daughter, that you sometimes let yourself give in to your inclination towards discouragement because you discover in yourself weaknesses and imperfections and in order to cure yourself, you would like to do without the strongest remedy; to strengthen yourself, you would like to deprive yourself of that food which par excellence makes people strong and produces saints. You are wrong as I have told you a thousand times, to listen to your gloomy imagination; you must, by naively recognizing your poverty, wonder at the fact that God loves you and wants to be loved by you. You must go to communion with faith, with confidence; and if you do not find in yourself those sentiments that charity always seems to have to arouse in the soul in the presence of God the Savior, you must again wonder at the infinite indulgence of God who does not rebuff you but loves you, notwithstanding your wretched powerlessness to feel that you are not insensitive to so much love for you. Believe that, my dear child; you know that I do not want to make you follow paths that would be suspect.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 17th December 1847

I am pleased to see, my dear daughter that your writing is getting better. Evidently, your body must be getting stronger. Take care to render that service to the traveling companion God has given you here below. But it will not be only your writing that will feel the effects of the strength you get for your body. Your imagination, your mind itself will feel the effects of physical improvement. The discernment of what is matter for confession will be another result of the cares wisely given to your body; you will be harder on yourself; you will be less under the influence of fear and sadness and will remember the catholic principles relating to the Sacrament of Penance.

Be convinced that I am praying for you and will never forget you before the Lord.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th January 1848

I received your news with great pleasure, my dear daughter; it strengthened me in the hope that I have always cherished that time would provide a remedy for your spiritual infirmities in particular, and even for your bodily ones, if the interests of your divine Spouse require it. Do not neglect anything of what can bring health and strength to your weakened limbs; but let submission to the will of the Lord always remain with you and thus assure you of the supernatural profits without doing harm to the good of the body. When your head seems to want to tend itself to your desires to meditate only with difficulty, do not see in that anything that ought to afflict you. God knows the dispositions of your heart and contents himself with the goodwill that animates you. Live a life of faith; believe in spite of darkness, and hope without having the motives for doing so apparent, contenting yourself with knowing that Jesus Christ does not abandon the Spouse who gives herself up to him. You will at least be able to love, when the rest seems to refuse to yield to your desires; and if you love the divine object of your love, you will be sufficiently enlightened and encouraged.

I go on commending you to the Lord; you know my devotedness, my dear daughter.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 18th February 1848

It is a long time, my dear daughter, since you received news straight from me. Although the time is not very favorable, since visits take up all our time in town, I am adding a few lines for you to the letter I have address to your Superior. First of all, I congratulate you on setting yourself above the difficulties your youthful imagination very gratuitously caused you. Next, I am allowed to conclude from the preceding that you must be acquitting yourself, more meritoriously for yourself and more usefully for your neighbor, of the various offices you hold. That is a further motive for complementing you. Thank God, my child, for these successes, the fruits of your efforts supported by grace from your divine Spouse. I always make it my sweet pleasure to commend you to the Lord and I count on your praying for me, as you are accustomed to do. When you have the free time, write me one of those naive letters, straight from the heart, about your present state. But do not require an answer. I must keep the time that is left after I have done what is strictly necessary, for seeing or receiving people I see only once a year.

All yours in Jesus Christ

Not dated (or date cut off in photocopying)

Yes, my dear daughter, you gave me pleasure by adding a few lines to those of your Superior. I was glad to see that your writing, more than ever, is gradually recovering. I hope your nervous weakness will yield in its turn, and you will recover strength and use it in the service of the Institute. Since my recovery I am writing less badly than I used to do. I was experiencing great difficulty in writing and for a rather long time I was acquitting myself very badly. I have not taken any coffee since the 3rd of this month; might not that be what is strengthening my nerves?

You are right, my dear daughter, you are one of those children who seem more specially to belong to me. It is in that sense that you can always address me and count on my true desire to be useful to you. Receive my blessing and believe in my complete devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 26th January 1849

Your sentiments and prayers, my very dear child, are very pleasing to me. I know so well the source from which they emanate. May our good God in his mercy answer us and we will worthily fulfill the respective duties with which we are charged. That is what I earnestly ask Jesus during these beautiful, touching feasts we are celebrating at the present period. Always go forward with more confidence in your divine Spouse. Forget your fears, your past faults in order to give all your attention to the fulfillment of your various duties and to strengthen the body and mind you will use in the service of the Institute.

I recommend to you two pupils who will be arriving at your place in the next few days. The Sisters of St. Joseph need to be trained in teaching methods. We have found it good to send Sr. N. and Sr. N to your house, as to a training college. You will need to take care to obtain lessons in pedagogy for these good Sisters; pointing out and explaining the best systems to them and following them to attend lessons, the best conducted classes, etc. You will inform them of the best authors. Madame Flore, the headmistress of the Institute, will be able to provide you with a good deal of information. We have the greatest interest in not lagging behind as regards methods; everything advances, we too must go forward.

Receive, my child, my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th December 1849

Never get discouraged, my dear daughter; always begin again with fresh courage and ever more real humility and perfect confidence in God. By force of trying and with the help of grace, nature will be changed.

Please, remember my remarks about your classes. Do not fail to write to Mme. N about them as I think I charged you to do. We absolutely must go forward and perfect our methods, our tone, our accent, if we want to avoid seeing ourselves left behind by lay institutions. Preach that often and at every meeting.

My letter to your Superior was written, when I got to know the decision of Fr. B. The retreat will take place on the 1st Sunday in September. There will be two Fathers; you will all profit by it and it is to be desired that as many people as possible be gathered together so that many may profit by the truths of salvation. I am always

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 23rd July 1850

Your good wishes, your resolution to work at driving away a certain constriction of heart, by means of views of faith, simple filial abandonment in your outpourings in the bosom of the Father, all gave me pleasure. I hope the novena will have excellent results.

Be convinced that I will always unite my prayers zealously to yours to obtain the graces you need as a child of Adam, a daughter of Mary and the superior of a convent specially consecrated and devoted to St. Joseph.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of

Your ever-devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th November 1850

Today I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the soul of our beloved Lady Flavie. We are indeed right to hope that we already have one more protectress in Heaven and will experience the effects of those touching promises our excellent Sister made us, before leaving us. It is very consoling, my dear daughter, to see the beautiful, saintly dispositions of the members of our pious family, when the Lord calls them to himself. I give thanks for so signal a favor and one which has without exception gratified all my children in Jesus Christ. May that mark of the special goodness of God towards us arouse a keen and lasting gratitude in us. May it also nourish in us sentiments of steadfast confidence.

I was glad to learn that all of you are well and that you have praises of your community to offer me. You know how keen are the sentiments of devotedness of

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 29th November 1850

Please remind all my dear children at the convent of St. Joseph that the Gospel tells us: "The shepherds returned (from the poor stable) glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard." Such are the effects that the sight of the great prodigy of the love of God for men produces in those simple people.

Let us, dear children, examine what has been produced in us by what faith has taught us during the very many years we have been admitted near the crib. What have so many marks of divine goodness produced in us? Are we full of admiration, full of the desire to praise God and proclaim his blessings like the shepherds? Do we feel: 1) a more ardent zeal for procuring the glory of God than when we left the world? 2) Have we acquired a more real knowledge of our wretchedness, of that self-love that spoils so many things? 3) Are we going once and for all to put the ax pitilessly to the root to eradicate what still remains of the old man in us? "All those who heard it", adds the Gospel, "were astonished. "The naive report the shepherds gave of what they had seen and heard, produced wonderful and salutary effects in the other people. Why? It was not due to the importance of those preachers, but because God gave his strength to the words echoing from hearts in which his love was already reigning. So love much, dear children, love with all your hearts, Jesus and his interests, and your words will be understood; your efforts will be crowned with success. Your pupils and still many others will experience the effects of those graces the Messiah came to bring on earth.

Such are the prayers that will be offered for you by

Your spiritual Father.

Ghent, 30th December 1850

I am pleased to see that you have begun the month of our august patroness, our tender Mother Mary, with zeal and confidence. Nourish these feelings in yourself, my dear daughter, and in your sisters and pupils. You will gather from them precious fruits for your good and that of your community and pupils. I will make it my sweet duty to help you with my prayers as I do with my counsel.

Always believe, dear child, in the sincere devotedness in God of

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 5th of Mary's month 1851

I thank you, my very dear daughter, for the marks of filial piety you give me every time you have the opportunity to do so. I hope that our good God will reward you for these acts of a virtue that is dear to him. I have also asked for you an upright spirit, a calm, pure heart that generously loves its divine Spouse. I have asked for your dear Sisters, prudent and humble zeal and lasting sentiments of real love for each other.

I give you my blessing and repeat the assurance of my true devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 19th August 1851

Man proposes and God disposes. Now, that adorable arrangement of the Lord's does not this time allow what we had decided about, a journey to Alost. For about a week I have been confined to my room with a slight indisposition. Everything allows me to believe that next week I will be able to carry out my plan without hindrance on the part of my health.

I will take care of your little matter in spite of this setback. Drive away all troublesome thoughts; be courageous; count on the help of the Lord; see in St. Joseph a protector at every instant; do not stop calling on Mary and you will have a year of blessing. I unceasingly ask for you to advance on the road to perfection.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 16th November 1851

Be very sure that you will not be forgotten in my prayers during this month that is consecrated to our Holy Patron. I hope that you will receive new strength to fight your enemy and have the happiness of triumphing over all the obstacles you meet in the way of the perfection to which your lovely vocation calls you.

On my part, please wish all your dear Sisters, much zeal and generosity during St. Joseph's month.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd March 1852

We are approaching that feast which every year brings us great spiritual favors, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ. Redouble your courage and generosity in the service of your divine Spouse, and St. Joseph will have the goodness to offer your acts, efforts and desires... try to get all your Sisters to prepare themselves with the same zeal.

Good-bye, my child, receive the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 13th of St. Joseph's month, 1852

You are astonished, I think, at my silence. I am sorry to have to tell you that the cause of it is: 1) Madame Bathilde who did not give me explanations capable of making me understand the matter with which you had charged her; 2) Yourself, my dear Lady, by adding to your letter of explanation, contradictions, fears, scruples in short, that prevented me from sending your letter to the notary and forced me to go to his office and to return there until I managed to speak to him in person.

That is the explanation of my silence. The paper will be sent to you when the difficulties are in their turn explained.

For the rest, my dear daughter, I am very pleased to see from your last letters, that you are content and full of hope for the future of your house. I continue to commend it also with all that composes it, beginning with yourself, to our good Patron St. Joseph, our Holy Angels and our very excellent and powerful Mother, august Mary. In my name urge all your dear Sisters to pass the lovely month we are beginning, with zeal, with faith and sincere and filial confidence.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th April 1852

I was very pleased to see that Father ... made the journey to Alost to see and console his relative. I have expressed my gratitude to him for that proof of devotedness he has just given us. I like to think that Madame N. has understood that mark of zeal and affection that this former friend of our Institute still has for us, and will find in it a motive for thanking our good God and getting encouragement in the way of penance she is traveling along, I dare to hope in faith and submission.

You will be good enough to say on my behalf that I am zealously trying to fulfill my obligations towards my spiritual children and at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, very specially commend those whose needs are most urgent. For the rest, that dear invalid appreciates the various states through which the Lord leads his chosen ones; she has enough experience in the interior life to understand that we have the greatest interest in generously bearing the trials, following the example of our perfect model, Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ. So let her seek to prove that, in her capacity as a child of Mary and spouse of Jesus Christ, she understands that her way is the one that leads to Calvary. Let her ask for what is needed in order to be firm and resolute in the accomplishment of the adorable will of God. We all join with her and ask with her for the strength that is given by grace, the fruit of superabundant satisfaction of our divine Savior.

Be my interpreter at all times to our dear invalid and count also on my efforts to render you services when the opportunities present themselves.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 19th June 1852

I have come back from my visit to Mouscron well satisfied with my dear children and their pupils. You must have noticed that I was also very pleased with you and your dear Sisters. What a joy it was to find in my Children Servants zeal for the Lord and his Holy Religion!

You will take care to have the little mirrors that ornament the interior of the tabernacle in your chapel covered with suitable rich material. The little pillars and other decorations are all right; it is only the mirrors that are contrary to what is prescribed and must be covered in such a way that everything is proper and in keeping as the internal ornamentation of a tabernacle.

Please, tell Madame N. I hope to see fulfilled the wish I expressed on leaving her, of coming back to see the dear invalid in September. May it please our good God to grant a few more years of work and merit to our very devoted child. Recommend to her on my behalf, generosity and submission to her divine Spouse.

I was very pleased with the letter of Madame N. and the sentiments of equity and gratitude that animate her. I beg you to tell her so.

Courage, my dear daughter; generosity towards your divine Spouse and confidence in the sincere devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 24th July 1852

I thank you very sincerely, my dear daughter, and I also thank your dear Sisters for the good wishes you sent me for my patronal feast day. I hope our good God hears your prayers and we will have the happiness of working together for a long time still for the salvation of the children his Providence deigns to entrust to us. Carefully nourish the sentiments of that enlightened zeal the Lord has given to a great many of my spiritual daughters. It is a real treasure; draw from it with confidence. You will do the work of your divine Spouse and become more and more agreeable to his heart and useful to his Holy Church.

Receive dear child, my blessing and the assurance of my sincere and very affectionate devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd August 1852

My kind regards to our dear invalid whom I always commend at the Holy Sacrifice.

I am taking advantage of the present opportunity, my dear daughter, to wish you the graces you need to prepare yourself and all your pious family for great feast of Sunday. Let us be very joyful at the memory of the triumph of our august Patroness. That disposition will be pleasing to Our Lord and his Holy Mother, and useful to us their happy children.

Be my interpreter, I beg you, to our good Mlle. Colette. I will make it my duty to pray specially for her on that great feast day of her chief Patron. I hope she will also be kind enough to commend us to Mary at this time, when with the Church, we are concerned with the entry into Heaven of the one who had the happiness of being used to open its gates to the unhappy descendants of Adam.

Receive, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 11 August 1852

Remember me affectionately to our dear invalid.

Please tell our dear invalid I am very consoled to see the happy disposition in which, by the mercy of the Lord, she is persevering and even perfecting herself. I make it my duty to pray specially for her, and we have the hope that we will not cease our pious efforts until the moment when they are no longer necessary. I again commend to her charitable zeal the family of which she is a member, and in particular, the Superiors who direct it, and the house of St. Joseph where she has received so many graces.

I thank our good God for the consolations he is deigning to grant you. Try, my dear daughter, to be very faithful to grace, and to help, with all your might, in the development of the good that must be done in your convent of St. Joseph.

Please give Mlle. Colette, in my name, 10 fr. for the purpose she knows about. It is a quarter of the annual amount we agreed on. I always pray for that good long-standing benefactress. I dare to believe she too thinks of me in her prayers.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Our Lord

Ghent, 22nd October 1852

Remember me to all your good Sisters.

I am very much obliged to you for the good wishes you have just sent me in your name and that of your dear Sisters. I have tried also to fulfill my sweet obligations towards you. May our good God deign to hear us for his glory and our advancement along the way of perfection.

I like to think that my letters to three of your Ladies have had their effect, and that Madame M. in particular, in trying to get rid of that morose humor that gets in the way of good and takes from her a part of the merits attached to her holy vocation. Please, my dear daughter, tell me a word about it when you write to me.

I am still waiting for a safe opportunity to send you the two shares, one for 1000 fr. and the other for 250. You are to put them into a type of paper portfolio of a fairly large format. You will add a note indicating that these shares belong to the free school, and that the interest must be exclusively used for the benefit of the children of our said school.

To ensure the preservation of that work you can add to the note that every year 1% of the income is to be retained and used to increase the capital, to a limit of 600 fr. So that there would then be 1800 fr., and that would be a reserve against an eventual loss.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing and the assurance of the affectionate devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 5th November 1852

You have rightly judged my position; there is hardly any means of writing letters at this time. I am no less thankful for the good wishes you sent me and have prayed zealously for you and your dear Sisters.

Please tell Madame Félicité, I am praying our good God to grant her a prompt recovery, since the house of St. Joseph needs all its mistresses and at the moment, the Institute has no members to spare. I like to repeat to you that I am always with all my heart and very sincerely,

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th January 1853

I am making a novena to the Sacred Heart of Mary for all my spiritual children. It will end on the Feast of the Purification. You are not left out of my commendations, as you can well imagine.

I do not know whether I have already spoken about the fast. It seems to me that no mistress can fast. So I grant dishonest ions to you, my dear daughter, and the mistresses, except those whom you think strong enough to fast and take their classes.

Remember me to our dear invalid.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 27th January 1853

Here is a letter for the Priest who says the Holy Mass for you. Please give it to him.

How is Thérèse your 25-year-old boarder? She must not be frightened by the little progress she making. If she generously continues for the good God, I will go on helping her. She must get to know that knowledge is only acquired in the long run, by repeating principles and elements for some time.

Tell Madame Félicité to think frequently of the passion of our divine Savior. She will draw lights, strength and pious sentiments from it. I make it my duty to recommend frequently to our good God that dear invalid. Tomorrow, the first Friday, I will please God, say the Holy Mass specially for her.

You will be kind enough to tell Mlle. Colette I have charged you to offer her my good wishes for the feast of St. Colette, and on the feast day, I will say the Holy Mass for her intentions, and to thank God through St. Colette, for the blessings he has deigned to shower down so mercifully on our religious Institutes since the year 1817.

As for your dear Sisters, my dear daughter, you will not be forgotten either these days or during the month of St. Joseph, or ever, I hope. My great wish will always be to see you advancing in grace before the Lord our God.

I give you my blessing with all my heart.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd of St. Joseph's month 1853

The news you send me yesterday surprised me. I was expecting quite a different result. However, the more one gets on in life, the less eager one is in one's desires to see our days prolonged. Humble submission to the adorable will of God is what leads more surely to that calm the value of which one feels when the time of trials arrives. I am happy to learn of the pious resignation of my dear niece. That disposition on her part, gives me the certainty that the outcome of her illness will be the one most useful to her. So may the will of the Lord be accomplished! I unite my prayers with yours, my dear daughter, and those of our dear invalid. Fiat! Fiat! Voluntas tua!

To-morrow, my sister N., please God, will come and pay my niece a visit on my behalf to tell her that we are praying zealously for the fulfillment of the Lord's will. I give you all my blessing.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 12th of St. Joseph's month 1853

Accept my sincere thanks for the good wishes you sent me. I too make it a duty of mine to commend you and your dear family to the Holy Patron whom we try to honor through-out this month, and whose feast we are going to celebrate to-morrow, with a zeal full of faith and love. May your community feel the happy privilege of being so specially under the protection of St. Joseph.

I was consoled to learn that you are taking such motherly care of my dear niece, and that all our good children at the convent of St. Joseph are rivaling each other in practicing charity. That is the characteristic of the children of God. Carefully nourish those sentiments, and you will make great progress in perfection.

Please tell N. I am pleased with her goodwill. I am not requiring success in studies, but the proof that one is doing and wants to do what God asks. So you are to decide what is right to do about that person.

My kind regards to Madame Félicité. I am very pleased with her submission to her divine Spouse. I make it my pleasure to do what she has asked me through Sister N.; I commend her every day at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 18th of St. Joseph's month 1853

Your good wishes and those of your dear Sisters are very pleasing to me. Please accept my very sincere thanks for them. I too have been praying for you throughout this month. We must have confidence, and await for the goodness of our dear Patron, and the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the help we need in order worthily to fulfill God's designs for us. Let us try, after these great feasts, not to take up again what we have laid down in following our divine model. Let us remain firm in our resolutions, and count on the help of grace.

I hope Madame Félicité will continue to recover and will above all, remain attached lovingly to the adorable will of her divine Spouse. I commend her constantly to the Lord through our august Patrons, Mary and Joseph.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father

Ghent, 30th of St. Joseph's month 1853

I am acutely feeling the trial to which you, I and the Institute are being subjected to by divine Providence. But I also feel we must put the adorable will of God above ourselves and everything. So let us not stop in the face of human considerations and let us say with a full heart: May the very Holy Will of the Lord be done!

It would have been very pleasant for me to come and see Madame Félicité, but my presence is needed at Melle. Please tell me on Monday, if my journey is almost necessary. If our dear invalid is too bad then for my presence to be useful to her, you know that I am praying at Ghent just as I could do at your place, and I will put off my journey to a time when I can be more useful to you.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd April 1853

Make many recommendations to my niece for me. May she be generous, confident in God and submissive to his Holy Will. I am praying for her with all the fervor of which I am capable.

I think I will have the pleasure of coming to see our dear invalid tomorrow, by the afternoon coach. If you think the condition of my niece requires me not to go to her in the evening, please tell her that on Tuesday morning she will have a visit from me.

All yours in Our Lord

Ghent, 10th April 1853

Next Monday, a Black Sister (Sister of Mary and Joseph) from Grammont will be arriving. I am very glad to get this relief for you and your sisters. You need it very much.

Tell our dear invalid again that I was very satisfied with my journey and that I am cherishing the hope that St. Joseph will obtain for us the recovery of a health which, from our point of view, would still be so useful, or the dispositions we should need to make the great sacrifice, if the adorable will of God should require it.

My kind regards also to my other children at your convent who are also very dear to me in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 16th April 1853

I thank you for all the care you have so zealously given to my dear niece. Please still continue, with your community, to pray for the repose of her soul. I have firm confidence that in Madame Félicité, you have and will have one more protectress in Heaven.

Try and do all you can go get order and regularity prevailing everywhere. You could not do anything greater in the sight of God, than to fulfill and get fulfilled the duties that the rule prescribes for each member. Be sure, dear child, that I am praying for you and that it is sweet to me to see you advancing zealously along the path of perfection.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 29th April 1853

It was in fact, during my stay at N. that it was decided to send you Madame N. I like to think you will be pleased with her devotedness.

I am pleased to receive your good wishes, my dear daughter, and beg you to be convinced that I have prayed specially for you. I hope the Holy Spirit will enable you to understand your duties, and grant you the graces necessary to fulfill them according to the designs of Providence.

Receive my blessing and believe in my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 15th of Mary's month, 1853

You gave me great pleasure in giving me news that portends success, and allows you to hope for blessings for your convent and your pupils. Let us continue with our efforts, my dear daughter, and you will soon be aware that our good and powerful Mother Mary is watching over you and yours. I confidently give you my blessing, and always willingly call myself

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 27th of Mary's month, 1853

I am putting off replying to what you asked me in your preceding letter, until the time when leisure allows me to take more care about it than I could at present. Meanwhile, my dear daughter, put into practice what I advised you in person.

I am very consoled by what you tell me about your pupils, your dear Sisters and the Reverend Father D. Be generous yourself with God, and go straight in all your ways, but always with prudence.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th July 1853

For fear that my long silence causes you anxiety, I am writing you a few lines; I haven't the leisure to enter into details.

I thank you, my dear daughter, and all your dear Sisters, for the good wishes you sent me for my patronal feast day.

Please tell Mlle. N. and Mlle. N. they may count on my helping them to attain the holy and happy state to which the grace of Our Lord seems to be calling them. I very much approve of their adding one more year of study and preparation to the good dispositions they have already attained. Their letters pleased me very much; sentiments, style and writing, all seemed to me to point to talents and very good sentiments.

Please be my interpreter to these young Ladies. Help them and keep me informed of what happens.

I recommend you with zeal to Mary, during this time of triumph for her, you my dear daughter, and your Sisters and Postulants.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 8th August 1853

I thank our good God for the blessings he has deigned to grant your efforts to end the school year well. I beg that merciful Father to go on giving you his favors and to shower on you and your dear children at St. Joseph's abundant graces during your retreat.

Mlle. T's business is not definitely settled. How old is that young Lady, and what do you think of her ability for teaching?

I have still more trouble in finding what I want for Therese. She must have a little patience. Might she be suitable for our Black Sisters at Grammont? Please tell me what I owe you for that postulant pupil. You will receive the amount of my debt, when an opportunity occurs. Ask without being afraid of being exacting.

I will be pleased to see Mlle. N. She may also, like Mlle. N. count on my being well disposed towards them.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, my paternal blessing and always count on my devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 22nd August 1853

Your retreat is finished, I think, and I congratulate you on the proofs the Lord has given you of his love, during those blessed days.

I have seen Mlle. N. and promised to second her efforts to arrive at the holy state she wishes to embrace.

Mlle. T. will be admitted to the Sisters of St. Joseph. Please inform me of the approximate time she could enter. It will be at Ostend that she will be making her novitiate.

Our good Thérèse will, I hope, be received by our Sisters at Grammont. I will write to you next week to fix the day when she can go there. I will also be in that town all the same week. It will be good for her to go there while I am there.

Give my kind regards to your dear Sisters, and receive for yourself and for them, the blessing I give you with feelings of paternal affection.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd September 1853

The news you have sent me gives me much pleasure, my dear daughter. I pray our good God to give you light and strength, so that better than ever you will act wisely and courageously in every encounter.

I am counting on seeing you in October. Meanwhile I give you my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 15th September 1853

I am profiting by the opportunity provided by M. N. to send you the hundred francs good Therese still owes you. I hope that girl will respond to the expectations of the Soeurs Noires, and that we will not regret what we have done for her.

Count on my zeal in asking the Lord for his blessings on you and on all your Community.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 1st October 1853

I thank you for the good wishes you sent me in your own name and that of your Sisters. May the Lord deign to answer those prayers, and the ones I offered for you, all your religious family and the pupils who are entrusted to your motherly care. Please also offer my good wishes to the good Mlle. Colette, together with the assurance that I will never fail to remember her in my prayers. I was on the point of coming to offer all these wishes in person, but I cannot say when it will be possible for me to get the pleasure of making the journey to Alost, and dealing with a few points on the spot.

I have received the interest on your two shares and will send it to you when I get the opportunity.

Receive, very dear child, the blessing of

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 3rd November 1853

I hope to come and see you on Monday, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. Prepare your notes, so as to do much business in a little time. I will have to return on the same day if that is possible.

Meanwhile I continue to pray our good God to bless you and help you with his grace.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 11th November 1853

I have just seen the Dean. We talked about the confessor for your pupils. I thought it necessary to limit myself to asking him to be kind enough to add a second Confessor, and in that way to provide the pupils with every freedom for confession.

I willingly renew the promises I made you and the assurances of my sincere devotedness. On Friday, I am counting on saying Holy Mass for you and your dear Sisters, and you will offer a communion for me, who am yours very affectionately, in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 15th November 1853

It was on the very day, that you received communion for me, and I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you, that the arrangement on which you are congratulating yourself was made. Tell Madame N. I am counting on her unlimited devotion to her new duties.

I will have 5 copies of the life of St. Colette sent to you. You will kindly give one to Mlle. Colette, and pay 2 fr. each for the other 4. Accordingly you will credit the account of my pupil with 8 frs. Would you not find it a good thing to send me a report of that report? Provided, however, that the parents would not be displeased.

I recommend you to prepare for the great feast the Church has in store for us, beginning from to-morrow. You, your dear Sisters, your pupils, must draw abundantly from that source of riches and true consolations. On behalf of three of our Josephites who will, I hope, receive the subdiaconate on the next ember days, I ask for an Ave Maria, every day preceding ordination.

Receive, dear daughter in Our Lord, the blessing of

Your ever devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 26th November 1853

I do not want to put off any longer writing a few lines to you, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ. The time for visits is approaching and it will be harder still for me to deal directly with my children. I am beginning by thanking you for the good wishes you expressed for me at the foot of the crib, and those you are intending to offer Jesus at his Circumcision. Be certain that I am not forgetting you either and will take care of you at the feasts that are approaching. You and your dear Community will have a good share of my petitions.

You misunderstood me very much when you imagined I gave you the advice you spoke of in your letter. That is one of those things that ought not to happen to you after so many counsels and instructions. A moment's reflection would have been enough to rid you of an idea so preposterous.

Please, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, offer to Mlle. Colette my greetings for the New Year. Tell that old friend of our Institute it is not only on New Year's day but every day of the year, that I address prayers for her to our good God. I sincerely say as many for you dear Madame N., and assure you that I will always be yours very devotedly in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 27th December 1853

Where is the postulant of the Sisters of St. Joseph? Is she persevering? She too might write to me, but in her own words.

(Beginning of the letter omitted in photocopying process)

... to come up to your expectations. I congratulate you on that heavenly blessing and unite with you in thanking God for it.

As for the novice, it is a cross. But it is a duty for you, not to rid yourself of this cross, but to make the matter known to Madame Superior General straight-forward, without fear of influencing, without good motives, the admission, contrary to the good of the Institute, a person who does not seem worthy of it.

I hope the remedies and courage, will give you back the strength that you tell me you have lost, or at least that has been reduced by the rigor of the season, I suppose.

Tell Mlle. N. I thank her for the good wishes she sent me; that I take a keen interest in her troubles, and make it one of my duties to pray for her. You will kindly add all you think useful in the dangerous circumstances she finds herself.

Be convinced, my dear daughter, that I commend you very specially to our good Jesus. Study that model; try and form yourself according to it. That is the surest means of reaching the perfection to which you are called.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 15th January 1854

I hope, my dear daughter, next month will be a time of new favors. Try and conduct yourselves, you, your dear Sisters and your pupils, with that confidence and sound piety that always attract the attention of the Lord. I ask all of you to have great generosity.

Say a word for me to Mlle. N. I want her to love St. Joseph very much. She is already indebted to our good Patron for many graces.

I will send you, when I have the chance, half of the sum we agreed on for that child. The other half will reach you a little later. I give you my blessing devotedly, very dear child.

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 9th February 1854

As soon as the chalice is delivered to me from the Bishop's House, I will send it to you.

I cannot say anything positive about the brief appearance you want me to make. However, it is a pity you have not found a painter capable of arranging your altar. All the same, the matter is not urgent.

You must abide by the decision of the doctor about abstinence and fasting. The class teachers may not fast. To remove all grounds of anxiety, I dispense them from fasting, and I include in that dispensation, the teachers of your classes for the poor. I also include those Sisters whose weak constitution or other causes lead you to judge they need a dispensation.

I will be pleased to receive all that my postulant writes to me. But let it be herself and herself alone that compose it. All the same, I will not have the leisure to reply at once, make her understand that she must not infer from that, that her letters do not please me. I have a real interest in that child. I thank you for making her known to me and for what you are doing for her.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, my blessing and the assurance of my affectionate devotedness. I wish, for your house in particular, that the month of St. Joseph will bring down special graces on it through that powerful influence he exercises over the divine Savior's Mother and over Jesus Christ himself.

Your Father, ever and entirely yours in Our Lord

Ghent, 23rd February 1854

I am counting on the pleasure of coming to see you on Tuesday. To-morrow I will offer the Holy Sacrifice to give thanks to the Lord, for the favors with which he has deigned to encourage our efforts, since the installation of our first Sisters, on the 6th of March, the feast of St. Colette in 1817. You will unite your prayers with mine; we will specially honor the Saint under whose auspices, we began with Mlle. Colette, a work that in his mercy he is deigning to bless.

Receive the blessing of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 5th March 1854

If you were as pleased with my visit as I was with you and your Community, you will have found encouragement on the feast of St. Joseph, from whom we are awaiting fresh favors.

Continue with zeal to fulfill your ordinary obligations in a spirit of peace and union with Jesus Christ. The Lord will look after the rest.

I hope you will be content with the changes made in your chapel, and that we will share those feelings.

Your very affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 15th March 1854

I am counting on seeing you at the end of Easter week. I like to think that with feelings of satisfaction, you will show me your beautiful altar and the improvements to your chapel.

Please tell my protégée that her report gave me great pleasure and that I am counting on her perseverance I am making it one of my duties to pray for her. You know, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that I am zealously acquitting myself of that duty, especially as regards you and the whole of your Community.

Accept my greetings for the Easter feasts.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 11th April 1854

I thank you, my dear daughter, for giving me news so promptly, and I give thanks to God for uniting you in such a way that you can give me good news.

I too have been asking for the graces of the Holy Spirit for you. May we obtain wisdom, patience, the consolation of purity of our views and desires. Then, difficulties will diminish, and we will find in the holy will of God, powerful motives for confidence and interior peace, lasting generosity and devotedness.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 6th June 1854

You gave me great pleasure by informing me of the good disposition of N. I am continuing to ask the Sacred Heart of our Savior Jesus Christ, for union of hearts and uprightness of minds among my children. A propensity to Holy Concord is the possession of the true Servants of God, the distinctive mark of the Elect. Let us neglect nothing to ensure ourselves of the possession of that peace with ourselves, our fellow creatures, and with our God.

I will unceasingly, throughout this month, ask the Sacred Heart of Jesus, for that grace for you, my dear daughter and for your Sisters. Ask for that heavenly favor for me too.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Ghent, 22nd June 1854

You gave me great pleasure with your last letter. May our good God deign to shower new blessings on your house.

Your dear Madame N. has written lovely, edifying things to Sister N. who is here with me. Mlle. N. whom I always very sincerely esteem, eagerly desires to come and see you to repeat to you her sentiments of gratitude for the blessings she received in the past at your convent of St. Joseph. I am taking advantage of this circumstance to give that Lady the commission to examine the wonders Madame N. has written to us about and to express the sentiments felt by Sister. N. but which she is not in a position herself to express to your reverend Ladies.

I will be pleased to go on doing for the young Lady you have just written to me about, what I so willingly did for Mlle. N. Please tell the latter, that I am very pleased with her letter and that she will give me great pleasure by coming to see me as soon as she is in Ghent. I will be pleased also to make the acquaintance of my new protégée.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 2nd September 1854

I thank you for the good wishes you have sent me. Be convinced that I am trying to be useful to you at all times, and that above all on the great feasts of the Church. I am redoubling my efforts to draw down special graces upon you.

I hope God will deign to bless your efforts and those of your dear Sisters, and that this year will be a year of success for the mistresses and the pupils.

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 3rd November 1854

I am very pleased to know that you have acquitted yourselves so well of what I had recommended to you in regard to the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. You may count on the help you need as well as your dear Sisters; Mary will come to your aid, and the mistresses and pupils will all experience it.

The idea you informed me about must not worry you, my dear child. Apply your attention to fulfilling your duties in the sight of your divine Spouse, and who after that can harm you? If you acted with a view of pleasing men, you would often experience disappointments, but what does the opinion of certain people matter to you if Jesus Christ is pleased with you? Think often about that.

I hope Madame N. will arrive one of these days and you will be pleased with her dispositions. Take care to inform her, without delay, of all that you want her to do and that she is to occupy herself only with what you entrust her with. My kind regards to your dear Sisters and please tell your pupils that I was glad to receive the good account you gave me of them.

I have given the veil to Mlle. N. and the name N. and to Mlle. N. with the name N. Remember me to my protégée. Tell her I am very pleased with her.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 16th December 1854

Your New Year's greetings have pleased me very much, as those you send me, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, always do. Accept my thanks, and be convinced that I zealously commend you to Jesus lying in a poor manger.

You know it is impossible for me to write letters in answer to those addressed to me, at the renewal of the year, and what's more for all else, I see myself obliged to put off my correspondence to the middle of January, so I have not sent your note to N. I even thought after mature reflection, that it was better not to send it. I like to think, my dear child, that you will appreciate my motives.

I am pleased with my protégé. Be kind enough to tell her so, and assure her that I will go on giving her proofs of the interest I bear her.

Will you be kind enough to inform Mlle. Colette that I have acquitted myself with pleasure of the promises that I made her, to pray every day for her? We would be ungrateful, myself and all of you, my children of St. Joseph, if we neglected our duties towards a person who so courageously helped me, during the early years of the existence of your religious family, and still preserves a sincere affection for us.

Receive again with my blessing, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the expression of my very sincere paternal devotedness.

Ghent, 12 February 1855

You will learn more and more, my dear daughter, that good suffers violence. Our Lord taught us that. Let us get used to that doctrine and we will be happier.

My kind regards to all your dear Sisters and especially to the choir novices. I always commend the latter in particular, to both their Superiors and our good God.

Madame N. has no clear idea of punctuation. Please get her the means of learning that part of grammar.

I give you my paternal blessing

Ghent, 26th February 1855

I too am cherishing the sweet hope that Madame M. Charlotte, after 19 years of the practice of evangelical perfection, preceded by a most edifying childhood and youth, has gone to receive the reward promised to virtue. We all review with happiness and edification, the numerous examples of acts of virtue which we have seen that model practice during her childhood, youth, and the exercises of religious life.

. It would be very pleasant for me, and useful to the Institute, to see a collection of the traits most suitable for making your pious Sister known. Some of your Ladies have had the advantage of living with her. It will be easy for them to provide a few notes.

Yesterday, Sister N., a lay sister of the Sisters of St. Joseph, died at N.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

Ghent, 17th February 1855

LETTERS Number 03 and Number 3 are ADDRESSED TO
SISTER MARIE-ANNE de PONTHEUX, NOVICE MISTRESS 1830-1853
Born June 17, 1788; Professed March 19, 1830; Died Dec. 26, 1855
(35 Letters dated 1832 to 1851)

Letter Set Number 03, were found in a box in the basement at Uccle in 1980. They were copied into a notebook. The location of the originals is not known.

03-1

Although you are still enclosed within the bounds of your corporeity, my dear child, I am no less sensitive to the wishes you offer for my happiness. It is in fact, the heart much more than the mind that I consider in the relations that exist between us. So I thank you with a full heart for what you would like to do for me. I hope our good God, touched by your filial piety, will have pity on me, and we will advance together in the perfection of our state. I also pray the Lord to grant you his most signal favors so that you may become an instrument still more and more perfect in the hands of mercy. Ah! then, my child, love Jesus very much! Jesus is so good, so lovable, so holy! So love him and make yourself so good and perfect that you are recognized as the Spouse of Jesus Christ and loved for the sake of Jesus. Purify more and more your heart which is to be the throne of Jesus and from which he is to shower his blessings on all who surround you. So, let us always have Jesus in view, he will soon be the master of our hearts, for one cannot think of him without loving him and wanting to imitate him. Such are the sentiments I wish you and with which I want you to live and die in order to live eternally.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 6th January 1832

My dear child

The sentiments you expressed in your last letter prove to me that our good God wants your heart whole and entire and that you are effectively working to give it up to him. Without reserve, the confidence you feel is a new effect of mercy. Carefully preserve that grace; it is the fruit of the love Jesus bears you. Cultivate it with zeal and perseverance. Ah! my child, the more we forget ourselves for the sake of God, the more God thinks of us. So let us be generous towards Jesus Christ and our souls will become incessantly more beautiful! Your nephew is getting better and better, so our good God has designs on him. Live therefore for Jesus and his holy love. Let him reign over all hearts. I give you my blessing and renew to you the assurance of my devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th April 1832

My dear Sister in Jesus Christ

The importance of the office with which you have just been charged, is such that I feel impelled here to give you a few instructions suggested by the measures taken by the Sister N., and that the good of the novices has obliged me to take. First of all, you must recommend to our good God through the intercession of Mary, both yourself who are called to form these young plants in the garden of the heavenly Father, and the plants themselves which are destined not only to be adornments of the garden of the Lord, but to become objects of the special affection of the Son of God; you are to prepare them to become Spouses of Jesus Christ. No creature without even excepting the Angels, could find in itself that wisdom it would need to fulfill such an august ministry; no, my dear Sister, you cannot succeed in your new office without the powerful help of God. But do not let that powerlessness frighten you. Mistrust yourself, and hope in God. Obedience has imposed a fresh obligation on you, and grace from on high will come and prove to you that every-thing is possible to obedience. So, set your hand to the work in the name of God, and mistrust only yourself. I am uniting my prayers with yours and with full confidence expect heavenly help; I have not the least anxiety about your new office.

You will therefore apply yourself to forming the hearts, the minds and even the outward appearances of your novices. Their hearts must be meek and humble like that of their future Spouse. They must be burning with love, like that of Jesus. Their minds must be illuminated with practical knowledge; they must judge things as Jesus does, and their external appearances must be modest, polite, cheerful without being dissipated, composed without affectation.

You will teach them the wonders of the love of Jesus Christ, and make them feel that the best means of responding to the love of the Savior is to love him very much and to feed the fire of their love with the consideration of what Jesus has done, and is still doing at each moment for each one of them in particular. But make them fully understand that love is active, in that loving Jesus, is to live and act for Jesus Christ.

So I entreat you, my very dear Sister, by that love you have for Jesus Christ, form the novices well. Cut, prune, pull up; then plant, water, embellish - in working to prepare Spouses for the Son of God, you will be doing a work that is worthy of a soul consecrated herself to Jesus Christ; a work that cannot fail to make you yourself each day more perfect and more pleasing to that Sacred Heart in which I want you to be able to find the strength, and the lights and all that can be useful to you in the career to which Holy Obedience is introducing you.

Receive my blessing, and give it from me to all my dear children confided to your zeal. Tell them often that I bear them in my heart and do not cease commending them to our good God, because I continually feel for them and for you also, my dear Sister, what the heart of a father must feel for his children; for I am very sincerely and consider myself happy to be,

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

My dear Sister

The little trials to which our good God is subjecting you by withdrawing his sensible presence in devotion, far from afflicting you must give you more courage. Does not Jesus Christ say to his Apostles, that he must take his sensible presence away from them in order to send them the Holy Spirit? Recall to your mind what the descent of the Holy Spirit did to the Apostles. Answers to questions asked.

Good-bye my child, pray much for the one who is sincerely devoted to you in Jesus Christ and who is with all his heart

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 31st May 1832

My dear Sister

The details you have given me have provided me with convincing proofs that God has granted you special graces to fulfill with success the office he has given you. May God be blessed for so generously seconding our feeble efforts! To him alone be the glory and to us his reward, and the continuation of his powerful help. So I am fully at rest both as regards your ability and as regards the result of your care for our young plants. God is visibly helping you, and consequently there is no longer any possible lack of ability. So be at peace my child, and continue with confidence as you have done up to now. I have already become certain that you are entering into the designs of the Lord, and the Reverend Mother General, whom God is also enlightening, has just given me new proofs that I had judged rightly. Like me, she blesses the Author of everything good, on seeing the way you are training our dear novices. Be thankful for the graces you have received and don't worry. Your divine Spouse has already done too much for you, for you to be allowed to doubt his tender affection and immense love for you.

For the moment I have no other recommendations to make to you apart from those I have already made. Love Jesus Christ sincerely and banish from your heart all anxiety, all that could lead you to sadness.

You see, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, what obedience can do. You have received the graces of the office that obedience imposed on you. Have you not seen the same effect in our Reverend Mother General? Let us accustom ourselves to acting with faith and in the name of the divine Spouse of our souls. It is the work of God we are doing; let us therefore count on his help and each one according to the grace he has received must generously communicate it to others. Ah! if we could rid ourselves of our unbelief, we would no longer be troubled about our offices and we would have confidence not precisely in the person himself who fills the office, but in the official to whom God gives grace to fulfill the duties of the office.

Good-bye, my dear child, be always convinced that I take a very active interest in all that concerns your perfection, and the perfect accomplishment of the duties of your important office. Form the young Spouses of Jesus Christ carefully.

I am very sincerely

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th June 1832

I recommend to the Mistress of Novices, the feast of the Sacred Heart of our divine Master. It is to that source that I want us to go to draw. Ah! may we intoxicate ourselves with the heavenly liquor it contains. The shortest way of arriving at perfection is to love the heart of Jesus Christ and learning the true love of God. It is a furnace which warms us if we approach it.

Do not forget the little remarks about the habit. I want to be able to finalize a few arrangements. The veil definitely cannot be round over the head; I have examined the matter carefully, I think your idea of a wire is excellent; I am also convinced that the dress must be the least voluminous possible and that the pleats of the skirt may be only little ones. A religious is a Virgin, that says everything. Do not forget our principle of matching poverty with decency and the noble tone the vocation of our Sisters requires. I want you in due course to give me a short note on the habit in general, from the chemise to the choir cloak. Take as a basis the one that was made last year and to which there was only a little to change or add.

I have a few pictures for your house, for the novitiate and the guest room. May our good God deign to bless our undertaking for the chapel and other changes. May they be for his greater glory.

Your very devoted Director of the Sisters of Mary
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

1st June 1832

Dear Sister

It has not been possible for me to get the retreat for you that Reverend Mother wrote to me about. The Reverend Fathers charged with this work cannot possibly render you this service at the moment. I am enclosing two letters which you will be good enough to read so as to get to know the subjects well. You will then seal them and deliver one of them to Sister N. and two days later you will deliver Sister N's. This is necessary to prevent them from making the contents known to each other.

I hope you will be more and more pleased with our dear novices. Ah! my dear Sister, take good care of those young hearts, form them for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. You can wipe out all your less perfect years with the zeal you put to preparing these new souls, forming these young Spouses for the one who merits to have the heart and mind whole and entire of those he admits to the signal honor of being his. So love your office and let nothing in you ever show anxiety or sadness.

Faith must give you an air of happiness, an air so serene that your life alone brings peace to those you are called to make happy in time and for eternity.

Tell all my dear children how much I have their perfection at heart. I love Jesus and consequently I take the most ardent interest in giving him Spouses who appreciate their sublime vocation. I also love my children; that is a very legitimate feeling, and consequently I take the most ardent interest in their happiness.

So let them have confidence in God, and faith in his promises and love everything in God who loves them throughout eternity and wants to allow them to love him also throughout eternity.

Good-bye my dear child, I give you my blessing and assure you I am always sincerely

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th June 1832

My very dear Sister

I experienced a lively consolation and one that I will long remember, during my last stay among my beloved children; may our good God be eternally praised for the great mercies he bestows on us.

You must also have experienced such pleasant sentiments at the sight of the goodness of your heavenly Spouse that the memory of them remains deeply impressed on your soul, so that nothing is any longer able to lessen the effects of divine love in you and in those whom you are called to lead. So to have always the means of reminding you of Jesus and of those you have to help, often ask as Jesus did of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus: With what are you occupied? That question will always bring you back to Jesus Christ, the heavenly Spouse of your soul. You will learn to walk constantly in the presence of God and you will find a resource against the temptations of the enemy. You will sanctify everything and be daily loaded with new riches. You will make yourself more and more fit for the designs of mercy that God has on you and your children.

Good-bye my dear Sister, continue your good prayers for the one you know to be very devoted to you and who likes to say so, because he is

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 24th April 1833

Tell the dear novices to preserve the joy, the fruits of that sweet peace Jesus has given them. Sweet, simple cheerfulness must never abandon them. It is a necessary adornment for those who are destined to become the spouses of Jesus; a smiling face on which is imprinted the calm of the children of God, animating and enlivening everything. The true means of obtaining that good appearance is to keep at peace the heart for which that of Jesus was sad, and after death pierced by a lance so that his children's hearts may be joyful all their lives and live on after death, as St. Francis de Sales remarks.

Get them to understand that this holy cheerfulness is not dissipation. I also want my children never to measure my affection by the small size of my letters. I often write on small sheets of paper to avoid the expense of the carriage of letters and also to save my time when I write several of...

(Conclusion of letter missing)

My dear Sister

I cannot stop myself from adding a few words to this parcel for you. First of all, I will tell you that a postulant from A. is arriving who will deserve special attention. I think she is a chosen soul. It would be a good thing to recommend her to Sister N., to whom I have written a note; then you will give me a few details about Sister N. I also think the Lord has designs on that good soul.

You will try and get Sister N. to love our good God and be less afraid. What God has already done for her proves how much she is loved by God. Her devotion mingled with so much fear offends the fatherly heart of her Creator. If you succeed in getting her to reform on this point, I will admit her to profession with the other novices, and tell the novices I am talking about their profession and urge them to think about it often so that they may prepare their hearts in which Jesus is soon to be the sole master.

Reverend Mother General who, I think, is animated with the spirit of her state is of the same opinion as I am about the way you are fulfilling your office as mistress of novices. So do not allow yourself any more fear or doubt. Be cheerful and courageous. God will show what his grace can do in the souls that have confidence in him. Ah! my dear Sister, that is true devotion. To believe, to love and to hope - it is on that basis that we respond to the promises of God: that we recognize his kindnesses and that we feel the fire of love light up more and more in our poor hearts. So love your divine Spouse very much and you will communicate those chaste flames to those you are called on to form for that same God-Spouse.

The feast of the Sacred Heart that we are celebrating next Friday will succeed, I hope, in lighting in all of us that love with which the adorable Heart of Jesus burns incessantly. Speak in my name to Sister N. of the confidence we must have in the Heart of our Savior. It was sinners that the divine heart came to seek and save, so we are the ones he has redeemed. Let us in our turn love this God who so loved us first.

Good-bye my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. I give you a blessing and wish you a great advance in the love of that same Jesus Christ.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd June 1832

Dear Sister

In answer to your letter 3, I hasten to tell you that the young Sisters whose year of profession expires on the 11th, may receive the blue belt that day.

I am very pleased to see that our young Sisters are advancing in love for their divine Spouse. Let them always remember that Jesus Christ says of himself: "Learn of me for I am meek and humble of heart." Let them try and resemble their divine Spouse in that respect. Give my kind regards to our dear invalid. I am pray to the good God especially for her. Tell the novices and the postulants also to be cheerful in God and to love very much Our Lord Jesus Christ who is calling them.

I commend you all to Jesus Christ at the Holy Sacrifice. May our good God deign answer my prayers and to encourage us in the new Life of the resurrection. Receive my blessing for you and yours.

I am very sincerely

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th April 1834

I am adding a few lines to answer the letter I received from you the day before yesterday. First of all, I thank you for the details you entered into, which are all the more precious as they bring me up-to-date on what most eagerly interests me.

It seems to me that you have assessed the two postulants correctly: one is all on fire and the other is too timid. Put off again the journey of the latter, since there is still time before the clothing; I have not answered her at all on the subject, preferring to leave that matter to your choice and your prudence. Awaken that Sister to be brave and lead the other by reason, by faith and by generosity.

You have rightly understood the needs of the novices. Go on urging them to have confidence in God and then in those people whom his goodness has provided to form them to perfection. Let them be cheerful and generous - may the sight of the mercies of God make them grateful, so that from that they may come to the love of God, to which you will lead them by all possible means, that being our unique aim.

Your yourself, my dear child, be in the joy of the Lord, that joy which enlarges the heart because it is pure and simple and spreads a balm on the soul that gives a kind of life to all that surrounds it and sweetens all crosses.

I hope that the Lord Jesus Christ will shower down his blessings more and more on your Institute. I am praying to him constantly for that and our dear Angelique will render us great services in that respect.

All yours in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

Dear Sister

I have learned with true pleasure that our young Sisters do not suffer from the dissipation I have noticed elsewhere. May our good God be praised for that! Jesus Christ deserves our hearts whole and entire and dissipation always takes some corner away from him. Let us all learn to find Jesus Christ in our hearts and to render him our homage there. In that way we will find strength and light for ourselves and others.

You will put off the ceremony of the blue belt until my arrival. The cloth for the cloaks is prepared. Reverend Mother General will have it delivered to you and will talk to you about that matter, and about the corsets and veils that are not all suitable, so it appears.

Have Mlle. N. examined by a doctor, and then put me in a position to get to know that person. I am answering her here only in an evasive manner.

Receive my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th August 1833

Very dear Sister

I have read and reread with great pleasure the details you have given me about my young children, and I have been thanking the Lord for the blessings he deigns to shower down on us. A feeling of lively gratitude will remain with me, I hope, in memory of the blessings we have received in such abundance from our good God. I do not doubt, my child, but that you share that feeling and also making it your sweet duty to be grateful. The enclosed letter that Sister N. addresses to you, will also give you pleasure.

I think that the means of persuasion and patience you are using with your pupils are the true means, and that one must not readily use others. Hearts will be generous when one mistrusts oneself, is less astonished at one's imperfections and puts all one's confidence in God. It is the unhappy I, that is the obstacle to this peace of heart. So, often tell your beloved children that to be at ease they must occupy themselves with our good God, rather than with their own selves. So let them be generous and always cheerful so that people who see them may learn and be convinced that one is happy in the service of God, and that spouses begin here below to taste the happiness of heaven, through the purity of their hearts and the conversations they have with Jesus Christ. A good religious converts many people by her appearance alone, if she shows what she must be.

Take care to get those who are weak to take nourishment from time to time, so as to acquire for them a good temperament and thus to put them into the possibility of rendering great service to the Institute, for one needs virtue, knowledge and health in order to be really useful.

I give you, as well as your dear children who are also mine, my fatherly blessing. May our good God grant you his holy love! Your happiness is mine; the father must not be separated from his children.

C. G. van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st September 1834

I think that at the end of October I will have the pleasure of seeing you; do not talk about it yet except to your Reverend Mother and the young Sisters to whom that could be useful. If all goes well, I will give the veil to your good postulant, to whom I will reply when I have leisure; tell her I am pleased with her letter.

Accept my dear Sister, my thanks for the good wishes you sent me. I too pray our good God that he will deign to purify you more and more so that the fire of divine love may act in your heart without constraints.

It will be very pleasant for me to work towards the happiness of your nephew who is very well, may the Lord be blessed!

I was touched by what Mlle N. wrote to me, our good God is purifying that soul by the trial, may she take care not to be upset by what is happening to her. She is preparing herself for a holy life full of merits, if she goes on with confidence and cheerfully according to the good pleasure of God. Tell her how keenly interested I am in her happiness. I would willingly impose privations on myself, if I could in that way hasten her entry into religion. Tell her above all not to get upset in any way - from the trials she must gain 1) a firm and gentle character; 2) an amiable appearance which is not upset by annoyances; 3) a purity of soul which makes her pleasing to the Angels; 4) a tender love for Jesus Christ, whose spouse she is hoping to become; her writing is befitting. Let her go on with her studies.

I give her my blessing. I give you as well as your children my fatherly blessing.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th January 1836

Your letter, my dear Sister, provides me with fresh proofs of the love our good God bears the children of the family of Mary and Joseph. I give thanks to Jesus Christ for the attentions, so full of love, that he shows us.

Say in my name, what is suitable to our Sister N. and to Sister N.; and to your novice, that her letter gave me pleasure. Mlle N. may not make a general confession, etc. etc. Receive the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th February 1836

Dear Sister

I thank our good God for the favors he does not cease granting us; and finding it impossible to do so in a way that would befitting, I pray our august Mother and immaculate Virgin as well as our Holy Patron, that chaste Spouse of Mary, to be kind enough to be our interpreters with the Lord. Yes, we have powerful motives for believing that our children are destined to do good in the Church and that they will be instruments of mercy in the hands of God. Let us rejoice in the Lord, at the memory of these proofs of his goodness towards us, and redouble our efforts to correspond with grace. Not having time to answer all the letters I have received from the convent of St. John the Baptist, I charge you to say to the novices what follows:

To Sister N., that she is received for holy profession, that she must manifest her gratitude, fix her attention on thoughts that are in conformity with the goodness of God, and not worry about all that happens to her against her will; she may give herself up to affections in meditation if they have humility and the love of God as their basis. Let her concern herself with Jesus Christ and not so much with herself and her own thoughts.

To Sister N., that she is admitted to profession and must attach herself to our Savior Jesus with confidence without worrying about dryness. That is how to serve God for God's own sake and not for consolations that are too tangible.

To Sister N., that she is admitted to the Holy Vows and must rejoice in the un-hoped for favors God is granting her. She must be cheerful, generous and never set her mind on sad ideas; melancholy is her most terrible enemy. If fasting tires or saddens her, she may not observe it to its fullest extent.

To Sister N., that she too is received for Holy Profession, and that God is asking of her much confidence and love. Let her be generous and cheerful; the rest will come in due course as she needs it.

Add to all that whatever you find good to say, in accordance with my heart, and the needs of each of your children; you are in a position to fulfill my wishes in this respect; the grace of your office is the proof of that to me. I will intensify my prayers for these dear novices. I ask them, in my turn, for a more frequent memento in their communications with the good God.

You may, in circumstance like those you write to me about, grant Holy Communion to the novices.

I will hasten my arrival among you all the more, as it will be possible for me to bring forward the happiness of your dear children.

Be courageous; be cheerful all of you, as it is right for people to be whom God favors with so many blessings. Let everyone know and see by your manner that you are happy to be in the service of Jesus Christ.

I am to you and to your children without reserve and with the feelings of a Father

Very devotedly

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th March 1835

Give my kind regards to Sister N. and Sister N.; let them advance with confidence towards our good God; let them try and educate themselves with cheerfulness and for the glory of the Lord, I am also devoted to them in Jesus Christ.

I like to think, dear Sister, you have taken steps to prepare the way for the Holy Spirit in the souls I have entrusted to you in the names of Mary and Joseph and of their Spouse himself. I address my prayers to God the Savior to obtain that the gifts of the Spirit he promised, meet no obstacles within us. It is then that we will become those perfect instruments in the hands of divine mercy and render service to religion. Let all fear and grief be banished from your hearts. Jesus Christ and his holy grace must dwell in them. Let Jesus Christ be our support, our guide, our hope and all our love. The Holy Spirit will speak and find in us the dispositions he needs to work in them according to his divine designs.

How are the young Sisters, novices and postulants? How far have the young Ladies got whom I saw and received on my last journey? Give me also a few details on the piety and the results that the new kind of life has had since the blessing of the chapel.

All yours, dear Sisters and children in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th June 1835

Dear Sister

I like to persuade myself that you have taken all the precautions necessary for making recommendations in conformity with the interests of the Institute. The young Sisters must not keep back any part of the hearts that have been consecrated to our good God; one must always remember that nothing can ever upset those hearts consecrated to the Heavenly Spouse - that alone says enough. So let them always be cheerful as it is fitting for the friends of the Lamb to be. Console your postulants whose mothers are so ungenerous. Urge them to bear this great trial with courage. God will repay a hundredfold what they have suffered for love of him. They must fortify themselves against the effects of sadness. It is a dangerous enemy... Tell them I am praying specially for them. The dear Mlle N. is the most exposed.

I am sending a word also to your novice, let her be courageous too and always joyful. I was very pleased with her during my last journey.

You know that no one loves you more than your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th November 1835

Dear Sister

There you are in the midst of crosses; however, have courage, the good God will show his strength -also it was necessary to go through these tribulations in order to come to the true love of God which is based on humility and confidence. So, take care to profit by these trials. I beg you to tell my sick children I am praying for them and want them to profit by their illness.

I have been ill for a few days

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

22nd (rest of date omitted)

Very dear Sister

Like you, I have felt sentiments of gratitude at the sight of the favors our good God is so visibly granting our very dear Sister N. Yes, through all eternity we will sing of the mercies of the Lord. That thought must give us courage and enable us to overcome all the obstacles that might be set in the way of our efforts in the service of the God of love whom we serve.

Take great care that all the Sisters without excepting Sister N. hold themselves very straight, make them do that exercise very frequently: with their hands straight and reaching towards heaven; their arms and shoulders firm and naturally drawn back a little and their bodies straight and their abdomens not protruding. Never let pass a mistake of this kind without correcting it. This is specially important among you.

Receive my blessing; you know with what sentiments I give it to you. Pray also for me so that I may always fulfill my duties faithfully as a

Spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd February 1837

I am answering the novices according to their needs, as you will see God is obviously helping them. I am delighted with their sentiments. If they become cheerful and generous, they will all have the happiness of reaching their goal. We will see what Sister N. will do.

The two young Sisters must have courage and filial confidence in their good Mother. I am not writing to them, but I am praying for them; tell them so and add that their letters gave me very great pleasure. I bless divine goodness for the graces he is showering on our dear children. They are great, those graces; let us try and profit by them. You will take care to go and accompany our children to the fountain of Holy Love; draw from it and make your pupils do so especially on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. How sweet it is to know and make loved this God of mercy and love. Love him too, dear Sister, yes, love Jesus. I have no more perfect recommendation to make you. You know how much affection I have for you in that heart of our lovable Savior.
26th of our heavenly Mother's month (year omitted)

My dear Sister

You are right in saying that the letters you have just sent me will bring me fresh pleasure. Yes, I am delighted to see that your children are responding to the kindness of the Lord. Those kindnesses are great, and it would be deplorable if those who receive them did not understand that. Tell those dear children that and add, first of all to Madame N. that she is to keep carefully her peace of mind and generosity towards her divine Spouse. Say the same thing to Madame N., let them no longer make an urgent study of the past; they are purified by this new baptism and consequently it would be superfluous for them to occupy themselves with their past life. Let them also continue forming themselves in the sciences and knowledge proper to their holy vocation. I am very pleased with their writing. Tell the novices also that their letter was a source of real joy to me; that I will help them with my prayers and with all the means that are in my power. I do not have the leisure to write to them directly, and I charge you with saying to them, as your heart dictates, the most encouraging things. All our children know how much I love them in God, but you must repeat it often. You would have much difficulty in exaggerating it. I pray very often, several times a day, to obtain for them purity of heart, and rectitude of mind that gives courage, cheerfulness and that generosity that produces true Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

Talk often to them about our dear Aloÿse; in her they have a perfect example of what they are to be. I recommend the month of Mary to all of you; let us try to get this holy month to be truly a time of graces. For our part let us love this august and very good Mother and have unlimited confidence in her love. Let us rejoice that we have Mary as our Mother and her Holy Spouse as our Father. I give you and your children a big blessing, beseeching the Lord Jesus Christ to add to it his own blessing which is all powerful. I also have the pleasure of in calling myself

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 22 April 1838

What a joy for me to learn of the wonders of divine love that are manifesting themselves among your children! Feed my sheep; nourish them with the milk of religious doctrine. That is my recommendation. I read what you wrote to me to the Very Reverend Mother, before her departure for Bruges. I reprove those little excesses on the part of the novice that you wrote to me about. That often comes from a little attachment to one's own opinions, rather than to those of the Lord. Our Institute wants moderation in the practice of penance.

I have not been able to write to the novices for lack of time, but I am praying specially for them.

I give you a big blessing. Receive it and pray for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th February 1838

To Madame Marie-Anne (Fragment)

I cannot get used to the idea that the novices are no longer in touch with me, and no longer give me any news. It is true that the number of those young plants that are called to replace our Ladies is reduced almost to zero, and that one thinks perhaps dispensed for this reason, from writing to me. I do not accept that that is to make me indifferent. So, you will resume the former habit, and tell me about the novice and the young religious.

(Fragment)

But must the novices sign Mlle N.A.? That seems odd to me. I urge you with all my might, to impress deeply on you the importance of your beautiful office and the merits you will reap in Heaven. Always be cheerful and generous; take care of your appearance; be amiable so that your children may imitate you without danger. Work at making their hearts generous so that they may become holy spouses and in no way frightened slaves; it is Jesus Christ who wants that. Many humiliations, but ones that cause their hearts to swell and remove timidity from their minds; exercises of penance, but ones that are most to be feared. But, I perceive that there is no necessary space except what is needed for telling you that I give you my blessing and am your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C.G.V.C.

It seems to me, dear Sister that you have taken the only wise course there is to take regarding Henriette. So let our good God see to it; he will do what is right for the child and his glory. It is necessary for her to go and help her mother.

I approve of your conduct in regard to our dear Beaudumont. I want him to be able to stay resting at Hal, until the holidays.

Here is a book in which you will find good instructions for your novices. It is useful for the novice mistress to have something new from time to time.

May the Holy Spirit come down on you and your children with abundant graces. That is the wish I am formulating for you in these days of extraordinary graces.

You know I always am

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th of Mary's month 1836

30th of the Month of Mary 1836

Dear Sister

I have commended dear Daudemont and his family to our good God. May the God of mercy deign to come to the help of all of us.

You must follow Christine up very closely and if you do not find her in better dispositions, one must conclude that she is not called to us. Then she must be sent away without delay. There are many who offer themselves to be lay sisters. One can choose.

I am very pleased to have good news of your children. I hope the hand of Mary has obtained many new graces for you. Let us love still more perfectly that good Mother we have in Heaven still.

Give my kind regards to my dear Sister Séraphine. I often think of her to commend her to the Lord. I am expecting of her a great love for her divine Spouse, and prayers for me and for all the dear Institute of the Daughters of Mary. I know she loves it sincerely.

I send you, Sister N. and all your dear children, my special blessing and the assurance that you are all in my heart when I offer the Holy Sacrifice with the divine Master. ...

(The end of the letter is missing)

To Sister Marie-Anne, Mistress of Novices

Courage, cheerfulness, generosity and a tender confidence in God, in Mary and in Joseph, these are the principle dispositions that I wish to (for) her whom mercy calls to consecrate herself to the religious life in the family of Mary and her Spouse.

You know, dear Sister, how much I am

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

28th August 1837

L.S.J.M.J

3-4

To Sister Marie-Anne

Dear Sister

Your letter is a true and sweet consolation. God is very good, is he not, my dear Sister? He loves us very much. Let us love him too with all our hearts and inspire our children with that generous love. I am very pleased with all you tell me about the novices. Yes, the holy season of Advent will make them all, as well as us, advance in love and union with Our Lord Jesus Christ.

I am sending you a few reflections that may help you. Explain each point to your children and tell them I am praying our good God to make them appreciate that doctrine -generous Love; that is the summary of perfection and the sure means of being happy.

The business of the nephews is going very well. Be at rest. Your divine Spouse will also look after that matter.

Receive, my dear Sister, with my blessing, the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in J.C.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

10th December 1837

To Sister Marie-Anne, Mistress of novices
(The main part of the letter is missing)

...

Have courage and confidence; God is good and all powerful. I am begging him to help us.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

3rd February 1839

Mme Marine must forget herself in order to give herself entirely to the work of God, the care of her pupils; whoever forgets herself for God's sake will not be lost.

My dear Child

I cannot let a good opportunity pass without saying a word to you in favor of my dear novices.

Consult with Mme Flore with whom I had the time to tell in detail my views and wishes. Be united, you and Mme Flore; form only one single person for the good of all of you and the relief of

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th September 1839

My dear daughter

During these days preceding the solemnity of Pentecost, I am concerning myself very much with the spiritual needs of my children. You will not be surprised at this attitude of mine. For a long time you have known my way of looking at things, and my solicitude for the souls the Lord entrusts to my care. You will therefore not think it strange, my dear daughter, to see me asking you again for news of your novices and of the results of my talks with them. What in particular has been the effect of my efforts with Mlle Cécile? You know how much I sympathize with the woes of that person who is called to great perfection, and whom the devil, jealous of the happiness God is preparing for that novice, is seeking the waylay with futilities for which she will blush when reason and grace have triumphed over the weaknesses of nature and prejudices of youth.

So please inform your children of the subject of my letter, speak to them, in my name, and let me know the effect my action has produced. You may ask Mme Angelique to write to me in your name, and tell her to add as well all you see fit.

Receive my blessing for you and your children.

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th June 1851

To Sister Marie-Anne, Mistress of novices

Here at last are the answers to the letter I received some time ago.

I am very pleased with the letter of Mme Léocadie. That child is making progress. Her writing is becoming good. Her only enemy is sadness.

Mme Marcelline also satisfies me. Let her be courageous. Let her read the article on temptations in the Instructions to enlighten pious souls, by Fr. Quadrupani, printed at Tournai. Read that excellent work very much to your novices and get all our young Ladies to read it.

The details you have given me have been very useful to me. I thank you for them. Be courageous, dear child, be cheerful and insist that your pupils are too. Our good God sends trials in order to purify us. Prepare all my children for the approaching lovely and touching feasts. Let them love much and rejoice: melancholy is the most wicked of dispositions. Insist that they enjoy themselves and take exercise. ... (End of letter?)

(Date unknown)

To Sister Marie-Anne, Mistress of novices
(The beginning and end of the letter are missing)

... It is a strict custom to eat only two slices of bread in the morning. I have noticed that at your house, there is generally a habit of eating very much. You will prudently try and put this abuse right. Persons of your sex, consecrated to the Lord, and preparing for that happiness, must take more care to fatten the soul with virtues, than the body with flesh and blood. Moreover, with age, they become fat and full of infirmities. You understand that, not taking exercise as is done in the world, one must avoid taking as much food. But, be extremely prudent. Be cheerful and courageous, the novices will love you and that will prolong you...

Dear Sister

We soon will find the favor we are seeking; the young nephew will go to Rooborst, where his brother is.

I recommend you to grant the postulants, novices and young Sisters the time and means to get instruction; that is the spirit of the Institute; it is God who wants it.

Tell our dear Sister Séraphine I am specially commending her to our good God, and urge her to be peacefully submissive to the wishes of her divine Spouse. I know how to appreciate health, but faith teaches us to put the holy will of God above everything. This submission is often even a more efficacious remedy for recuperating one's strength, than the remedies of the doctor. The Reverend Mother and I will pray for Saint Thérèse. During this month of October you need many graces as Mistress of Novices, and Sister N. as assistant.

I send my blessing to both of you and believe my desire to be a real father in Jesus Christ.

...

(The end of the letter is missing)

Dear Sister

Although you have given me very detailed accounts of our young Sisters and novices, it seems to me that my heart needs you to repeat or rather give me a fresh report on each sister, each novice and postulant from Waeken. You know, my dear Sister, how much it matters to me that you keep me up-to-date as to what concerns our young children especially; I must know if they are cheerful, if their piety is full of love and their love sincere. I see more and more that the heart must be big and that our good God requires generous Spouses. So in your docility to satisfy me, I am waiting for you to answer my expectations and give me details you know will be pleasant to me.

Independently of the tender devotion they must have for Mary and Joseph, tell them how much the...

(The second page of the letter is missing)

LETTERS TO SUPERIORS
Names of Recipients unknown
53 LETTERS DATED 1835-1865

L.S.J.M.J.

4-1

Madame Superior,

Your letters were a great relief to me: on the one hand, the necessity of permitting what cannot be prevented, on the other, the danger of anxiety and making things worse than they really were, have made me do what I had to - to accept the blow in the way God has the right to expect of his servant. However, I admit that I am too sensitive, in everything that concerns my children, to have borne the news of the misfortune threatening poor Sister Gonzague without painful emotion. But, my very dear Sisters, how have you carried this cross? I beg of you, have peace in your heart; your divine Spouse dwells there and he must be more dear to you than all the rest. Besides, you know that for those who love God, everything turns to good. We must remember that the work of God grows through humility and be sustained by humility. His whole Church was established and sustained in this way, beginning with the Apostles. So we must consider things in the same way and we shall remain calm in the midst of storms.

Neither the Dean, nor any priest in your town, has the least authority to dispense from, or make any change at all, concerning the vows of Sr. Gonzague. If she persists in her strange attitude this is what you must do: Reverend Mother will come to Ghent with Sr. Gonzague on Saturday evening. The poor sister must not be informed of this until Saturday after dinner and then she must not be left alone for one moment, one of you will be with her without losing sight of her until she leaves, and you will not allow her to talk to the sisters except to say what is absolutely necessary and in your presence. She must not say Good-bye to anyone, since she is only going to ask my advice about her difficulties. They must not know anything else.

Be very careful about Sr. Euphrosyne: I fear she may already have drunk from the poisoned cup and needs a great deal of care. Be gentle and considerate with her and watch over all the proceedings of Sister Gonzague.

I need to reflect maturely on the proposition of Reverend Mother relative to Sr. Clothilde. I would have been willing to speak about Sr. Pauline but not Sr. Séraphine because I am speaking of an older sister for your house. We will resolve nothing positively and definitely until after the return of Sr. Marie Anne.

The Deeds you speak of must be stamped, but do not have them copied before I have seen and corrected them. You would need the adjoining lands of each house, and as your contracts are in Flemish, perhaps it will have to wait until my next visit.

Good-bye dear sisters, we must be courageous, cheerful and have confidence in God. Read the 15th Chapter of the 3rd Book of the Imitation.

Yours devotedly in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

29-? -1835

Reverend Mother,

As I find it impossible to reply by letter to all our dear Sisters, I will ask you to be my interpreter with each of them, and to tell them that I was very pleased to read the expression of their feelings for me and their good wishes for my happiness. It is a great consolation to me to read such expressions of affection and filial piety. And so nothing could stop me from going to the crib, where Jesus, with the tenderness that makes one bold, welcomed my humble thanks and my ardent prayer to bless with both hands the dear children he has given me and whose hearts belong unreservedly to him. It really seems to me, Reverend Mother, that our good and august Mary and her holy Spouse took great pleasure in supporting my requests and the wishes of our souls with the divine Child; and that our loving Savior gave us his blessings, the effects of which we shall feel if we keep the right dispositions. Now, these dispositions, Reverend Mother, you will make even more perfect, I am quite convinced, and you will purify this confidence which delights your heavenly Spouse. May Jesus possess your hearts entirely and make them a source of the tenderest feelings, solid and in proportion to your needs. Nothing is so alive, so strong, so sweet, so lovable, so living as hearts animated and possessed by divine love. So may this heavenly love come and consume anything that would be an obstacle to its wonderful operations!

This is what I ask you to tell yourself and the whole community in answer to the letters you sent me. You know how sincerely I am in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th Dec. 1836

Reverend Mother,

I am delighted to see that you wish to be obedient in spite of the objections of nature. May God be praised! All that God wants in these circumstances is that we be courageous and our will submissive. This is the condition to which attaches his grace and all the help we need to fulfill the designs of Providence. Consider Mary, our august Patron, as soon as the Heavenly decree is known to her, she answers the admirable Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. The most sublime function ever confided to a creature, the most extraordinary consequences, the sufferings, the most unheard of humiliations, nothing could stop the consent of Mary for one moment. God wishes it; God desires it; that is all I wish to know: Fiat, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum! There is the model; if we study her, we shall not hesitate in from of difficulties. St. Augustine said: All is equal where God's will is equally found. So we must carry out all the duties which the Lord deigns to confide to us with equal zeal. We must not consider our inclinations or our own satisfaction; we will accept them with generous and humble submission. Whether they are exalting or humiliating, easy or difficult, we see the greatest delight of the beloved of our heart, and we accept what it pleases him to grant us. We must not be led astray by the various subtleties of self-love; we must not fall into the snare of false humility which might only be a real lack of generosity or even a sort of laziness. The holy and ever adorable will of God, generous obedience to this divine will, that is the goal and the summary of perfection. So, dear Child, adore God's will by submission without question to what we have decided. Follow the example of Mary your Mother, and the almighty power of heaven will be with you. Be a willing instrument in the hands of God and you will have the happiness of procuring the glory of your divine Spouse. I shall make a point of praying for you during the Holy Sacrifice, as long as I live. You know how pleased I am to perform this duty. I wish to prove that I am sincerely,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent 14th Dec. 1837

This is a letter which I request you yourself to give to the Archpriest Mr. Bosmans. You will do well to go and greet the 'Grands Vicaires' on my behalf, and request their good offices. Also, go to the Sisters of Charity and ask for their prayers. They are the children of one of my great-uncles; they will welcome you warmly and you can count on the help of their prayers, as soon as they know of your plans. The priests at the College will also be of great assistance.

(Beginning of letter missing?)

As for you, my dear child, you can with confidence profit from the beautiful privilege granted to you in the position God has confided to you: receive Communion as many times as the Holy Rule allows for Mothers. In this more frequent union you will find both light, strength, and the consolation you need.

I do not know whether this letter will reach you in time to help you to make a decision. In Ghent, there are two posts a day and two collections. So I am sending this letter immediately to be posted; yours arrived two hours ago. It is useless to write anything on the envelope to speed the arrival of letters; the post (office) keeps strictly to the rules.

Please give my respectful greetings to the Archpriest, and I send my blessing to you and your small family.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd Jan. 1838 11h in the morning

Reverend Mother,

Your letter gave me great joy and I thank our merciful Jesus for the favors he is bestowing on us with a generosity worthy of his great love. The crosses will make us more and more capable of serving his holy cause. May he always be praised! Tell our dear Sister Aloÿse to arouse feelings of love and gratitude in her heart for the loving care she receives from her divine Spouse, and on my behalf, tell Melle Valentyns how deeply I am touched by the extreme kindness she is showing us in this time of crisis. I shall always remember it, and ask our divine Master to repay the debt of gratitude we have just assumed towards this charitable lady. Ask her to accept my thanks which come from the depths of the heart, as you know, Reverend Mother, and you can tell her this in formal terms. I also commend our dear Sister Gonzague to profit by the trial God is sending her. It is a mercy the great value of which she will understand one day. Tell her to be tranquil, not to worry about the past except to thank her heavenly Spouse for having upheld her when she stood so dangerously on the brink of the precipice. I congratulate her sincerely once again.

I am writing to Mouscron and I hope that Sister Stéphanie will come to you on Thursday. You can give her the black veil, if you think it suitable.

Perhaps you will have to continue to use the Moens house. It could be used for the novices, if we move them in Spring.

May God support you dear child and pour down his most abundant blessings on you!

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th Feb. 1838

My dear Sister,

I received with real pleasure the expression of sentiments that animate you; I know how sincere they are and that is what makes me value them. I thank you, and I beg you to tell your dear Sisters how happy I was to receive your precious bouquet. It is consoling my children to see how well your hearts understand the needs closest to my heart, and that you take pleasure in responding to the sentiments which grace has inspired in your souls. We must love each other in Jesus Christ, and prove our mutual affection by helping each other by our prayers, by our example and by every other possible means. My most ardent desire is to prove that, as long as I live, I wish to be for my dear children

A really devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th July 1838

Our dear novice has to make another sacrifice for God: the profession will not take place until after the retreat in September.

I remember hearing with great joy since I last saw you that the pupils of the Ladies of Mary in Brussels are very fond of their teachers. Continue to deserve this affection and to keep good order in the classes. I am convinced that you will obtain good results from your efforts.

(The beginning of the letter is missing)

... Providence is not (letter torn). The feast we are preparing for by a novena will bring us consolation. What joy, my dear Child, to hear that Mme Bathilde is a consolation to you. You know my affection for all of you, especially for the sick; so you will understand what it means to me to have the type of news I received in your last letter. I would have been so delighted if you could have given me equally reassuring news of Mme Stanislaus. The Blessed Virgin, the retreat and perhaps the strength of the wishes I form for her will one day bring about the same result. Amen! Amen!

(Reverse side of letter: top is missing)

... Good-bye, dear Child; pray, always be cheerful and generous; you know that Jesus Christ asks this of you specially. It is also the wish of

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th August 1838

If it's possible, I will come and see you before the retreat. You know I am at the service of my children, but they must be satisfied to best of my ability. The Josephites are expecting me to be with them for a part of their coming holiday.

Reverend Mother,

I cannot tell you how happy I am to see the sentiments expressed by my dear Children. Their filial piety and full confidence in Mary is the most pleasing evidence I can have from them that they really wish to be what I am trying to make them: worthy daughters of the Mother of Jesus Christ and true spouses of that loving Savior. May Mary, on this day of her triumph, deign to accept the simple expression of the love of her children; may abundant graces from heaven come down on our religious family, and may we all, without exception, become instruments of mercy in the hand of divine Providence. That briefly, is the most ardent wish of my heart. Reverend Mother, please tell my Children this once more and assure them that I shall pay much for them tomorrow. I will offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for our family and Mary will deign to accept our vows; this august Queen of the Saints and the Angels will join her prayers to ours to obtain an abundance of heavenly favors, on our Sisters and on those pupils God has confided to our care.

It is impossible for me to answer all the letters which gave me so much pleasure. I will answer them verbally before long.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th August 1839

Madame Superior

I hope that the basket and also the money arrived safely and that you will be able to put your mind at ease concerning finances.

I have not yet had a reply from the Prince of Hohenloke, but I think it will not be long delayed. It seems more and more evident to me that pride is causing the miseries of our poor invalid. Try to convince her very gently of this. We want to help her, but she opposes our efforts by this insurmountable obstacle. Talk to her about the beauty of humility. That would be the best possible preparation for the favors we hope for from the Prince.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of
Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th Feb. 1840

Madame Superior,

I join you and all your dear community in giving thanks to the Blessed Virgin for obtaining for you that which we all desired, an increase of pupils, which is necessary for the reputation of your house and the general good of the Institute. I did not delay in fulfilling my commitment. I have just said the Te Deum from my heart as I promised. You may make the novena and communion you asked for, but you will say the Te Deum, not sing it. While you are making this novena, make an attempt too to improve your handwriting; if you become docile, your writing will follow your example, you may be sure of that.

I think we shall decide on the portrait with my hand. But I do not know what you were thinking of, my dear daughter; each house will not have the portrait. Only one is necessary and that must be at the motherhouse.

I suspected that the Madame Superior General was not well and I have been recommending her to the good God. I am afraid that some imprudence, some small excess may have been the cause of the indisposition. Give the responsibility to Mme Angelique to watch over your dear Superior.

I suspect her docility as much as I do your (word illegible). I do not like these half-docilities and they are not pleasing to God, believe me.

I pray the Holy Spirit to enlighten you all, to strengthen you, to give you his peace and to make you true daughters of Mary and Joseph, the faithful spouses of Jesus Christ.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th June 1840

(The previous letter is the same as Letter 17-49. Translation from French to English is somewhat different. Typist note)

Madame Superior

I forgot to inform the Ladies of your house of the departure of A. and G. It is however necessary for that matter to be made known to them. So you will be kind enough to say a few words about it to each of your Sisters when you see them individually. But you will recommend them not to talk about it among themselves. Stan... is more or less known to them and Gen... has lost grace through lack of humility. I leave the choice of the reasons to you and you will be able to take counsel with Madame Flore. This communication has not produced any bad effect in our other convents. The lay Sisters must not be informed of these sorts of affairs.

Madame Flore will do well to urge a few young ladies to attend the retreat when the time is definitely known to you. At Malines they will also have a retreat like yours, at the same time.

Say many encouraging things to Mme Adélaïde, both from me, and from other people capable of judging her state. We are all of the opinion that this dear Sister has only to submit humbly to the apparent rigors our good God is using to purify and sanctify her.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th June 1840

Madame Superior

What a joy I felt at the news that the holy man, of whom God made use of to lead me into the paths of religion, from my childhood, and even to enable me to know my vocation, has been to see you! You have seen a saint to whom you are under obligations and who perhaps, in the designs of God, is the chief cause of the existence of your religious family; it is perhaps to his solicitude for me, that I owe the happiness of working in my turn, in the vineyard of our mutual master Jesus Christ. I am sending you a few letters that the good Fr. Sellier wrote to me while I was his pupil. I have kept these letters as a precious possession and re-read them always with profit. You will take great care of them, and return them to me when you have read them. But as the matter is not urgent wait for a safe opportunity for sending them back to me. I permit your dear Sisters also to hear them read, if you do not find it inconvenient. I admit to you that I do not have the contents of these letters present enough to mind to judge whether they may be wholly divulged. You will judge that.

The visit of our good friend, Msgr. the Cure of Reckem, pleased me very much. I was sorry it was so short.

For the rest, all is well with the Institute. You will announce the news of the loss we have incurred, when you find it good to do so. However, I shall bring to your notice the fact that Msgr. the Cure of Reckem has been informed of it; I have just spoken to him about it.

My kind regards to all your pious family; I give them my blessing with all my heart. Take care of Fr. Sellier's letters. They are relics to me.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th January 1842

I shall deliver your letter to the Rev. Fr. Provincial of the Jesuits.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I put off writing to you because I was waiting for news of your Madame Superior General and thought I would take some steps regarding the points we dealt with in our correspondence. While waiting for measures to be taken to avoid destroying with one hand what is being built with the other, I charge you to require that the table of the pupils is to be served in such a way that the cause of complaints are no longer possible. On this point one must show a sort of generosity that proves that no sacrifice is omitted by the Ladies of Mary in order to deserve the esteem and affection of the pupils and that, in a word, everything is for the pupils at the Ladies.

The health of Madame Superior General is improving as one would wish. I give very profound thanks for that to the Blessed Virgin and our other Patrons who have obtained that favor for us.

You will take counsel with Mme Marie Anne about arranging that what I have said to you about the food gets a prompt and twofold result.

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 26th October 1842

Madame Superior

You gave me great pleasure by sending me the good news of your convent. The satisfaction I enjoyed at your place, during my last journey, although I was little disposed at that time to give my heart to any feelings of joy; and the consoling testimony that Madame Superior General has since given me of her children at St. John the Baptist, has prepared me for the pleasant things you were able to write to me. So, I again bless the Lord for continuing to give you his blessings; I thank that good Master for the successes he is giving to your efforts, and beg him to accept my thanks, the homage for the honor, and for the good he is allowing us to do, for to him alone all glory belongs. We cannot ourselves be anything but useless servants; let us take care, however, never to be unfaithful servants by attributing to ourselves what in all justice belongs to God.

It is in this sense that I have been praying for you, my dear Child, during this octave. The Queen of the Saints, who is our Mother, must indeed have known how to offer my prayers, on the great feast; and the author the grace that makes saints will have deigned to accept them.

I found our dear Superior General much changed to her advantage and it seems to me we may cherish the hope of keeping her for still a long time at the head of our religious family.

It is for your Bishop to name the confessors. I shall take care to deal with that matter with his Lordship. I am pleased with the dispositions you have noticed in the new parish priest. I intend to write to him when he has been installed and shall also write to Msgr. the Cure of Reckem to thank him and to the Burgomaster to congratulate him on the resounding success he obtained in the election.

I have found two pictures, one of which will suit you perfectly and the other Mme Catherine. I beg you accept them as well as the assurance of the sincere devotedness with which I am always

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th November 1842

Madame Superior

I have not found means to get you the novena you desire. As a replacement, I suggest you begin a nine days exercise in honor of the adorable name of Jesus, from the 21st that would end on the 29th, the feast of St. Francis de Sales. You would say the litany of the Holy Name, once for nine days. I shall join with you in the name of all my other spiritual children.

I do not really understand the conditions in common usage in the undertaking of architects. Madame Superior General, on the other hand, knows a lot about them. If you still have any doubts, you would therefore find more enlightenment at Malines than at Ghent.

It is undoubtedly due to some distraction that you have come to ask whether your Ladies, or any one of them, could go out of the convent to give instruction to the poor. Your Rule is very explicit in the article on going out. Madame Agnès knows that we have no longer allowed her to take some thirty steps along the road to give our free class in Alost.

The fact that she is a niece of the Bishop of Ghent would indeed cast something into the balance with me to make the admission of your postulant easier.

May the name of Jesus enlighten us, heal us and fortify us. St. Bernard points out that his adorable name is a light, a remedy, a nourishment.

I am always very sincerely

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th January 1846

Madame Superior

A conversation I have just had with some very sensible persons, inspires me with some regret for allowing you to buy the sofas you wrote to me about. It seems very doubtful whether those pieces of furniture are suitable for your convent. Berlaymont, Jette, Doorzeele and other establishments of this kind, have very simple parlors. The Ladies of Mary must also like religious simplicity.

Those reflections I submit to you. I dare not take it upon myself to allow luxury to be introduced into your Institute. Thinking it is not too late to withdraw my permission, I hasten to do so, for anything that is beyond your needs.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th of St. Joseph's month 1847

Madame Superior

I have just been offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; in it you have been the object of my special commendations. What, indeed, can we do of ourselves? Nothing in the order of grace. So, we shall have recourse to the source of that grace and I shall lead you there every day until the beginning of the school year. Join with me, my dear daughter, and let us count on the munificence of our good Master Jesus, the loving Spouse who is entrusting to you the family of the children of Mary and Joseph.

I think it will not be inappropriate to make you some recommendations. You will apply them and conform to them with that wise and prudent zeal God has accorded to you.

1. As soon as possible get rid of the traces of the miseries caused by the soldiers.
2. Without delay, and before the cold weather arrives, make a ruling about when and in what places the little winter coats will be worn. It is an important matter and causes a lot of chatter.
3. Call to mind the recommendation I made about the care to grant the religious the means of keeping up their knowledge, exercising their memories, writing with a steady hand, forming their style, etc.
4. Require the proprieties to be observed everywhere. Let the dress, bearing, gait, tone of voice and gestures be in conformity with the prescriptions of our Rules and the requirements of our position. See to this carefully. These points are very important.
5. Arrange the tables in the refectory of the religious, in the way they are placed in the convents.
6. Do not allow any food or drink to be taken outside the refectory or, in the case of the sick, the infirmary.
7. Have more exercises set in the study of English, German, and in handwriting.
8. Require a greater uniformity in religious exercises and practices of piety.
9. Examine whether all the points of the Rules and Constitutions are being observed and whether each convent has a copy of the Constitutions.
10. To obtain uniformity, it would be fitting for all the materials for clothes to be furnished for the Institute at the price of (?)
11. I recommend the lay Sisters. Like the Ladies, they are spouses of Jesus Christ. They must not be given work to do in the garden that is beyond their strength, or is not suitable for religious.

I have just received at this moment the letter you sent yesterday. It is a fresh subject of consolation and hope to me. I bless the Lord for it and thank you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for all you tell me. Since your entry with us, I have known the sentiments that have constantly animated you. You have acted with prudence, and necessity has reduced me, forced me to a silence that has cost me a great deal; but our good God is allowing us to breathe, as Mme Angèlique was saying to me last Tuesday.

As for the classes for the poor, do as you find good. See separate notes.

I shall examine the plan for the dress of the postulant.

I give you, very dear child, and your dear councilors, the blessing, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th September 1853

Madame Superior

It seems to me that the Rev. Father Superior of the Josephites was not at Grammont, when your letter arrived. So his reply will be delayed. I purposely abstain from speaking to you about this, although I have no illusions about the uselessness of attempts to invalidate the assessments made in due order by men combining the qualities required for expert appraisals at Brussels. All I want is that the will of God be done. Well! What better could I want? If I could follow my leaning as a father, I admit to you, my child that I should incline a little towards the weakest side and espouse the interests of my daughters a little more warmly than those of my sons in Jesus Christ. But as a matter of justice, one must maintain an even balance. So, I shall continue to act with prudence, while working to bring victory to a plan, that in conscience, I think, is the one that responds to the designs of divine Providence.

I hope to be able to carry out the plan of coming to see you that I announced at Coloma. However, I cannot fix the day yet. It will be more useful for me to be in your midst when the postulants have arrived, still more for those postulants than for me.

I am intending to send a contribution for Mlle Joséphine Buysen, as I gave you to understand. I am setting aside 500 fr. for that. As she is not the only one I am helping at this moment, I think I shall hardly go beyond that sum. The subject deserves consideration, and I am counting on your heart and good sense.

The news I am receiving from our houses is all of a kind to nourish our confidence and our gratitude towards our good God.

Say, I beg you, Madame, all that your heart dictates to you about my devotedness in Jesus Christ, to all your dear family and especially for the council and above all still for its president.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th October 1853

I recommend to the prayers of all the community, Mr. Ghislain, a Josephite, who received the last sacraments in a very holy way, last week, at the convent of Melle.

Madame Superior

Some time ago I received your letter in which you informed me of the visit of Madame Superior General accompanied by Mme Flore and of Mme Emérence and the good result of that visit. You also informed that Mme. Clara as nominated First Assistant, that the novice Raphaëlle shows good promise and that you are not as reassured about Mme Victorine who is in charge of the classes for the poor.

It would have been useful for me to learn, in your last letter, that of the 8th of this month, what the experience came to confirming or invalidating all you had hinted to me during the course of February.

I like to think, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that our good Mme Julie is feeling the effects of the good weather, and her strength will return with the fine Spring days. Tell her that I am not forgetting her before the Lord, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Please tell, Mme Maria that Mlle Colette whom I saw on Tuesday, is the same as usual. I did not find her much changed.

Mme. M. Charlotte is preparing with peace and confidence to go and join her heavenly Spouse; all fear has disappeared; she is sighing for the happy moment when she can leave this place of exile. My niece, Mme Marie, at Jette, is preparing with faith, with confidence, to yield to the invitation of Jesus Christ, who is calling her to rest in paradise.

They are, let us agree, my daughter, fine examples. Let us thank our good God for his favors, profit by them and pray for our dear invalids. I am addressing this to all your Sisters.

Let us have confidence in our Holy Patron. Let us honor him with a good heart, and recognize humbly that our successes are due to his powerful intervention.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th of St. Joseph's month 1854

Madame Superior

I have not seen Mr. Simoens again since his departure for the country, and I did not know that he had visited you. I have not heard anything either from Mouscron. The news you gave me about them gives me great pleasure. God is good, by giving a large number of pupils, is rewarding the real zeal and generosity I have been noticing in Mme Helene and her dear Sisters for a long time.

The date of my journey is not yet settled. Meanwhile, I urge you, Madame Superior, to firmly impress into your mind, and to make the same recommendation to all your dear Sisters to firmly impress in their minds the greatness of the treasure you possess in the most Blessed Sacrament of the altar. It is one of the most powerful means of arousing in you that spiritual hunger that so happily disposes the heart for communion. That eager desire enlarges the faculties of the soul to prepare for those special graces the divine Spouse loves to communicate to his faithful and generous spouses. Try and form a just idea of the divine Banquet to which you have the privilege of being so often admitted. May you be able to understand who he is who invites you and offers to come himself into your hearts to nourish and satiate them. Consider with what ardor Jesus Christ wishes to unite himself to you in that wonderful sacrament. To whom is that union to be useful, is it to Jesus or to you? Apply yourself to getting to know your needs, your destitution, and you will not delay in feeling eager desires, a holy hunger for that living bread. Your hearts prepared by such sentiments will feel new needs to love Jesus Christ and make him loved. You will feel a real joy at the sight of the adoration that your dear Sisters and your pupils (experience) and at the memory of that public homage the faithful hasten these days to render to the Son of God throughout the universe. (Be) united at heart to all pious souls take part in the triumph of the divine Spouse. Form the resolution to occupy yourselves piously during the octave, and with very special zeal for the adorable sacrament of the altar and to present yourselves more often at the foot of the altar of Jesus, to render him your homage, expose your needs to him and implore his help.

May the Lord deign to shower his blessings on these recommendations and prayers that are addressed to you by

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd of Mary's month 1856

Madame Superior

On Sunday I received a letter from Mme. the Superior General, informing me that tomorrow Monday, she was coming to your place with Mme. Flore, to attend the examination of your classes. Please inform me yourself, or through Mme. Alexandrine, what was the result of the examination and the visit.

Try and make Mme. Eudoxie understand that she is doing Mme Félicie a bad service by always talking to her about her health. The latter is in good health, but is pained to see this anxiety on the part of her sister, her brother and her parents. She might even end up imagining that she is really unwell, seeing that persistence on the part of her near relatives in claiming that she is. Get Mme. Eudoxie finally to understand that it is entirely against the Rule of all religious institutes to occupy the religious with their parents and relatives. There is no exception apart from prayer, in that they may and must commend their parents. Let Mme Eudoxie weigh up what precedes. She is convinced that I bear real interest in her and Mme Félicie, and that no one is to supplant me in the carrying out of my duties towards my spiritual children.

Receive, my dear child, my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th January 1858

You may even tell Mme Eudoxie what I have said to you above about her and her sister. She must understand the dangers she is incurring before God and the Institute, by dealing in so human a way, in these matters with her sister and parents. She is undertaking a terrible responsibility.

Madame Superior

The response of Mme Eudoxie to the remarks I addressed to you for her astonished me and, I must admit to you, really pained me. So, that Lady has forgotten the cares with which I have always surrounded her and the special attentions I have not ceased lavishing on Mme Félicie? I did not think her capable of such forgetfulness. However, I cannot let that reply which I refrain from describing adjectively, pass without taking it up. In what way does the Madame Superior of Alost not occupy herself with the health of Mme Félicie? And I myself, how do I not occupy myself with it either? That goes beyond the limit! Thank God we do not forget our duties to that extent. Such sentiments oblige me to forbid Mme Eudoxie to correspond with Mme Félicie.

Receive, Madame, my blessing for yourself and your dear Sisters.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd February 1858

Madame Superior

The dispositions with which you have accepted the decisions of divine Providence, confirm me in the hope I had conceived that you will attract the merciful attention of the Lord to you and serve the Institute in your new post with great merit and real consolation. I thank our good God for that, and beg him to continue to give you his blessings.

As for your dear Sisters, they will get used to you; they will, I hope, give you the satisfaction you can expect from them, and even those of whom you think you have to complain, will prove to you that you have not devoted yourself for insensitive hearts.

Commend yourself specially to St. Joseph, the patron of your convent, and to St. Therese, that heroine who is so powerful over the heart of Jesus, and so worthy of your imitation. I shall join with you in my prayers, and render you all the services that depend on me.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th October 1858

Madame Superior

I am taking advantage of the return of the Charnes to write you a few lines begging you to read them to your dear children, and to your novices, whose hearts you are trying to form with such keen solicitude.

The big feasts that we are going to celebrate will occupy us specially with the divine Child, the expectation of the nations, the Redeemer promised at the unfortunate fall of our first parents.

Jesus, in fact, is our mediator. From infancy, he began to act as such never to cease doing so; he is still living, says St. Paul, to intercede for us always with the Father. What more powerful motive for us, very dear children, to love Jesus and have confidence in him. Let us often occupy ourselves with this very consoling truth; it will preserve you from all exaggerated fear.

He is also our model. Look at and act according to the model that is set before you, not only on the mountain, but also in his childhood, as the prophet Zacharie teaches you. So, it is according to that perfect example that your will regulate your thoughts, affections, words and actions; all your interior life and even your external appearance.

Jesus is also your brother. It is he himself who deigns to give us that title; go tell my brothers, he says to Magdalen, when speaking of his disciples. What a glorious title, we are his heirs to the kingdom of heaven.

But for you, my dear children, there is a more special and more loving distinction: Jesus is your Spouse. By preferential choice, he has distinguished you from the rest of Adam's daughters. He has contracted a close alliance with you; he has made you the conveyors of all his blessings. You are the beloved of his divine heart! In these circumstances, recall that prerogative that raises you so high in the esteem of the faithful here below, and in that of the angels in heaven.

Let our dear novices weigh up these truths; they will find in them powerful stimuli for surmounting the difficulties that corrupt nature, the prejudice of the world and the malice of the devil might suggest to them. You might recommend them to read what is to be found in my Manual for Christian Youth: on Advent and Christmas.

Accept my good wishes for you and all your community, my dear daughter, with my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th December 1859

May Madame Superior General be pleased to accept herewith my good wishes for the feasts we are going to celebrate. I recommend her to take care of her health.

Madame Superior

Here are a few lines you will kindly use prudently and at an opportune moment.

1. It seems to me indispensable to take steps to prevent the pupils from sending badly written or badly drawn-up letters.
2. That the music and words of pieces for the use of the pupils are well examined before being handed to the pupils.
3. That it be carefully inculcated at all times, morning and night prayers must be said.
4. That it is to be desired that during the holidays, the pupils attend holy Mass every day when that is possible. The children need special help during those days of relaxation, and many parents are edified to see in their girls, that zeal for attending the august sacrifice.
5. That the young people become accustomed to occupying themselves always with some useful piece of work, and always shun idleness which is the source of many evils. In families that are well-off one works for the poor, when one does not have an occupation for oneself or for the family.
6. That the obligation of almsgiving is taught to those who have the means, and the importance of a good intention in what one does so as to avoid losing the merit of one's works.
7. That the pupils are instructed about the danger of familiarities with young men, and excessive intimacy with their (own) companions, about curiosity, malicious gossip and the longing to tell news, discuss, etc.

You will see in my recommendation, Rev. Lady, the keen desire that animates me of procuring the well-being of your dear pupils, and working towards increasing your successes as well as the rewards that are waiting for you.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th September 1860

Dear Daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letters have brought me real satisfaction. In them, I indeed find once more that spirit of submission the Lord asks of each member of our religious family, that self-denial that makes you powerful instruments in the hand of the divine Master. Maintain those dispositions; even force yourselves to increase them daily by the exercise of the good qualities you have acquired or obtained in your holy state. There are sure guarantees of success in religion. I am also happy to learn that your dear Sisters are already giving you so many motives for congratulating yourself on them and praising their zeal and humble submission. Tell them how satisfied I am to learn what you had the good fortune to send me.

Be convinced, very dear Madame Superior, that I shall fulfill my duty of helping you with my prayers and counsels.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th October 1862

I beg you, be the special interpreter of my sentiments to my good god-daughter. I acquitted myself with zeal of my obligations before the Lord during the days preceding her holy profession.

I think, between us it may be said, that music lesson, especially in singing and piano, are not suitable for Mme Kostka. Her physical strength will not stand up to that occupation.

I thank you cordially, my dear child, for the prayers you are offering for your Father in Jesus Christ. I too have been offering prayers and, above all, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you and all my spiritual children. It is a great source of happiness to have such powerful means of helping each other. Let us continually give thanks for it and have confidence in the goodness of the Lord, as well as in the infinite merits of our merciful Savior.

My eyes oblige me to stop. I shall give our Rev. Lady Superior General my reply to the other points in your letter.

Meanwhile, I give my blessing to you and all your dear Sisters.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd November 1862

Ghent, 14th February 1863

Madame Superior

I have only answered your letters briefly; my health has been imposing that sacrifice on me for a few months. Thank God, I have regained my strength and see myself in a state to resume part of my occupations. Give me some explanations about all your houses and your dear Sisters. You will see that my silence has not been the product of a weakening of zeal in regards to you.

While awaiting news of you, I give a very cordial blessing, my dear daughter, to you and your beloved Sisters.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Letter Dictated)
J.M.J.

04-29

Madame Superior

Here is the reply of Mr. Lammens to the letter I sent on to him on your behalf.

I thank you for the congratulations you addressed to me in your name and that of your Sisters on the occasion of the distinction with which H. M. our King was so kind as to honor me.

I hope that our Patron St. Joseph will make you feel that he accepts what you, Madame, your beloved Sisters and pupils will do in his honor, and will obtain for you all the special graces according to the needs of each one.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th March 1863

Madame Superior

If you find it pleasant to open your heart to that of your Father in Our Lord, I can tell you that I gratefully receive those testimonies of gratitude and filial piety that animate you. You know, my dear daughter, that from your novitiate days, I have expressed the hope that you would respond to the designs of Jesus Christ and form yourself after his adorable heart. A little exaggerated fear slowed down your advance along the way of perfection. Since you have understood what was said to you on that subject, you have made progress which is a subject of great consolation to me. Persevere on that path, follow the impulses of grace, listen to the movements of generosity that the adorable heart of your divine Spouse imprints on your heart and you will go far.

I thank you with all my heart, my very dear Mother, and all your dear Sisters, for the good wishes you have sent me for my patronal feast-day. I am as sorry as you are that time did not allow me to have a longer talk with you. I hope our good God will grant us the mutual satisfaction of seeing each other before the winter.

Meanwhile, I give you my blessing and wish you fresh favors on the occasion of the triumph of the august Mother of God that we are celebrating next Saturday.

Your cordially devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th August 1863

Madame Superior

Your letter gave me some precious details that brought me real pleasure. I thank the Lord for the happy dispositions your dear Sisters have shown in the exceptional circumstances that last month brought them.

I thank you, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for all you tell me about your desire to seem your means for doing good increased. I hope that your Rev. Superiors will grant you what is in their power. However, take care to conserve your the strength of your dear Sisters. God does not ask us to go beyond the range of means he has so kindly granted us.

Please tell Mme Colombe that I shall make it my sweet obligation to commend her to our good God, especially during the retreat. I shall also pray for her brother. I like to think that the dear Colombe will excuse me for not writing to her directly. She knows I must spare my eyes.

I give you as well as Mme Colombe and all your beloved Sisters, my paternal blessing with the assurance of my affectionate devotedness in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th September 1863

Madame Superior

I thank you for the good wishes you addressed to me for the great feast we have just celebrated, and the very heartfelt congratulations you sent me on the news of the honor the Bishop has so kindly done for me by conferring on me the dignity of archpriest and dean of the Chapter of his cathedral.

You may be certain, my child, that you are never excluded from the prayer I offer for the persons whose care God has entrusted to me. Believe it also, I am without anxiety as regards the distractions and other difficulties you are experiencing. Life would be too pleasant, if you did not meet any annoyance. Carefully shun gloomy, sad and morose ideas. Try and be always cheerful, generous and content with what God sends you.

Thank your beloved Sisters for the very religious sentiments so full of delicacy that they expressed to me on the occasion of my recent nomination. I am edified to see that gratitude is so lively in the depths of their hearts, and that the blessings our good God grants their Father, brings their thoughts back towards the gifts they themselves have received. That fortunate tendency increases happiness in this life; it makes the accomplishment of duties easy and increases the number of meritorious acts through the generous disposition to carry out the will of the divine Master: The Lord loves the cheerful servant.

As everything has a side offering in unpleasantnesses, I beg you, Madame Superior, and your dear Sisters, to remember me in a still more special way than ever. I have undertaken obligations that scarcely suit my habits and tastes. I willingly grant you what you are all asking for, a communion for my intentions on the day you will indicate, and may all of you, dear children, accept my blessing and the assurance of my very heartfelt devotedness.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th November 1863

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

4-33

Madame Superior

I thank our good God for deigning to allow the few lines I addressed to you to be useful to you. I have no orders to give to your Madame Superior General, but I very willingly join the expression of my wish to the request you made to her to spend the night at your convent when she comes to preside over the examinations.

(In the Founder's hand)

Go forward calmly and with confidence along the path of trials, and do not get angry with yourself. Humble yourself and count on the help of grace.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd December 1863

I am very pleased with the work of your Ladies that Madame Superior General sent me.

Madame Superior

(Dictated Letter)

I was very pleased to receive the wishes you addressed to me for the feasts we have just celebrated as well as for the New Year that we are entering upon. I too have asked the Lord on your behalf and that of your dear Sisters, for new graces in proportion to the needs of each of you.
(in the Founder's hand)

I was edified to read the letter of Mme Kostka. God has deigned to grant that dear niece and god-daughter, exceptional favors, and in particular, that of understanding that she must be grateful. Please tell her from me that the Lord asks her to be also very confident in his goodness. For the moment I do not have time to answer her letter, but I wish you to tell that beloved daughter in Jesus Christ, that I thank her for the prayers she is addressing to the divine Child on my behalf, and that I in my turn, am trying to acquit myself of the commitments I have undertaken towards her. I am also very pleased with Clara and Léonie. The latter is going to prepare for her first communion at Doorzele.

I have also seen in your letter, Madame Superior, that the touching feast has given you new courage in your position as superior, the importance of which divine Providence has made you understand.

Kindly tell all your dear Sisters, I am commending them with all my heart, these days, to our good Mother Mary and the divine Child who is the subject of our hopes in time and for eternity.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th January 1864

(Dictated Letter)

Madame Superior

If I have forestalled you in our exchange of good wishes, it is because an opportunity of getting a letter delivered to you has presented itself. So, do not see anything resembling a reproach in that. Please, make this observation to Mme Kostka.

As for the embarrassment the situation of your finances is causing you, do not worry about it too much. In your position as superior, you are obliged to make that state known to your reverend superior general, who will make it her duty to come to your aid. You know that in this sort of affairs, there are mutual obligations. St. Joseph too will continue to help you; he will get new pupils for you.

On reading what you wrote me, I was very touched by the extreme kindness of His Eminence towards your community. You know my feeling of veneration for that august prince of the Holy Church; so it is easy for you to assess what his fatherly kindness towards you and me makes me feel. Pay my respects to Msgr. Lauwers and beg that devoted friend to be the interpreter of my sentiments to His Eminence the Cardinal.

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for yourself and all your beloved Sisters, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th of St. Joseph's month 1864

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated Letter)

4-36

Madame Superior and her beloved Sisters
My dear daughters in Jesus Christ

I hasten to acquit myself of a very sweet duty, that of expressing to you my thanks for the good wishes you addressed to me for my patronal feast day. I was touched by the sentiments of gratitude your hearts are feeling at the memory of the special favors our good God has procured for you through my ministry. I willingly join you in addressing thanks to the author of everything good for the gifts we have received from his generous hand, and asking him for constant perseverance along the way he has deigned to trace out for us. For this end I grant you a communion; it is on Thursday next week that you will take advantage of this favor, I recommend to you the elections that will take place on that day.

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive my very dear daughters in Jesus Christ, a blessing and the assurance of my real devotedness.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th August 1864

Not translated into English

4-37 and 4-37b

Note on page by translator: "are the same as 18-172 and 18-172a to Madame Clotilde".

The sentiments you experienced during the visit of your reverend Mother Superior, are what they must be, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. For a long time you have been deprived of the happiness of experiencing the effects of these visits made in accordance with the will of God. That, my child, is the cause of these rather violent impressions. Do not worry about them. Be happy on account of the good fortune the whole Institute is experiencing, and enjoy with thanks the favors the Lord is deigning to grant us. You will find in them the means of bearing the burden of your position as superior more easily and alleviating that of your superior general.

May all your dear Sister rejoice in their divine Spouse, at the blessings that are granted to us, and may their pupils profit by the happiness of their dear mistresses. But let that be done with prudence and religious wisdom.

Receive, Madame Superior, the blessing and the assurance of the devotedness of
Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

21st November 18_8 (year uncertain)

Please, say many encouraging things to all your dear Sisters. I send my compliments on the generous renovation of your holy vows you have just made, and pray our good God to grant you the graces necessary for going forward in the way of his divine love.

Madame Superior

I am experiencing feelings of very keen gratitude towards our Patron St. Joseph, on account of the V.L. affair. The V.D.S. plan was my nightmare. I never got used to it. Our good St. Joseph has put an obstacle in the way of the realization of that affair which was threatening our Institute with irreparable harm. During these last few days, I still felt quite anxious at the mere thought that the harm was perhaps not averted.

The V.L. premises please me. If the price does not inordinately exceed the reasonable assessment, it is my opinion that the business can be terminated without further reservation.

I am continuing to commend you, all your V.L. business and your dear Sister to our holy Patron. I give you my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Not dated

The loss our good Marie has just experienced in Belgium, by the death of Mr. Van (illegible) must have been keenly felt by Mme Pharaïlde. I am very sorry about it.

Madame Superior

It is true that it is a long time since I wrote to you. If one measured time by the events that have followed one another since I addressed my last letter to you, one would have to say that there are great many years separating us from that epoch of peaceful memory of mid-February 1848. It is precisely these very events that have prevented me from writing to you. I was stunned by the crash of the throne they were overturning; I was so stupefied at seeing in flight, abandoned by everyone, in rain and storms, a whole family on whom one was accustomed to lavish all possible marks of honor; I was incapable of believing in the idea that the most powerful sovereign in the world, the richest prince in Europe, the wisest monarch of our present times, can be, in a few hours, knocked to the ground, reduced at present to having only what is strictly necessary, finding no one who remembered benefits received; I was, I say, so incapable of believing these things possible, that I wondered whether we really were wide awake and not under the influence of a strange dream. However, we had no urgent measures to take. Time was to bring counsel. Now, again there is nothing to prescribe for you. You are praying, you are trying to appease the just anger of heaven, by offering with the Church the spotless Lamb. That is all there is to do. Address yourself to St. Joseph, particularly during this month and above all during this week. God can draw good out of evil.

Your ever devoted

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Not dated

My dear Sister

You end your letter by asking pardon of me for its inordinate length, and I myself should perhaps need to begin mine by making excuses for my delay in answering you; let us forgive each other our faults, if there are any, and talk without any fuss for a few moments.

Our reverend Mother Superior is convalescent and the doctor gives one to hope that he will completely cure that good mother. At Alost, they are also hoping that our reverend Mother Olympiade will recover. I share that hope which is founded on the great confidence I have that our Holy Patrons will have pity on us, seeing our needs and the ardent desires of their children.

I have been thanking our good God for the fresh favors he has just granted our dear community of the Holy Angels. Let us try, my child, to merit that these blessings go on being bestowed on us with that merciful profusion that so rightly surprises us. Let us acknowledge with joy that God is good, and indeed deserves all our love, our hearts whole and entire.

I like to think that these sweet sentiments dominated the touching ceremony of the renewal of vows in your convent. The young Spouses of the divine Lamb very easily found again the precious sentiments with which their hearts were burning on their profession day. That very sweet memory added to the fresh favors they have since received will give strength and a heavenly unction to their expressions, and above all, to their feelings on the feast of the Presentation.

I agree to the change you propose to me to make in your chapel. But you will do well to take good measure to avoid all unnecessary expenses and to put off the work until after the cold which is making itself felt at the moment.

While awaiting a definitive arrangement, ask reverend Father Vandermison to hear your confessions again next Ember week. When an opportunity arises, you will send me the official document that contains the powers granted by His Eminence. We shall see what is allowed you as regards first communion, etc. It seems to me that they are not as restricted as we think.

... (The end of letter is missing. Date not given)

Madame Superior

From time to time we receive salutary warnings. Sometimes the Lord addresses himself to our young religious, and after testing them with long, painful infirmities, finds it good to call them to him to grant them a crown that a long life spent in the exercises of religious life would hardly hope for. Sometimes, after a very short immediate preparation, he takes away others of our subjects who have grown white in the toils of a ministry, very humble in appearance, but of very great importance for the preservation and propagation of the knowledge and practices that our Savior God and his apostles have made known to the Servants of God, the children of his holy Church.

The departure of any warns us that the most recent novices in the religious state, must strive to be ready to go and render an account of the use made of the graces God has bestowed on them; the deaths of the others are directed still more at Superiors through age as well as the posts they hold, reminding them that the time for rewards approaches, and that it is necessary to work seriously at being constantly, in reality, in the situation in which their divine Spouse wishes to find them when it pleases him to call them to the abode of eternal rewards.

So, profit by these warnings. Madame Justine, Madame Marie Anne, Madame Emilie as well as Madame Félicité, Madame Maria, Madame Angèle prove to all ages that experience and faith together proclaim the obligation of preparing daily since one's holy profession for that moment that will decide on the degree of happiness that will be one's recompense for all eternity. Once that supreme moment is past, nothing more can be added to the total merits, nor, consequently, to the reward which is the happy result of them.

... The end of the letter is missing.

(Not dated.)

Madame Superior

Fortunately the sight of Mr. Van Wymelbeke who has just arrived, reminded me of the wine debt, for the payment of which I had made an agreement with Mme Clotilde. So, you will find a bill for that debt in the purse, and at least, the equivalent sum.

Here is another note for the Rule of the Infirmarian. They are at the end of the letter.

The escapade of the traveler, who goes to Malines and then returns to Mouscron, is so wonderful, so odd, that I do not know what to think of it. I am abstaining from making any judgment and taking any steps for a few days, so as to act with all the prudence so grave a matter requires.

31st January

As Mlle Colette did not come, I am profiting by another opportunity, the one afforded by the new curate at Alost, to send you the Constitutions, without enclosing the money for them; I shall perhaps get another opportunity of transmitting it to Mme Clotilde.

The business of St... is altogether extraordinary. I hope that Jesus, whom we have specially tried to honor this month, will have pity on us and that these numerous difficulties will only be forerunners of very special aid. I am sorry for Mme Clotilde; her rather melancholy temperament and a timidity, the bad influence of which she still feels, are disastrous in these moments of great trial. I do not share her opinion on many things and it seems to me that we must even be a little on our guard against her plans. She wishes to have Mlle Carine, and I would prefer that young lady not to be employed before the clothing. To begin with it would be more useful for her to be at Alost.

Let us have courage. Let us count on Mary, on St. Joseph, and particularly, Our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray, but not think we can exact what we would like. God will bless the efforts of so faithful and humble a Spouse. ...

(The rest of the letter is missing)

(Not dated)

(The beginning and the end of letter missing)

...I like to persuade myself that our dear new assistant will fulfill our plans and those of her divine Spouse who wants the happiness of all his spouses, even those who try our patience. Let her not be frightened of anything, Jesus Christ will help us. Let her be cheerful and her outward appearance never be too serious for fear of reducing the joy of the Sisters or the pupils. We all know from experience how much good sweetness and amiability do to souls; it is a true balm that spreads far and wide the good odor of the divine Spouse. Tell my Sister Clotilde that; she knows how keen the feeling is that makes me wish for her happiness; she knows the heart of her Father.

(On the reverse side of letter)

... One must have great practice in writing (rest of line cut off) clear, precise and exact definitions. However, I do not want to restrain your spirit; I shall help you and we shall judge your enterprise when you have composed a few pages.

Sister Pélagie writes to me that her brother must have about 500 frs for you and that the sum will be followed again by another debt. I see that good child would be very glad to see her sister change her mind. I admit to you that I do not share her feeling, because I am not convinced that her sister can be useful to us.

You see that our dear reverend Mother General is...

The end of letter is missing.

(Not Dated)

My reverend Mother

I have thanked our good God very much for the graces he is bestowing on you. We could not repeat it enough; the Lord is infinitely merciful to us. The faults we ourselves notice in ourselves do not prevent him from favoring us with very special graces which we know we obviously do not deserve. Ah! my child, since the Lord has entrusted you with a few talents, use them for his glory; since he gave you a heart capable of feeling the effects of his infinite mercies, and of loving the author of so many benefits, do not put any limits on your gratitude; love Jesus Christ, and let your love for your divine Spouse have no other limits than those he himself has fixed on the powers of your soul and the strength of your body. Nothing is so just and nothing will be more capable of urging God to grant us the means necessary for raising our religious family to that degree of strength that will render it capable of fulfilling the designs of Providence.

It will not be possible for me to come to Malines this week. I shall pray our good God to bless your efforts and to continue to give you the goodwill of the friends he is deigning to get us in your town and in particular that of the Prelate who is no less distinguished by his high dignities than his sweet, amiable virtues, and who is showing signs of attachment that is very encouraging for you.

Mr. Valentyn will be able to give lessons to the two Ladies you will send to me. So these Ladies may come, as you wrote in your letter to me.

How can I not get all your children to understand with what tone of affection I wish them a very happy resurrection with Jesus Christ, our good and very tender Master. I think they would answer me with an Alleluia that would increase our mutual happiness, then the... (Illegible) are this reciprocal devotedness in our Lord. ...

(The end of the letter is missing)

(Not dated)

(Fragment of a letter. The top and bottom are missing)

...

Refrain also, dear child, from making those reflections that are too deep. Let yourself go more gently according to the good pleasure of your divine Spouse; refrain from making those examinations that the love of Jesus ought, it seems to me, to forbid you. Does he not know better than we do what is right; and is it not fitting that we should let him act, having no other cares than to preserve for him a heart that is always well-disposed? I pray our good God to give to you and also to us, those dispositions which I regard as less subject to illusion and which must necessarily bear fruits of salvation. I ...

(On the reverse side)

... some prayers from the members forming your community. I have thanked my niece in your name before her departure. You will also find in the packet a Roman bond for 1000 francs. There are 20,40 fr in expenses you will pay back to the Institute.

The result of the examination of some of the Sisters at Mouscron seems to me worth making known to you. Let Sister Clothilde see it and tell her to use it for Sisters Honorine, Marie Charlotte and Eulalie. She could imitate that piece of work when she examines the Sisters. ...

(End of letter missing)

(Not dated)

Reverend Mother

I am sending you some letters that more and more prove that our angel intercedes for us in heaven. In these outpourings of heart you will find some phrases suitable for including in your work. The book describing the lives of several pupils of St. Acheul's contains remarks and details that will also be useful to you. The motives the author or compiler gives in his address to the children contain reflections I have already made to you about the usefulness of your work. I forgot to reply about the notice that was to be published in some newspaper. It seems to me that it will hardly be useful and that furthermore the thing presents difficulties.

It will be necessary to send me, when an opportunity arises, the Rule written out by our dear Aloÿse. You will leave at Brussels the copy made by our Sister Adélaïde. Send me also the old copy in the same hand; I shall need to examine the old allocution and other things that are in it. It is the notebook I used for drawing up what is done. I handed it to you at Alost on my last journey.

If my writing is so bad, you must attribute the cause to the heat and not to carelessness on my part. I make this observation to you, my child, to avoid scandal and preserve for myself the right to require care in handwriting. Let that be said once and for all, so that it does not come into anyone's mind to apply to me the adage: Physician, cure thyself. I no longer deserve it, as you know, at least as regards handwriting, since the death of our model Aloÿse.

Now the coolness of the morning comes to furnish me with the proof that I said yesterday about my writing. I am going to take advantage of the favorable disposition of my hand to copy out for you a very remarkable passage from a letter I have just found again. You have already guessed from whom this letter comes. It is dated the 28th of Mary's month of last year. There are things that concern me alone and that is one reason which makes me decide not to send it to you. After telling me that she found in the convent at Alost examples of fervor and of great generosity, our dear Lady Aloÿse concludes with the following reflections:

I do not want," she said, "to be a cowardly admirer of these virtues, but to work sincerely and seriously to form myself according to these excellent models. My divine Spouse always lavishes his most tender caresses on me. I wish to love him with all my strength and to correspond faithfully with his grace which so often speaks to my soul. When I consider all that our good God has done for me, I feel inspired with lively gratitude; I would like to pray much for him, but a voice inside me tells me: be more humble, more recollected, more exact in keeping your holy Rule; die to yourself and do well what the Lord asks of you at the moment. This voice, very reverend Father, I recognize as that of my divine Spouse and I try to be faithful to it.

Good bye, very reverend Father, I am daring to count on the help of your prayers and beg you to accept the regards of our reverend Mother and give us your blessing.

Your very grateful child

Sister Aloÿse

Letter not dated

(Note: Madame Aloÿse died Feb. 21, 1838)

Reverend and dear Mother

As I think you no longer have the inanimate body of our very dear Sister Aloÿse, I believe myself obliged to write to you to make a proposal to you, for fear of being too late, if I wait for the announcement you will be making to me. It seems to me that it would be for the glory of God and in the interests of the family of Mary and Joseph to preserve the features of this holy religious. So, if sufferings have not too much disfigured that face which breathed the happiness of belonging to Jesus Christ and told all who looked at it that the yoke of the Lord is sweet, I would urge you to have it lithographed. You could adopt the attitude of a body lying on a bed, and adorned as is done in our Institute. You remember, no doubt, seeing St. Louis Gonzaga represented in this way. But let the artist try to capture those features of innocence, naivety, interior joy the fruits of victory over all disorderly passions, that so well portrayed the lovely soul of our dear deceased Sister. Below it put: Dame Aloÿse of the Institute of the Ladies of Mary, died at the age of nearly 23 years, at Brussels on February 1838.

What joy you would give me if you informed me that our good sister is still alive, and that there is room for hope that she will edify her neighbor for a long period of years! That would have the effect of a resurrection on me. May the adorable will of God be done. That is my consolation and my life.

I was not pleased with myself when I left you. I said a word to you that I repent of; I order you to take care of yourself. That must be hard to digest for a soul that wishes only to obey. It is the second time that this term escapes from my fatherly solicitude. I beg your pardon for it.

The change in Sr. Gonzague is a miracle of divine mercy obtained by our Sr. Aloÿse. These changes are rare, because it is a conversion of a spirit that has been misled by the heart. However, let that sister beware of herself, count on grace and not listen to herself. ...

(The end is missing)

(Not dated)

My very dear Child

As it is impossible for me to come to Alost, I am sending you a few letters, recommending you to hand one to Mme Euphrosine and the others to your Mme. your Rev. Mother, on her return from Malines.

I am profiting by this opportunity to give you the task of reading to the assembled community what follows:

The Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph being separated from that of the Ladies of Mary, and the government of these two Institutes giving much solicitude and work to be any longer in the hands of a single superior, I have consented to our Rev. Mother General's (Sister Julie: added in pencil) being relieved of the Institute of the Ladies of Mary, and have only to direct that of the Sisters of St. Joseph. While waiting for another Superior General to be named, Mme Olympiade will continue to govern your Institute in her position as Vicar General. So, it is to this Lady, the Rev. Mother of your convent, that all the members of the Institute of the Ladies of Mary will address themselves for all that concerns their dealings with the Rev. Superior General.

You will make a copy of this note, changing your convents into our convents, to the Superior of the convent at Malines and tell her that you are sending it on my behalf.

We shall continue to pray for your invalid and I recommend you to look after yourself carefully so that excessive fatigue does not make you less capable of responding to the designs we have on you. Speak and explain as little as possible in class.

Not dated.

(Letter 4-49 is the same as Letter 5-21 which is dated June 22nd 1839)

My dear Sister

I have not been able to arrange manner of my affairs so as to make the journey to you. I feel the need of it for your house, but hope this need is no such as to cause much anxiety. I learned that your Sister Adélaïde is busy with other things than with what is her duty. She is in relations with outsiders about forming a hospital or a similar thing. She is a restless spirit and the Bishop of Bruges gave me to understand that she is not humble, etc. etc. I am writing about this to your Rev. Mother and telling her that she may talk about it only to you alone. Pray, my child, that this poor creature does no harm to your convent and, without being afraid of anyone, frankly give me the details you think useful.

I forbid your Rev. Mother to allow anything to be given to this new establishment and that no one from your convent be connected with it in any manner whatsoever.

I like to think that you have been pleased with my letters to your pupils. ...

(The end of the letter is missing)

(Not dated.)

(The beginning and end of letter are missing)

4-51

When the extraordinary communion is granted, it goes without saying that the Superior has the right to participate like the other religious.

I have talked about the proposal for the association of perpetual adoration. I do not know whether a decision has been taken. ...

It is good to diversify the investment of funds a little and not remain too much with the same kind.

I think a superior can go along with a certain amount of simplicity as regards correspondence with her family. She does not have to have the letters she receives opened nor does she have to have those she writes sealed.

This is for Mme Clothilde. ...

(End of Letter missing)

(Not dated.

N o t e s

It would perhaps be prudent at present to be content with doing the essential repairs to your school building, and later to get suitable premises put in order.

Is it not advisable to put a stove in the dormitory of the youngest pupils? You only have to light it when it is found necessary.

During the winter, after the pupils have gone to bed, do you have a Sister, each evening, examine whether there is danger of fire anywhere? Are the dormitories supervised in summer, during the night? How is this supervision done?

It seems to me that the office could be better said. You too easily, it seems, allow it to be said elsewhere than in the chapel.

Announce your nomination to the Rev. Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph. You will give each other the name Sister; please remember that.

A few of the Ladies would need to have remarks made to them about their way of walking which is rather too heavy, and some sisters perhaps, about their general deportment. Our good God will make the remarks easier for you because of the motherly tone he has given you for soothing the weak.

(Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME CATHERINE DAL
Superior at St. John the Baptist Convent, Mouscron
Born July 4, 1774; Professed March 19, 1831; Died Dec.15, 1851
(38 Letters: dated between 1833 and 1845)

L.S.J.M.J.

5-1

Reverend Mother

Thanks be given to our good God for having restored you to health and peace. It is because you are a people of goodwill that the peace of Jesus Christ has come down on all of you on the feast of the birth of the Lord.

Thanks be given to all of you, my very dear sisters, for the prayers that you are offering for my happiness. I dare to say that you are all right in believing that I love you very much in our divine Master. Yes, dear Children in God, yes, I bear you all in my heart and our good God knows the desires I form for your happiness. It is impossible for me to write to all of you, this time, but you will lose nothing by it; I shall commend you specially to Mary and Joseph who in their turn will present you to the Child Jesus. So, live Jesus, my sisters. Live the divine Spouse of your souls! Live my children in God, all the sisters of convent of St. John the Baptist.

Those are the season's wishes. May the Lord answer my prayers and render you more and more worthy of your sublime vocation, so that you are ever more powerful instruments of divine mercy.

Good-bye, my Reverend Mother, May Jesus encourage you, enlighten you, and lead you by the hand, so that, in your turn, you may lead the whole family at St. John the Baptist to the summit of perfection. Amen.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th December 1833

Reverend Mother

I am writing a few words to you in answer to the letter of Sister Adelaide. Some eye trouble I brought back from Alost prevents me from also writing to that sister.

It is undoubtedly allowed to have the blessing of water every month and to give holy water every Sunday before Holy Mass.

The service of benediction is always carried out with exposition and benediction at the beginning and end. We shall see later on what days it will be appropriate to have exposition at Mass.

Sister Colombe has not properly explained the matter about the organ. When you write to me, you will tell me the conditions.

My painter has not begun the picture. I have acquired a Presentation of the Holy Virgin by the famous painter Philippe de Champaigne. This beautiful work, which is about two hundred years old, is in a pleasant, religious taste that one does not find today. Our convent will only gain by this change: it will have a picture superior to what would be painted in Ghent, and it will cost nothing. It is a present for the novitiate. The picture will arrive in a few weeks; it is seven feet wide and nine feet high; it is rectangular. Perhaps your altar will not be too high. You will not give any attention to the niche. The picture is framed.

It is useless to say I was pleased with my journey to Mouscron; you could see that, in spite of my weary state. Give my regards to Sister Adélaïde, and to Sister Marie-Anne, whom I hardly saw this time. Her niece, the postulant, and our Sister Colombe are very busy at Alost; they have had a great welcome.

Sister Olympiade has been installed as Rev. Mother of the convent of St. Joseph. The position of Sister Assistant is temporarily vacant.

About ten days before our holidays, Sr. Séraphine and Sr. Colombe will arrive at your place, please God. Would it not be a good thing to name Sr. Séraphine as the senior sister? The very Rev. Mother will perform the various installations at Mouscron. Examine my proposal at your leisure.

When the opportunity arises, please send the rule of the Rev. Mother and of the Mistress of Novices and of the Sacristan, in French. We do not have them in French.

I give you a blessing and beg you all of you to redouble your efforts to obtain the blessing of Mary, at the end of this month for the whole Institute and your convent in particular.

All yours in Our Lord

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th May 1835

You must leave temporarily in Belleghem the sister you sent there.

Reverend Mother

Your letter of the 14th of this month reached me only today, the 24th, and came via Bruges where it was posted only yesterday. It seem to me that you are paying dearly for the organ that Mr. Lampe has obtained for you and that he had promised us for 250 to 300 frs. We shall see when I come in July what there is to done about it. What seems certain to me is that for 600 frs. one can have something good of this kind. How many registers are there and what are the stops?

Tell me how much you must pay to settle the most urgent debts. (words missing) these debts so as to ease things a little for you and to satisfy the tradesmen. You will then tell me what you have left and we shall see what opportunity we shall make use of to send me the money I need to repay the 1000 florins I raised for you without interest; the rest is from my money up to the sum of almost 2400 francs that I showed you on my last journey. However, see first of all to what I have said above; we will not immediately tell the Rev. Father Superior that the 1409 francs and 20 centimes have been received.

Your big Louise arrived safely, I hope. Do you still want a lay sister more accustomed to the kitchen? It would perhaps be necessary to leave Sr. Humbeline at Belleghem. It is better to have too many rather than too few of these sisters; those who have no work in the kitchen, can sew and give more attention to cleanliness in general.

Let us not settle anything yet about Exposition during the Holy Mass. I need to examine that matter. Ever Thursday would perhaps be too much. If it were done, there would have to be benediction before and after Mass, with incense. Begin with the first Thursday of the month, and we shall then examine whether it is appropriate to add other days. I want you to be able to expose on Fridays, the relic of the Holy Cross, in a cross nice enough to be put by the tabernacle for exposition. There is no hurry, we will see later what we can do.

I pray our august Mother Mary to take notice of the prayers we have offered this month. Let us go with confidence and humble submission addressing our prayers to her. May all our dear sisters prove by their appearances (words erased by paper fold) and may show that they are happy in the service of Jesus Christ. No more fear, no more sadness; they are dangerous enemies; no mad joy any more than coarse games. I am always invariably devoted to you in our common Master.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th May 1835

I have been so busy for about ten days that it has not been possible for me to write to you, Reverend Mother. However, I have been thanking God for the blessings he is deigning to shower down on your convent and commending you specially to his mercies, these last few days. In view of the observations passed on to me by Sister Adélaïde, I shall not press so much for the return of dear Sister Aloÿse, but I shall not decide anything about her class. Let Sister Marine prepare for it in the meantime. Sister Adélaïde can put off inserting the announcement in the newspapers. Tell her that to me it seems useless to make any other rule than the one in the existing directory of congregations. She may write to me as she has asked me; tell her so.

You are right, Reverend Mother, in feeling that the project for a plan of the new boarding school must not occupy you at the moment; pray God and await the time fixed by Providence, at the feet of Mary, of Joseph and St. John the Baptist, that is what there is to be done at present. Let us spend the month of Mary well and be well prepared for the feast of Sunday.

I intend to go to Bruges next week; I will try to arrange the matter of the foundations there, if I can do so without the papers, which I cannot find. Be serious and respectful towards the chaplain. Let us not be wrong in our relations with him.

I have lost my notes relative to your account with me; please tell me where I am and I will send you at the next opportunity what I still owe you.

Here is the cloth for the lay postulant Regine.

Please give Mr.(illegible) the accompanying roll and offer my respects to that priestly dean and also give my greetings for the season to the parish priest whom I very much revere as you know for a long time.

Receive, Reverend Mother, with my wishes for your happiness and that of all your dear community, the assurance of my true devotedness.

Your very affectionate spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th of the month of Mary 1836

To Madame Catherine

Reverend Mother

It is almost eight days that I am absent from Ghent and I will return there only on Wednesday or Thursday next. So it is impossible for me to do your errand with Mr. Ganser. I am very pleased to see that the child of our procurator general at the court of appeal is doing honor to our convent. I thank our good God for that and congratulate you on it. Now you are at your prize giving; it is an embarrassing moment, but it is followed by a short period of relaxation. I want you to profit by these holidays to get your pupils to make their annual retreat, since Fr. Kerkhove is not giving one to the sisters but to the pupils, according to what I think I learned at your place.

The departure day for Alost of Sr. Honorine with her mistress of novices remains fixed, as I have already pointed out to you. Sr. Honorine is informing her parents that she will have the happiness of making her vows at Alost on the 27th at 9:00. Sr. Marine will accompany Sr. Marie-Anne as far as Vive St. Eloy where she will find a person to take her to the sisters at Marke. Sr. Marie will bring to Ghent the chasubles that are made and that they are sure they cannot be placed at Mouscron.

My health is fully restored. I also want all your sisters who are tired as a result of the prize giving to recover very quickly and to regain their strength to recommence with fresh and always holy courage. I have commended all of you very much to the Holy Guardian Angels and to the Queen of Angels during the octave that ends tomorrow. Like me you will be astonished at the decision taken about Maria. Her aunt wants to have her with her, at least for some time.

Please tell Sr. Marie-Anne that they are very pleased with Mr. Baudumont. If he were to present himself as a postulant, he would be received with open arms. He may always return after the holidays whatever his decision is about his vocation.

I beg you also to tell Sr. Adélaïde I have examined her scheme for her classes and will answer her in detail during the holidays. I also wish that Sr. Adélaïde will be able to get Sr. Bathilde to understand that excess in application is harmful to progress in one's studies. This reflection comes to me at the sight of one of our brothers who has also put too much zeal into his studies. One does harm to one's health and does not always obtain the result one is aiming for even in knowledge.

Receive, reverend Mother, my blessing and believe I am always

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Rosborst, 12 September 1836

Reverend Mother

It is finally decided that my journey cannot take place before the cold weather. I cannot tell you when I shall be allowed to have the satisfaction of seeing you. I think the novice Marie-Charlotte will arrive in January. They have always been very pleased with this novice at Alost. The beautiful relic of the Holy Cross will be sent at the first opportunity. It is something magnificent; I am daring to use that term.

I want all of you to prepare with confidence and love for the touching feasts that are approaching. Become children to honor the childhood of Jesus. Be simple and cheerful and you will be what God asks you to be.

Receive my blessing for yourself and all your community.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

28th November 1836

Praise be J.M.J.
To Madame Catherine

5-7

Reverend Mother

I have been blessing the Lord for the mercy he showed by giving our dear Sister Eulalie sentiments so precious for herself and so edifying (words erased by paper fold) at the moment he called her to himself. What motives for confidence, that conduct of God towards the sisters of Mary, make us find in the very midst of trials that events are giving rise to. Let us be submissive in every encounter and we shall not lack graces from heaven. I united my efforts with yours to obtain that the soul of our good sister may without delay, enjoy the happiness reserved for the spouses of Jesus Christ in the abode of the blessed. I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for the same end. I recommend to all my Children prompt and generous submission to the holy will of the Lord. Do not grieve like those who do not have the faith, or are deprived of any title to confidence in divine mercy. Be cheerful as is appropriate for spouses of Jesus and children of Mary and Joseph.

If the very Reverend Mother is at your convent, you will present my respects to her and tell her I am impatient to have news of the matter I wrote to her about last time. I have allowed a girl from Courtrai who presented herself to the very Rev. Mother, to come to Mouscron as a boarder for a semester, so that we can get to know her disposition and judge whether she may be suitable for our Institute. This person will pay for her board, but avoid expenses that are not absolutely necessary.

I think that in a few weeks our novice Marie-Charlotte will come to the novitiate. Before long, I shall indicate to you the day fixed and the way in which the journey is to be made.

You are not in doubt, Rev. Mother, of the fact that I am very much occupied with you and all the dear children who are at your convent during the lovely days we are celebrating at the moment. May Jesus reign in all of you! In him I am always very sincerely,

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th January 1837

I hope you have not forgotten to give my good wishes for the New Year to your parish priest and your chaplain.

Reverend Mother

I have been thanking our good God for the unequivocal signs of affection His Lordship the Bishop gave your convent of St. John the Baptist. I pray the Lord to make these proofs of the affection of the bishop of the diocese have a powerful influence on your clergy for the honor of God and the good of the villages of Mouscron.

You gave Mr. Roussel a good answer. We shall examine his proposal on my next journey.

I will give myself the pleasure of writing to the Bishop of Bruges every time the good of your convent requires it. So you may express to me your wishes in that respect every time you think it good to do so.

I am not upset about receiving only 8000 frs. from Lille. The interest of 4% scared me and then the difficulty of repaying a large sum all at once would add to my anxiety. Our good God will provide for it. Pray and get others to pray.

Wanting to remove from you a part of your anxieties arising from the payments to be made while you do not have the money, write me a note, quite clear though simple, about the debts in general that you have. I would like to obtain for you some help in proportion to your need. Do not make me wait too long for the letter, in which you write that note about your present position.

Always count on the true devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th July 1837

Reverend Mother

Divine Providence having led us to found an establishment of the Ladies of Mary at Malines, I have seen myself obliged to send some of (the) four first members there. Sister Clothilde, Sister Stanislaus and a cook will leave for that town before long. Consequently, I need two sisters at once at St. Joseph's to replace the two sisters who are leaving. I beg you to send me without delay, Sister Théodosie and Sister Angélique with their effects. It is a nuisance having to make these changes at this season. But our good God imposes these little crosses on us; let us try to carry them for love of him, being only too happy to contribute in that way to the extension of our dear Institute.

I hope all continues to go as one would wish and you were all renewed in fervor on the day of the renewal of vows. May our heavenly Mother deign to go on giving us her powerful help against our enemies and we shall have no trouble in advancing in the way of perfection.

I like to think that my letter arrived in time to con-sole and fortify Melle Le Roy. A postulant Mlle? entered at Alost on the 21st of this month, and another has just obtained permission to enter the Institute in three months time; she is Melle Brisart, a very good subject. You see the novitiate is going to increase before long by several postulants.

The new novice, our dear Sister Stéphanie, will be pleased, I think, to take advantage of the departure of these sisters to write me a few lines on the state of her soul, etc.

See, reverend Mother, whether you do not have any piece of furniture that is easy to transport, that you no longer need, and that could be useful at Malines. The Queen of Angels will reward you for your generosity towards her. Let us not keep useless things in our convents. Also send all the chasubles the Institute possesses. I will place them from here, or sell them again.

We will take part in a novena of the Prince of Hohenloke beginning on the 3rd of December and ending on the 12th. I am praying the Lord Jesus to bless your convent of his holy Precursor and to give the abundance of his graces to the Mother and to the children she has to direct there. Also accept the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe Ghent, 30th

November 1837

I would find it pleasant to know whether the number of pupils has increased.

Reverend Mother

I am again sending you a few reflections for Advent that I beg you to get copied out so that the very Rev. Mother can take copies back to Alost and elsewhere. You will then be kind enough to give a reflective reading on it to the sisters at your convent and Sister Marie-Anne will also give a reading with reflections to her novices for some time.

I have again reflected on the plan to expose the statue of St. Louis Gonzague at the Christmas feasts and have realized that I gave a solution that is inappropriate. In fact, all our attention and all our affection must be directed solely towards Jesus, who has become man, and Mary who has become the Mother of that God-man and consequently, everything that would be liable to distract from these two objectives would indeed be out of place in your chapel at the Christmas feasts. Now, the novelty of the thing, if you expose the statue of St. Louis or anything else of this kind, it would really do harm in these circumstances. So, I am obliged to withdraw the permission I gave you yesterday, and cannot allow you to expose the statue of St. Louis Gonzague except for the feast of that saint and then again it would be more appropriate to an establishment for youth, like that of Mr. Flageolles, for example. So, that is the end of the matter; you must not come back on it anymore.

Be kind enough to tell the dear sisters, for whom you have written a few line here, from my part, it is out of economy and to avoid causing your community to have to pay heavy charges that I have written on format 36. But the feeling I have for them are neither petty nor capable of being expressed in their full strength. You will also, Reverend Mother, be kind enough to present my respects to the very Rev. Mother and to tell her I am expecting her this week in accordance with the decision I made last Friday and which she must have received.

May the Lord give us a generous love for him and for all your children. That is the wish of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th December 1837

Reverend Mother

I am sending you news that will stun you, and yet we must adore the designs of our divine Master; our very dear Sister Aloÿse received the Last Sacraments on Sunday. Her tender piety, generous love, and very beautiful soul will be enough to tell you with what fine sentiments that child of benediction received these aids of religion. I returned from Brussels this afternoon at 2 o'clock and left the invalid in a state that, humanly speaking, hardly leaves any hope of saving her. Let us pray with confidence and put into the hands of our Patrons the success of our pious efforts. Let us adore the designs of God and not worry.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th February 1838

You may vote on Melle Descreme and Melle Terace may have the name... she spoke to me about and Melle Descreme that of Clémentine.

Reverend Mother

Our dear Sister Aloÿse is still alive, and consequently, we may still cherish the hope of keeping her for the Institute in which she is so eminently useful. Let us persevere in prayer; perhaps God will be satisfied with the sacrifice of Abraham

Sister Gonzague, as a result of her weariness and anxiety, is also unwell, and although her state does not arouse anxiety, we need to come to her help. This is what I have resolved; you will send me the novice Stephanie next Wednesday; you will have a lay sister accompany her on Thursday, by rail, to Brussels and immediately return to Mouscron, after handing the Novice over at the convent of the Holy Angels.

It is with great reluctance that I have recourse to this means, but there is nothing else for me to do. At Alost we have several sick sisters, Sister Euphrosine, Sister Henriette and Sister Marie-Charlotte and each of them has a different illness. Sister Marie-Charlotte has in a little way, the same illness as Sister Aloÿse. It is a stomach inflammation that in the case of the latter has spread all through the intestines.

I beg our good God to give you his most abundant blessing and ask you, dear Superior, to pray for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th February 1838

Reverend Mother

On Wednesday at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, our beloved Sister Aloÿse went to heaven to receive the reward God is preparing there for his spouses. You are acquainted with that purity of vision and the acts of sweetness and of charity that is embellished by generosity of heart and amiability of manners, in a word, you know the angelic behavior of this young spouse of Jesus Christ; so you will allow me, Reverend Mother, not to enlarge on it. I adore the holy will of God, and I am silent; my heart is still too moved; I still feel too keenly the loss our Institute is undergoing to speak of it with moderation. We shall however, have one more protectress in Heaven. She is a saint whom we have just seen reunited there with our other Children.

The shares that the Institute possesses and that were bought to produce interest on the money raised for building at Mouscron, cannot without loss, be immediately converted into money; we must wait for a favorable opportunity; we had been flattering ourselves that we could have drawn the interest from them until May, at least, however we must pay Mr. Le Roy, as you know. So we will see what we have to do to get you some money. Meanwhile, I am sending you 250 frs. Take care Reverend Mother, to incur only essential expenses and then only with the advice of Mr. Vuylsteke.

You will allow tea to be taken with the slices of bread and butter or with the bread for those sisters who will not be fasting.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd February 1838

Reverend Mother

Because of the effect produced on you by the death of our beloved Sister Aloÿse, you can understand what I must have felt on this occasion, I who knew the merit of this excellent subject and the great services the Institute was receiving from her. But God is the Master who may arrange things as it pleases his divine and adorable Majesty. Let us submit and humble ourselves.

Here is a parcel that arrived from Alost; I do not know what it contains. You can await my arrival at Mouscron to send the things of Sister Stéphanie to Brussels. The Rev. Mother at Alost is writing to me again to urge me to do the ceremony of clothing and profession at her convent, saying that the good of the Institute seems to require it; vocations still in doubt could find great lights in it for settling them; the pupils and sodality members seem as if they too must gain by it. With the feast of St. Joseph falling on Monday, it would be possible for me to do the ceremony that very day at Alost and not at Mouscron, etc. I have of necessity to come to Mouscron, but I could come either next week or the one after the feast day of St. Joseph. Those are our reasons, examine them and write me your opinion on the subject, without delay, so that I can decide immediately.

Tell Sister Adelaide that I will give her an answer in person, as also in the case of Sister Bathilde, and set the mind of Sister Raphaëlle at rest about the fast I think must be very harmful to her. Let us mortify ourselves with prudence, and above all practice interior mortification. Let us be generous.

I consent to Melle Terace receiving the name Aloÿsia and Melle Descreme that of Célestine. Today is the anniversary of the establishment of your Institute. So it is 21 years since the family of the Children of Mary and Joseph was born. May our good God deign to give it his blessing so that increasing, the members of this family may spread the kingdom of their divine Spouse; may our dear Sisters carry the good odor of Jesus Christ far and wide and may they be subjects of consolation for the Holy Church, and of confidence and of joy for us. That is what I am asking the Lord, through the intervention of Mary, her holy Spouse, St. Colette, and those other holy Patrons and our beloved Children who have had the happiness of already being admitted to the presence of their heavenly Spouse. You know, Rev. Mother, with what sincerity I can call myself

Your devoted spiritual Father.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th of St. Joseph's month 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

5-15

Reverend Mother

Everything being considered, it is appropriate to put off the profession ceremony until Wednesday the 28th. I will arrive on Monday or Tuesday evening, please God, and in that way we have more leisure to deal with our affairs in detail. The name of Aloÿsia cannot yet be given. So, we will once more have to change what had been arranged.

I beg Sister Adélaïde to prepare a note on our dear deceased. She knew her in more than one respect and especially in that of her pupil. Let her take from sentiments of sweetness and simplicity the colors and scenes she depicts. Everywhere they have a high opinion of the virtues and perfection of our lovable Sister Aloÿse. I think she has already obtained great graces for us since she has been united with her divine Spouse in the abode of eternal rest. It seems to me by what I have just said that I am certain of it. I know of two remarkable cases in which the help of our holy child is evident. Humble sweetness has great power over the heart of God.

You will do well to write to Mr. Le Roy at Lille to know whether we can count on any funds. I would be pleased to know his answer on my next journey. We would be very embarrassed if this help failed us. After repaying more than four thousand francs raised earlier to help your convent, the Institute has only 5000 frs. of the twelve that came from Lille; and that is a small amount for building.

The basket I spoke of in my last letter or before the last letter has not been sent off because of the thaw. You will receive it now.

I give a big blessing to your novices in particular and to all your sisters in general. May the good St. Joseph deign to pray well for us. There are a few new postulants. Some of them will already come to you at Easter. Let us try to form them well by our example and prayers as much as by our discourses.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th of St. Joseph's month 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

5-16

Reverend Mother

I have been commending you to God very much during this time of triumph and consolation; for, although I was upset by certain things on my last journey, I have nonetheless a keen desire to see you living as a true religious, as a true daughter of Mary and Joseph. I thank the Lord for having prevented the faults of the superiors from harming the good of the pupils and that everything continues to go well in the boarding school at your place.

The business of Sister Philomène has been arranged by her brother who is the authorized representative in a way I am very sorry about; all the money is handed over to another brother and that at 4 per cent. I was in no way expecting that result and that increases our financial embarrassment. So be very prudent and incur only essential expenditure, for fear of not having at the right time the funds needed for paying out.

I am sending a thousand francs, the reception of which you will acknowledge as well as that of the sum I handed over to you on my last journey. Pray our good God to help us find money for you. I had hoped you would not meet with any trouble on that point.

The deaths of our dear Sister Aloÿse and our Sister Eulalie oblige us to renew the three bills of sale. So you will sign the three enclosed bills, that is to say, you, Sister Marie-Anne and Sister Adélaïde will sign one each. We have left blank the names of the buyers to avoid that the death of one of them does not again cause embarrassment. You will keep these bills carefully when they are signed, the old ones as well as the new ones.

I am recommending the month of our august and divine patroness to you, Rev. Mother. Let us have confidence in Mary, and please pray for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd April 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

5-17

Reverend Mother

You did well not to speak to anyone about my last letter, since our good Sister Louise is ill and her indisposition may be of some duration. However, not foreseeing that a journey on my part may be possible in the near future, and thinking myself obliged to fill an office at your place that has been vacant for too long, I beg you to examine before God, whether our Sister Marie or our Sister Mélanie could not fill it. I shall then decide and inform you of my decision. Meanwhile, I pray the Lord to restore the health of those of our children who need it and are making such good use of it for the good of the Institute.

Please tell me also, Rev. Mother, when the organ builder can come and install our new organ. You will do well to examine at what position this organ can be set up, in accordance with the location of your gallery.

Tell me also how many boarders you have and whether there is still a good spirit among them.

Receive my blessing, and say to your invalids from me, all the most affectionate things that can be said.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th November 1838

Praise be J.M.J

5-18.

Reverend Mother

I was pleased to receive the good wishes you addressed to me for the touching feasts we are going to celebrate. I also pray our good Savior to grant you light and strength and, above all, the holy simplicity of spiritual childhood, so that you may fulfill the designs of the Lord in the family of Mary and Joseph. Love Jesus, and be humble, in imitation of him, dear Mother, and you will heap up treasures of great price in heaven.

The illnesses and other trials God is pleased to send us are proofs of special attention on his part for our religious family. For us they must be the consoling announcement that precious blessings are reserved for us. Count on that with confidence.

I grant Mme Mélanie the powers for which you asked me, and approve of the admission of the postulant from Tourcoing. I will let you have the receipt that our Brother Michel will send to me. Our brothers, the Josephites, have made some desks which I am told are very well made, I would like to be able to get an assurance of that and then to give you the designs before you order any. I think the workmen still have many doors and frames to make and you will be able to occupy them with these objects in the meantime.

Mr. Van Pelleghem, the organ builder, is so exacting that we will have trouble in coming to an agreement with him about the placement of your organ. It seems to me that you would do better to make use of your builder, I mean the one who was dealing with you in the past about this matter. Please get in contact with him without delay.

I am very much of your opinion about Mme Adélaïde, she is very useful at your place, and I am all the more upset by her persistence in her project, and I am still more of the opinion, since I spoke about it to the Bishop of Bruges, that her plan is not inspired by God. May she learn humility at the crib of Jesus Christ! You may be sure I am not neglecting any means of bringing back this sheep that wants to go astray more and more. However, be very prudent for fear of aggravating the evil. Up to now we have no reproaches to make to ourselves; let us avoid all that could make us participate in the evil that pride and an unmortified imagination has made this sister commit. You may count on my prudence and zeal in this whole affair.

Receive my blessing and believe in the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd December 1838

Tell your dear invalids I am praying specially for them. I like to think they did not forget me either, in their prayers to their divine Spouse.

At the end of the novena that finished on the 11th of this month, it was the second one, our Reverend Mother at Alost was so relieved that we think God has answered us and we shall preserve this child. Since then she goes to the water-closet with out enemas. God be blessed for that! Let us go on praying and we shall experience the fact that the Lord is not inflexible.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-19

Reverend Mother

Now your Mother Superior is making an appearance to bring you a few words of consolation and give her blessing to your invalids. At the same time she will regulate some matters that the illnesses and deaths of some of our children have complicated a little.

The Rev. Father Provincial of the Jesuits has indicated to me an easy way of avoiding the difficulties and expenses of registration which the death duties could cause. This means consists of making wills and getting a debt recognized approaching the same sum as the value of the legacy would amount to. In this way one avoids death duties which fall only on the inheritance from which the amount of the debts chargeable on that inheritance has been deducted.

Mme Marie-Catherine will make a will in favor of Mme Marie-Anne

Mme Adélaïde will make one in favor of Mme Caroline

Mme Marie-Anne in favor of Mme Marine

Mme Emélie in favor of Mme Léocadie

Mme Marie in favor of Mme Marcelline.

Each of these five testators will sign an acknowledgment of a loan of money received from your Rev. Mother General. In the event of death, the one who has received a will, will produce the acknowledgment of the loan and will have to pay death duties only for the value of the property bequeathed to her that would amount to more than the debt of the testator.

Your Rev. Mother has the formulas, both of the wills and of the acknowledgment of the money loan. So, you will first get the will copied out on officially stamped paper, for the five testators and then the acknowledgment of the loan also on official paper for each of these same testators.

Your Rev. Mother has bonds against Hail (Gresil=Sleet) that she will give to each of the five testators before the later sign the obligation in favor of the Rev. Mother General.

In this way we shall avoid the terrible anxieties that beset us and either the illness of one of you or some other event of that nature can aggravate.

You know, Rev. Mother, how sincerely devoted I am to you in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent 13th February 1839

Your Reverend Mother will give you some pictures that you will distribute to persons of your area who may be useful to us or would have some inclination towards the religious life.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-20

Reverend Mother

Wishing to send a few small things to your exhibition, I am putting off speaking to you about them until the moment when I have enough time to deal with them. Meanwhile, I authorize you to give in the name of the convent of the Ladies of Mary of Mouscron, the bell cord I sent you one day.

The postulant from St. Guerin has written to me; her affair is put off.

I like to think that our invalids are feeling the effects of the favors of our Mother Mary. There are more precious sources of relief than those that are connected with bodily sufferings. It is with pleasure that I acquit myself of the duty of commending them at the Holy Sacrifice of the

Mass. Mme Bathilde is persevering in her humble confidence in our Holy Patrons and specially in her divine Spouse. Her health is failing imperceptibly.

I hope to come and see you within a few weeks.

I think you will have a retreat for the religious at the end of the last week in August.

Arrange for your prize distribution to take place on the 26th, the 27th, or at the latest, the 28th of August. It will be followed, I hope, by your retreat. According to all appearances, the profession will take place at Alost, on the 20th of the same month. You may prepare Mme De Wolder for it. If our good God continues his favors towards us, we shall have a few postulants for that period.

Receive, dear Mother, a blessing for your whole community, and the assurance of my true devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th June 1839

L.S.J.M.J.

5-21

Reverend Mother

The Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph being separated from that of the Ladies of Mary and the government of these two Institutes giving too much anxiety and work for it to be any longer in the hands of a single Superior, I have permitted our Rev. Mother General to be relieved of the Institute of the Ladies of Mary and to direct only that of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Until I nominate a Mother General, Mme Olympiade will continue to govern your Institute, in her office as Vicar General. So it is to this Lady that you will henceforth address all that concerns your relations with your Superior General.

I hope to arrive at Mouscron on Wednesday week, the 3rd of July. I am putting off all my replies until I have the pleasure of seeing you again.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd June 1839

Praise be J.M.J

5-22

Madame Superior

I am very grateful to you for the prayers you and your dear community have offered to our good God for me on this feast day. Accept my sincere thanks and be assured that all of you had a good share in the requests I made of the Lord through the intercession of the all the Saints. Like you, I hope that we shall be able to work for the good of the children divine Providence is entrusting to us, and to that effect, we shall obtain the grace of enjoying health of the body and that of the mind. Let us for our part, do all that depends on us, avoiding excesses, and generously practicing all that the Holy Rule desires. Let us be cheerful and often express to our good God, our gratitude for the blessings he is lavishing on us, even in spite of our miseries and our old indebtedness. You feel, dear daughter, that I am doing what I can for all my children and that Mme Adelaide has very special rights to my prayers. You will have a special memento at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, these days.

I have received a letter from the postulant from Poperingue. I am writing about it to Mme Flore. It is money that this person does not have.

May the Lord deign to answer our prayers and to send down on your children and pupils an abundant rain of graces so that the virtues may grow in the souls confided to your solicitude and that you may experience the consolation of seeing God loved, your mistresses respected and your house known and esteemed.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd November 1839

Someone came and asked me for a prospectus of your house for Holland. May we deserve to be known and esteemed in distant places!

I hope our Novices are always courageous and are being formed to good manners and holy and proper cheerfulness. These two points are of the most utmost importance for themselves and for our Institute.

How I pity poor Mlle Leroy! May Mary and Joseph deign to protect her in the midst of the dangers surrounding her.

Profit by the first opportunity that presents itself to get Mme Flore to talk with Fr. the parish priest of Reckem. I place importance on that custom; I know it will produce good results for your house.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-23

Reverend Mother

With real joy I learned that everything is taking on such a fine appearance and that every day you have fresh proofs of the goodness of God towards you. So, praise the Lord and pray to our good Mother Mary to help you to give thanks to Heaven. I do not mean that you are without any cross; you have too much experience of the fact, that this is not so in this land of exile. To carry one's cross behind Jesus Christ, and have recourse to mercy to make up for what we lack, that is what we must try to do and then rejoice at the good God allows us to do. I would like to get Mme Adélaïde to understand that also.

I think you would do well to allow the uncle of Mme Marcelline to take her, in the company of a lay sister, to the oculist who has successfully treated her at other times.

Please tell Mme Flore that I do not have the leisure to answer her at the moment; that I am putting that off to another time but that I am pleased with what she tells me of her new pastor.

Receive, Reverend Mother, my blessing and believe in the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. van Crombrughe

Ghent, 20th November 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

5-24

Madame Superior

I thank you for the good wishes you sent me for the feasts of Christmas and New Year. You may be certain that I shall not forget you during these days of grace, and that I will often commend you and your community to the divine Child and his Holy Mother, in order to obtain for you the continuation of the heavenly blessings that are raining down on you in abundance. For your part, be grateful; you know it is the best way of obtaining fresh favors. Repeat that often to all your dear children. I have not failed to pray for your nephew; may he be a worthy minister of Holy Church, a faithful friend of Jesus Christ.

I have not seen the brother of Mlle Clémentine, but I have received a letter from the father, which I have not answered. These parents seem to be to be rather exacting.

The difficulties arising from the new constructions at Malines, and other reasons oblige me again to grant some help to our convent of the Queen of Angels, and, all reflections made, I have resolved to send Mlle Clémentine there. So, please send that novice there as soon as possible. It is useless for her to break her journey at Ghent; she will book her place from Courtrai as far as Malines itself.

What a pleasure, Reverend Mother, to see your new dormitory filling so quickly. I am longing to enjoy the beautiful sight of that lovely corridor in the middle, where the image of our Mother Mary must produce a wonderful effect. If the (page torn) was going as far as Mouscron, I would have already obtained the pleasure this sight must produce in the hearts that love God.

During the night, this week, burglars got into the house of our Josephites at Grammont. They took nearly 3000 frs and one of the religious almost became the victim of his own courage and of the brutality of the burglars. A warning to all houses of education.

I shall do what prudence allows me to do in favor of Mlle Sylvie. I have seen her; she came to my house, but I have put off any decisions until around Easter.

So count, Rev. Mother, as I have told you to do, on the infinite goodness of God, on the love of Mary, St. Joseph, our holy Angels and our holy Patrons; and finally count on the good will of
Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd December 1839

I have received a novena of the Prince of Hokenloke. It begins on the 26th of this month and ends on the 3rd of January. Now, the month of January is the month of Jesus.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-25

Madame Superior

I have the pleasure of informing you that we have fixed the 19th of this month, the feast of our Holy Patron, for the election of a Lady Superior General for your Institute, and that it is at your convent that this impressive election will be held.

Independently of the Lady Vicar, the Mistress of Novices, the individual Lady Superiors of each convent, your Constitutions instruct you to elect another elector from your house, by secret ballot. "The choice must fall only on a sister with voting powers and the act of this election must be dated and signed by your assistants and put sealed into your hands so that you may produce it at the General Chapter."

You will begin a novena on the 10th of this month, saying each day the "Veni Creator, to obtain as Superior General the one whom God destines for you.

Please consult with Mme Flore who has some knowledge of the course your Constitutions trace out for you.

The Superior at Alost who has not had the opportunity of sending you any money, will bring you some in two weeks.

I have not yet received news from the Prince of Hokenloke.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd of St. Joseph's month 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

5-26

Madame Superior

To save time, I shall address to you my reply to the letter of Mme Flore. I would be very reluctant to refuse a person, animated with the desire to work for the glory of God, entry into our Institute on the sole grounds of lack of money. So Mme Flore may write to the girl from Poperinghe that we accept her in spite of her small means; this condescension on our part will be a stimulus that will unceasingly arouse her gratitude and make the way of perfection easier for her. However, she (the postulant) would have to come without delay, so that she can take the veil with the others a little after Easter.

It is with joy that I see that the pupils are well. I cannot yet say anything about the retreat for the boarding school. We will talk about all that in a fortnight's time.

While awaiting news of the Prince, tell Mme Adélaïde to read sometime No. 2 of the meditation on the depth of the mercy of the Lord, page 206 in the Manual for Christian Youth. There are things said there expressly for our dear invalid.

Referring you for the rest to the letter I sent on Sunday, I end by giving you my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of St. Joseph's month 1840

The Superior at Alost has not received the letter Mme Flore sent in February, in which you wrote to me that there was some question of a request for a bill of exchange to be made. You will have the money in 15 days.

Please communicate the contents of this letter to Madame Flore.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-27

To Madame Catherine

Madame Superior

Please send your novices and postulants accompanied by Mme Caroline direct to Alost by the first train next Thursday. Mlle Octavie will remain at Mouscron, as I wrote to your earlier.

I like to persuade myself that you are enjoying the consolations of the great solemnities we are celebrating. Our good Savior is granting us his graces with such prodigality these days, that is only depends on us to enrich ourselves and make ourselves more and more capable of becoming instruments of his mercy. So, Rev. Mother, take advantage of all the opportunities that present themselves to show your divine Spouse that you love him sincerely and that you can generously make him the sacrifices he is asking of you. What could we refuse Jesus Christ, after meditating on what that good Savior suffered for us?

Be convinced that I am always

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th April 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

5-28

Madame Superior

The health of Mme Caroline would have obliged me to keep that Lady for a few weeks at Alost to enable her to enjoy the rest she appears to need. But on due reflection, I am sending Mme Caroline back to you with the recommendation to give her easy jobs and to give her an assistant if you happen to have any sick. Mme Adélaïde must above all do violence to herself so as not to expose herself to destroying completely the impaired health of her good sister.

More boarders will be coming to you. Thank our good God for the blessings with which he is crowning my sacrifices, the enlightened zeal of the Madame Superior General and Mme. Flore and your efforts united with ours. However, I must tell you that if, at your place, all the religious do not work sincerely with the good God, you will again feel the arms of the Lord weighing heavily on your house and our early successes stopping in a few months. So be just to us and do not let anyone criticize what we are doing for the general good, without ever forgetting the well-understood interests of the Convent at Mouscron.

In spite of the sincere desire of the Madame Superior General to alleviate your financial difficulties, I cannot allow you to keep money that belongs to the Institute. Melle Cans (de Gonzague) is to receive 200 florins and to do so as soon as possible.

Tell Mme Marie-Anne to set out for Malines on the 13th of the next month and to go straight there.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th April 1840

I recommend to your zeal the month of our august Mother Mary. If Mme Flore is of our opinion regarding the postulant the parish priest of Montreuil-des-bois is writing to us about, you will tell her she may answer in the affirmative.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-29

Reverend Mother

I am taking advantage of sending the enclosed letter to tell you I have offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to God today for you and your convent. I have prayed your holy Patron, the happy precursor of Jesus Christ, to obtain for you the virtues that will render you more and more pleasing to your divine Spouse, and more and more fitted to fulfill the designs of his mercy towards the children who are entrusted to you. Holy daughters of Mary and Joseph must obviously be good instruments in the hands of God the Savior.

May the loving heart of Jesus make all of you feel fresh effects of that tender and generous love with which it burns for God and mankind. That is the continual prayer formulated by

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th June 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

5-30

Madame Superior

I was not surprised to receive the news you sent me on the 5th of this month. Our good God was pleased with the pious wishes of his faithful servant; she asked only for a few days of work, and now an eternal reward is the prize. What a generous master we have, and how well he deserves that we breathe only for him. Our dear Léocadie will help us more powerfully in Heaven than she would have been able to do here below. I admit to you that this consideration is really capable at this moment of causing us to bless the adorable will of God, and generously to make sacrifices the heavenly Father requires of us. Let us all continue with courage to do the task imposed on us, and may our submission edify our neighbor, while meriting fresh favors for our pious family.

You must be very pleased with the arrangements we made at Malines; your convent, like your boarding school is experiencing the effects of the lively solicitude of your Superior. We hope your house will become more and more useful for the Institute and Christian youth.

The Bishop of Ghent has not told me anything about his niece, since I wrote to you about her; there is plenty of time. We must not be the first to bring the matter up; His Lordship will not fail to pay what he promised in the past.

Receive my blessing for your community and count on my devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th October 1840

I want Mme Flore, when she writes to me, to say a few words about your Novice and the pupils of your house. I like to persuade myself that your young ladies appreciate the favor God has just granted them; let them be grateful, generous and cheerful. Mme Adélaïde must also obtain consolations for us by recognizing the divine mercies of which she is an example, in the Institute.

Praise be J.M.J.

5-31

Madame Superior

The satisfaction I felt during my visit to your convent made up to me very much for the unpleasantness of the bad weather and dreadful roads. I thank our good God for the favors he is granting you and recommend to you gratitude and confidence, together with punctual attention to all I said, especially about the singing, etc. I returned yesterday from Alost where I had fresh proof of the need for the pre-cautionary measures I set before you: Mme Marine has not yet fully recovered from the harm she did herself at Mouscron by singing. However, she will recover her health, I hope, in the long run and through the care of the doctor who guessed the source of a slight bad throat produced by tiring herself singing at your place. For the rest her health is not to arouse anxiety; they do not even talk about it in her convent. Sr. Christine is going very gently to her heavenly homeland, edifying all around her.

Without asking me for any explanation, the Bishop handed me 150 frs. for what he had promised to pay for his niece; that is to say half the boarding school fees. The Superior at Alost, who intends to send you some money, will also arrange to send you that sum. Prudence will oblige us to be content with these 150 frs. annually from Msgr. and politely to obtain, if possible, the rest of the expenses from the parents themselves of that niece.

Please inform Mme Flore of the contents of this letter, and tell all your Ladies and sisters that I shall try to pray well for you all during these days of devotion and grace.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th October 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

5-32

Madame Superior

The interest you take in all that concerns me urges me to write to you this evening, having scarcely had time to do so these days, in order to recommend to the holy prayers of your dear sisters, the soul of my niece, Madame Marie Van Crombrugghe, who died last Friday. That good person obtained the help of our prayers on the first day of the novena that was made for her, and she will still have a share in your communion on Wednesday. It is to be noted that, not many hours after the ninth day of the novena, she peacefully fell into eternal sleep. In the designs of God, that is perhaps a greater favor than the cure she had asked for.

As Madame Braye is unwell, the Bourgmester will not be told this news. Please break it in a suitably gentle way to Mlle Sophie Braye for me, explaining to her the reasons for our silence.

Do not take any more steps at Waeken to obtain the rest of the effects of Mlle Justine. I will bring that matter to an end and you will give that Lady the items of clothing she still needs. We will include a cloak or 90 frs for the clothes. You can claim this money, if necessary, from your Madame Superior General, or at least, as much as you spend to get the clothes Mme Justine needs. The other things coming to that Lady belongs to the Institute.

Tell all your dear Children I have not forgotten them in my prayers these days. May Heaven be worthy of our efforts! Let us be meek, let us be humble, let us be generous, let us work zealously for our salvation and that of the children the Lord entrusts to us, and Heaven will be our reward. There we shall be with God, with Mary, with Joseph, with the Angels and the saints and with our dear Sisters. Amen! Amen!

Meanwhile, I wish always and with the help of grace to show myself

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd November 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

5-33

Madame Superior

I thank you for the prayers you and your very dear community have addressed to Heaven for me during the touching feasts we have just been celebrating. You know from experience, that on my side prayers rise towards the Lord for my Children every day, but with a doubling of zeal on all the chief feasts of our holy religion. Among many other graces that I have asked for all of you, these days, through the intercession of the august Mary and her blessed Spouse, I have been insistent about obtaining for you a generous disposition to obedience. It was the example of our great model that urged me to do so. On reflecting on what Jesus Christ teaches us as soon as he comes into this world, that hardly was he born than he gave the earth the astonishing sight of a God dependent on men, that from his circumcision, he began the long succession of acts of submission that ended only with the greatest of all, his obedience unto death and death on a cross; I felt impelled to urge you to practice courageously a virtue of which your divine Spouse gives you such great and frequent examples. Whatever we do, we cannot elude authority; but you can, by your happy position, in imitating Jesus Christ, lessen the pain and difficulty of obedience and increase its merit. Of what for many men is a subject of distress, you can make an object of consolation that may render all your moments happy and all your acts meritorious. So apply yourselves to the exercise of your vow of obedience with that ardor that merits your experiencing the sight of what your true friends, your great model and tender spouse Jesus Christ has done. Add to the exercise, the frequent request to understand the most perfect manner of imitating the good Savior in this important point of his teaching, and you will considerably shorten the way to the highest perfection to which you have the happiness of being called.

Please thank Mme Flore for her letter. I do not have the leisure to write to her individually. This letter being for all of you, she too has her share in it. Then you will consult with her about what you will answer me as regards the following question: of what deed of purchase are you speaking of in your last letter? I told you in the past that all our deeds of purchase had to be made in such a form that the property belongs only to the last survivor of the contracting parties. I remember that the Notary made the unfortunate mistake of not following my order, and that he has exposed us to serious inconveniences, but have we not remedied the evil? Did you not get those of our Ladies, who figured in that unfortunate deed that was enacted contrary to my instructions, to sign fresh

deeds? If that was not done, and several of the contracting parties are dead, we shall have difficulties! For complete safety, and to avoid in future any of these untoward acts of forgetfulness on our part, or the notary's, I can see no other remedy than to ask you for that unfortunate deed in order to examine what remedy there is for the evil, or else, if there is still a remedy.

My cold is nearly better. On that matter, Madame Superior, you can be without anxiety. You gave me great pleasure by giving me good news of your children, as regards health.

I am always very sincerely

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd January 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

5-34

Madame Superior

I felt real consolation on receiving the good news your Reverend Superior General brought me of your house. I thank the Lord for what his mercy is doing for our convent of St. John the Baptist; the trials will rebound to its glory and the good of our dear spiritual children. The situation, in particular, of Mme Adélaïde must make us understand that God humbles us in order to raise us up and save us. You cannot repeat that enough to that Lady who is the visible object of great mercy.

It was 24 years ago today that our religious family was born at Alost. I cannot sufficiently marvel at the goodness of God so many proofs of which we have had during this quarter of a century. Let us combine our efforts to express to the Lord the feelings of gratitude we experience and let us redouble our zeal to attract to his service the children Providence entrusts to our care.

Give my compliments to all your dear sisters and tell them that I shall make it my sweet duty to commend them often to God through the intercession of St. Joseph, during this month that we consecrate to that powerful Patron.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th March 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

5-35

Madame Superior

I admit to you that I can not explain to myself the request made for papers I had left at Mouscron. It is perhaps the anxiety of Mme Delphine (or rather that of her family) that gives rise to this unusual step. But even in that case, the thing is very surprising. You did well to return the signature. However, you cannot stop at that. You must make a little deed of resale of the eventual rights Sr. Delphine has in your house as a result of the purchase in which she figures. Then you will send it to her to be signed. You will in no way be able to go there yourself. I shall tell you the reason for all that when I see you. The deed of sale may bear as purchasers the members who bought with Sr. Delphine and who are still alive. You see that we have to deal with very suspicious people. Talk all this over with Mme Flore. I am delighted to learn that everything continues to be on a good footing at your place and that the month of Mary was well spent.

Tell your dear sisters I will make it my sweet duty to commend you specially to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose feast we are going to celebrate. Mme Adélaïde will have a big share in my commendations to the heart of our divine Master.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th June 1841

Praise to J.M.J.

5-36

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I thank you with all my heart for the good wishes you addressed to me, and very specially for the prayers you sent up to heaven for me on the occasion of the great feast of the triumph of

Mary. I understand the sincerity of the feelings that animate your heart; I have appreciated it for many years. So you understand, my dear daughter, that I am touched by your filial piety and religious submission to the holy will of your divine Spouse. You procure for me sweet consolations. May I, in my turn, obtain for you consolations to sweeten the natural bitterness bodily sufferings cause! At least I address with confidence the Lord and beg him each day to grant you the unction of the Holy Spirit so that you will have their reward in eternity. So have courage! Entrust your interests to the hands of our heavenly Mother, count on the mercy of God and on the immense love of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will also go on commending you to the Sacred Heart of your divine Spouse, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. That is exactly how I wish to prove to you that I am truly

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th August 1845

(Letter lost/missing) 5-37

Praise be J.M.J. 5-38

To my dear Mother in Our Lord, and to all our dear Sisters of the Convent of St. John the Baptist

The letter which you asked dear Sister Adelaide to write to me brought me up to date on all that happened in your house, in the way that was very satisfactory, and the one you added to it gave me the 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 sentiments; 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 addressed my expression of sincere gratitude. Yes, may the God be blessed, 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 full of lessons for us, leads me to tell you at this moment: the peace of the Holy Spirit which the divine Spouse of our Sisters 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 neighbor, by charity, by gentleness, by the humble and unaffected expression of our holy friendship, and 3) with ourselves by discarding the things of this world and above all by mortification of our disordered desires. This peace is, I say, in the plans of God, the end of your sublime vocation; this is the hundredfold which Jesus Christ promised here below to those who renounce all to follow him. Happy, says our good Master, happy are the peacemakers, they will be called the children of God.

In fact, they will show the glorious characteristics of the children of God, by the resemblance 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 that he pours into our hearts. But you, my dear Sisters, you the children of Mary and 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... Therefore, love peace in all and always. Keep it, if necessary, at all cost. Maintain it carefully, suffer everything, give up everything rather than break the sacred link that unites you among yourselves, and that binds you to God, to Jesus the 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. Humbly conform your sentiments to those of your Superiors and your Rule. Fear pride; fear curiosity; fear superficiality. These are the sources of trouble; carefully avoid them and do not stop being on guard against them. Train yourselves to that amiable cheerfulness which makes you happy and dear to God and to those whom you are called to edify and to console. There it is, my very dear Children, this is what I believe I must tell you in these moments of grace, I whose

words would not be doubted by you, I to whom God has given for you the heart of a father. May that sweet peace of the soul which surpasses everything, remain always with you!
(Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME OLYMPIADE DERVILLE
First Elected Superior General: Superior General 1840-1858
Born Nov. 23, 1812; Professed March 19, 1834; Died Aug. 15, 1887

In the Congregational Archives the letters in the Founder's writing are numbered from 1 to 374. The original number system is followed here even though only 106 letters and numerous fragments are extant: Letters dated 1833 to 1851.

L.S.J.M.J.

6 -1

In your letter, my dear child, there is rather too melancholy a tone; I do not like those extremely vague accusations made against a soul that is so dear to me. Oh! you must not tell me that you no longer have any faults, I would not believe it; but do not tell me either that you are not making any progress in the way of perfection. It is certain that you have received many lights since you have been in the convent, and I dare to assure you that you are often doing violence to yourself. I understand that you have not triumphed over all your enemies, but you have discovered them and a part of their strength is lost as a result of that. Continue with humble, meek courage and you will make yourself pleasing to the one who has chosen you out of thousands and thousands to prepare you for the greatest dignity you can attain here below. So be meek and humble.

I am taking note of the last words of your letter, but you will go on all the same, without fear, without mental reservations: Jesus will be yours and you will be his! Amen. As for me, I am lovingly

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th October 1833

L.S.J.M.J.

6-2

Dear Sister

The presence of our very Reverend Mother will be of use to you in several respects. However, I will tell you that you must arm yourself with courage and not let yourself go to sadness, whatever the motive. That passion would do you incalculable harm and Jesus Christ would be offended by that disposition in a heart that he inhabits and that he wants to be calm. Set yourself against involuntary impressions and strengthen a little that dead body that you must however take care of for the sake of God. Do not imagine, my Child, that you are inconstant since you experience physical dispositions that differ from each other from morning until evening; console yourself; that is very simply a result of that body of clay that we have to carry around and sustain with resignation. So, no more anxiety on that account. Let us pray to the divine Spouse and be cheerful as befits a spouse of the peaceful and simple Lamb par excellence.

Explain yourself clearly to your Rev. Mother; you will find her a person experienced in this matter and one who has received grace to direct her children.

Good-bye, my good Sister, believe in one who is with all his heart
Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

12th August 1834

Do not study too hard, take care of the strength our good God has given you for you to use it for his Church and not for an immoderate desire for knowledge.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-3

My dear Sister

I did not have the leisure to answer your letters sooner; our good God wanted to make you begin at the convent of St. Joseph with a few privations. Do not be too upset by that, my Child, it is through privations that we form ourselves and reform our poor hearts. Our divine Spouse has such extensive rights over us; he deserves all your affection so exclusively that it must not be surprising to see him so careful about detaching you, humiliating you, in order to give you some likeness to him, and to bind you to his heart in a manner worthy of his adorable love. So, may the loving Spouse accomplish his work and, according to his good pleasure, train that dear soul I had so much pleasure in sacrificing to him on the feast day of St. Joseph.

I thank you, my child, for the details you have given me about the dispositions and studies of our dear Sisters. You know how keenly I want them to educate themselves while continuing the work of spiritual perfection, so that they may be useful to themselves and others according to the purpose of their Institute. Continue with zeal the task I have imposed on you. Take care to get our Sisters to work on notebooks, so that one day I may judge the work they did each day or each week.

A word about your letters, in regard to the art of letter-writing: in general the style is simple and naive enough; it gives one a glimpse of the fact that success will come through practice. (Three lines about spelling crossed out).

Your writing is improving. There are too many long tails to certain letters; your 'd' is too big; for example d (written very big). There are capital letters in the middle of sentences, for example, the Week, I Felt?

Please tell the postulant Augustine she must have more courage towards our good God and have more confidence in him. Certainly, she is much mistaken if she hopes to have a second Fr. Delbeque who will console her, as children are consoled. When you know her better, you will talk to her about the Holy Rule, religious exercises, etc. Her self-love must not be so readily frightened by a sort of forgetfulness in which a lay postulant is left. I do not know whether it is useful to teach her to write; that depends on what she knows. In a word, tell that child she must be patient and learn to obey and to do what is asked of her without being given any choice.

Good-bye, dear Olympiade, may the Lord deign to bless your efforts; that is what I ask of him with a good heart and very sincerely.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th June 1834

L.S.J.M.J

6-4

Yes, my dear Sister, it is a happy metamorphosis that mercy has just brought about in you. I am very much consoled by it and so full of gratitude to the author of all good, that the sentiments will remain deeply engraved in my heart. How good God is and how fortunate we are to see ourselves in this way as objects of his ineffable love! I am all the more conscious of that bestowal of grace and generosity, as I like to persuade myself that your heart will in no way be ungrateful! I think I know you enough to be able to expect you to respond generously to the designs of your divine Spouse, to form yourself according to the obligations of a spouse of Jesus Christ, and an instrument of divine mercy for the salvation of the souls that are to be entrusted to your care.

The conclusions that grace has made you draw from your retreat, and the good intentions it has made you have, are for me a fresh proof that the Lord will accomplish what he has so generously begun in you. Dear Child, follow the voice of the Lamb who is calling you; walk in the odor of sweetness that Jesus Christ bestows to attract you; and, when the way appears hard to you, cast your eyes on the author of your happiness; the sight of him will give you courage and the love of the divine Heart will warm you; then nothing will oppose the designs of the goodness of God on you and perhaps on a great many others whom you are to attract to him.

How sweet it is for me also, my dear Olympiade, to find you simple enough to talk about yourself in all truth. Let us cast down the enemies of our peace, tread underfoot those inventions of pride; may Jesus with all his humiliations serve as our model and let us set more store by the voice of obedience than by all the glories of the world. Let us know how to please Jesus meek and

humble of heart, and we will be exalted enough, happy enough, perfect enough. With his heart, we will be rich enough.

Persevere in the practice of meditation in conformity with what God appears to require of you in that respect. Follow your inclinations in that matter and you will reach the goal that the designs of Providence destines for you. Nevertheless, go gently; spare your strength, and do not upset your heart but let it remain wide open and ready for the orders of your divine Spouse.

That, my child, is what is said to you by one who knows no greater happiness than that of leading you in the ways of God, according to the obligations imposed on him by the office of spiritual Father in which he is invested and which he specially esteems because of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th September 1834

L.S.J.M.J.

6-5

My dear Sister

I submit to the will of our good God which I recognize in the orders of the doctor. You are aware what it must cost me to see that you cannot cultivate the talents that God has given you and your young Institute needs so much. However, if you were not entirely submissive, it could happen that you would soon be unable to work with your mind. So, do not tire your mind and do as much work as possible with the body, but light tasks that do not tire you.

That, my dear child, is what your divine Spouse requires of his spouse Olympiade. Agree that he is indeed the master who can exact these sacrifices, and obey with love; sadness would not suit you in any way.

Good-bye, I am all yours in him whom we must both love and who will be our great reward.

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

3rd October 1834

You must above all avoid mental strain and occupations that take a long time. One must pay the fines to those who have been kind enough to correct our mistakes in speech and pronunciation. Tell Sr. Gonzague that from me so that she can tell the other Sisters.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-6

My dear Sister

I am beginning by remarking on a sentence in your letter; it is the one in which you tell me you would write to me more often, if you were not afraid of stealing time intended for important matters. My Child, you can well believe that I consider important the duties I have to fulfill towards you. The office of spiritual Father that God has given me in regard to you is one of those of which I acquit myself with most pleasure. Let that consideration be enough to encourage you to write to me as many times as you think you will find advantageous. I will judge of the need to answer you. Your letters are always dear to me and very welcome.

I am satisfied with the reports you have given me of your class, of the Sisters and of your study. I am sending you a book that can stay in the convent library at St. Joseph's; you will read that book, without being frightened by the Latin which you have only to pass over; you will perhaps learn from it more than you have done in the rhetoric you have been studying. It is an excellent work for forming taste. On my next journey to Alost, you will talk to me about it and then we will decide about the question of the English language; meanwhile, let the treatise on commerce rest.

In your handwriting I noticed a few defects that must disappear. Your 'c' is sometimes made like capitals. Cependant (however), the 't' in tres (very) is also a capital, the 'n' in "Noel" is not, etc. Your 'M' in the address is not well made. In spite of these defects, I repeat that your letters always please me very much.

My dear child, enjoy the blessing of health in the designs of our good God. Continue being cheerful, the Lord wants you to be. Let your cheerfulness be a modest joy in the presence of God, a simple joy that expands the heart and recreates the mind without intoxicating it and spreads a

balm over all that surrounds it; that sweetens all crosses and increases in everything the value of our work.

All yours, my child, in him who has appointed me

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th December 1834

L.S.J.M.J.

6-7

I am very pleased, my dear Sister, that you received some lights through my brother-in-law Van Wymelbeke, and that you can go on with certitude along the way to which you zeal and duty have led you. That you may have some difficulties with yourself my child is conceivable. When our minds are greatly occupied with an object, they are naturally inclined to find that object almost everywhere. So do not be too upset by a very natural disposition that time alone can teach us to moderate. Try only not to give consent willingly to ideas contrary to your duties of the moment, in a way conformable to what our good God is asking of you in each of these moments. Let us humiliate ourselves because of our faults, but let us never be discouraged. Go to your divine Spouse with faith and confidence and tell him it is for him you are working, that if he finds more zeal in you than is fitting, he may deign to restore you to that wise disposition that is agreeable to him, that your desires are limited to that. In that way, my dear Child, you will lose nothing, in virtue, and the efforts you will be making to acquire certain knowledge on behalf of your Institute.

That, my dear Sister, is what I think I must tell you at the moment. Our good God will be kind enough to add what is missing from my lesson. I beg him earnestly to do so and call myself from the depths of my heart,

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

28th February 1835

L.S.J.M.J.

6-8

To say, my dear child, that I sympathize with you in your troubles, would be of no use at this moment; you need something other than our compassion. It is blind submission that allows no more reasoning that we need now. I understand that the act that calls you to a post different from the one you are occupying causes anxiety: but, my dear Sister, is it from yourself or from God that you expect all that is necessary for the fulfillment of the divine will? Would he who is calling you not have the power to enable you to carry out his orders? Must one reason in a human way about matters of religion? Is it man's abilities or the grace of God that must operate when the work of God is in question? So do not look at the future any more; do not see the present any more according to our feeble calculations; see all in the adorable will of your divine Spouse. Yes, my very dear child, keep yourself in the Heart of Jesus Christ; take your impulses, your direction from it; cast your whole self into that brazier of sacred fire; you will come out purified, recreated and no longer having a taste or inclination except for making sacrifices to your Spouse. If your studies are necessary for the glory and interest of Jesus Christ, they will not suffer from the delays you are afraid of; if they are not, you do not have to regret that they will suffer from an act proceeding from him who must have you without any restriction. Finally, since you have said with such a big heart: Ecce ancilla Domini, add to that: Fiat mihi secundum Verbum tuum!

I join you in making this declaration and will offer it to Jesus Christ at the Holy Sacrifice next Saturday between six and seven o'clock.

I will attend to your errands and recommend you to God through the intercession of our great friends and Patrons. Never doubt for a moment the good and sincere will that I have to prove to you that I will always be in every circumstance and with much zeal,

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th March 1835

I hope, my very dear Sister, soon to receive the news that the house of Mme Cost is definitively for the use of the Children of Mary and Joseph. I have just said Holy Mass in honor of our Holy Patrons and to thank our good God for the graces he has deigned to grant us during this month of St. Joseph. We have received precious ones; our gratitude must be great; fortunately the duties that virtue imposes do not weigh on our hearts.

I see with real pleasure that you are beginning to familiarize yourself with the duties of the office God has entrusted to you. Last Saturday, through the mediation of our august Mother, I offered your full and entire submission to your divine Spouse, while he as sacrificing himself at Holy Mass. I made that offering with a devout heart, it seems to me, and in such a way that you would not want to refuse to ratify what I have done for you with your presumed authorization. So take care to open your heart wide and to count on Jesus Christ, without any fear, without any afterthought. Oh! my child, your heavenly Spouse must be enough for you; for what could you lack if God is with you? If you preserve the conviction of your powerlessness, I promise you on the part of my divine Master, that help from on high will accompany your undertakings and you will have the happiness of working for the glory of God. What an honor indeed, and what happiness there is in generously leading the spouses of Jesus Christ and helping them to fulfill the designs of their Spouse! I am not yet taking any definite decision about the mistresses, the hour of God has not come, and I do not want to anticipate the arrangements of Providence. I am praying and reflecting in peace. Help me, my child, with simplicity and faith.

I applaud the proposal you make to me about Sister Rosalie. But let that arrangement be decided between Reverend Mother and yourself, without the intervention of the Sisters who are accustomed at Alost to meddle in the running of the house, to the detriment of holy subordination and, consequently of the good of souls. You may consult the Sisters but that must be done prudently and in a way that they conclude from it that the superiors are acting prudently, and in no way that the subjects have to meddle in the running of the convent, or that one is obliged to ask their opinions.

See the enclosed remarks that I am addressing to Rev. Mother for both of you.

You have no need to make copies before writing your ordinary letters and for current matters. It will not be long before you are writing well, to the point and as befits a Superior. All for Jesus Christ, my dear Sister. Do not make your capital 'c' like this one 'C', but let the base touch the line.

This is how it is permitted to examine the objects of our obedience: 1. We can examine the thing that obedience asks of us, in a spirit of sincere submission so as to become acquainted with what God is ordering, and with the disposition of doing what is ordered, whatever our repugnance or natural inclination may be. 2. This examination must be limited to the question of knowing whether God has given the order; it must not go beyond that. As soon as it is seen that there is an order, it remains no longer for us to discuss but simply to obey. That is the limit at which our examination must stop; there ends the domain of our mind and there also begins the domain of obedience. Once the divine will is known, our reason must prostrate itself and put us without reserve into the hands of Providence, who is henceforth to be our guide, in a region in which faith enlightens and enlivens everything and our poor minds and feeble hearts have only to allow themselves to be led with docility.

I am answering the sisters of our Sister Gonzague, when I have the leisure to do so tomorrow or the day after.

I am, my Child, all yours for ever in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, the last day of the month of our Holy Patron, 1835

Reverend Mother

I am very pleased that your distribution is over and that it was such a success. May the glory of it be to God alone!

You all need peace of mind and some bodily rest. So, let nothing grieve or torment you, my dear Sister; go gently along on the way of the divine will and of the holy love of your Spouse.

I want your retreat to finish on Tuesday at the latest. I will arrive that day, I hope, at your place and we will deal with various matters we have already spoken about. The confessor for our Sisters is the ordinary and the extraordinary and myself for the whole Institute. I will urge the Sisters to make their review to the ordinary; that is more convenient and more useful, generally speaking. However, the extraordinary may be had during the retreat.

I permit Sister (name crossed out) as a dispensation, to apply to Fr. De Vos, if she so wishes.

Another word for yourself; you must occupy yourself with consoling things that cheer the mind a little while enlarging the heart. You could easily become more pensive and serious, less amiable in your dealings, if you do not put yourself on guard against all that gives rise to fear or sadness. It is experience that has taught me at my own expense what I have just told you. You have more need at this moment of reading the treatise on cheerfulness than on following a retreat with exactitude. I very nearly wrote to you in my last letter that you could not follow this retreat closely.

Give my regards to Fr. De Vos; tell him I will unite my prayers with his loving care for the spiritual good of our dear Sisters of the convent of Alost. I will be eternally grateful to him for the truly extraordinary zeal he has for my Children in God. ... (Last line cut off)

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

26th September 1835

Lost/missing

6-22 to 6-27

L.S.J.M.J.

6-28

I was touched, Reverend Mother, on reading your last letter; the graces our good God is granting to your dear Sisters and to you in particular, arouse in me feelings of lively gratitude. From the depths of my heart I have thanked the Lord Jesus for the marks of tenderness he continually bestows on you. The lights you have received on your spiritual needs are precious favors; receive them with gratitude and apply to your heavenly Spouse, who will grant you the qualities, the virtues he wishes to find in you, and that he is kind enough to point out to you. I have done my best, it seems to me, to obtain for you meekness, simplicity and candor. May the divine Child be touched by the good will that animates you, and we will employ in his service all that he deigns to give you. Are not those your sentiments, my dear Child?

All that is not included in the boarding school fees is to be paid not with the money coming from Sister Pélagie, but by Mlle Vandeweghe.

Mlle Beaudumont will pay at the rate of 150 frs. but the money you have advanced will be reimbursed. The same for Mlle Augustine. You know no doubt that the latter has left (line cross out but one can read): Is the word 'debourse' (disburse) French? It seems to me that it is 'debours' (outlay) or 'debourse' (disbursed) that one should say.

Pay something on account to the creditors who need it most and I will try and send you the money Sister Pelagie is to receive. Meanwhile, count on divine Providence and remember your vows as our good God is giving you the idea of doing.

The most ardent wish of my heart, in these days of benediction, has been that the peace of God which surpasses all understanding may preserve in Jesus Christ, the hearts and minds of my children in God. I have begged Mary and Joseph to help me obtain that grace from the divine Child who was born to merit it for us. One could not be with greater goodwill than I am, my dear child,

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 30th December 1835

I have not found the picture of the Blessed Virgin you asked me for. Say also what day the postulant destined for Wacken will be able to come. She is needed. You could still wait for sometime before sending your Séraphine. They have not yet been able to free themselves of Rosalie.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-29

I cannot put off any longer, Reverend Mother, expressing to you my very keen desire to have news of you. I am anxious, and you must satisfy my very legitimate curiosity without delay. How did you find your convent on your return? How did the installation of your assistant go? How is your health? You see, my dear Child, I could add to my questions; but you will be careful to satisfy me in detail on all these various points. I have been obliged more than once to have recourse to submission to our good God to avoid my heart getting worried by this absence of news. So do not delay any longer in giving me simple explanations. May they be of such a nature as to reassure me! I will give thanks to the Lord Jesus from the depths of my heart.

It is very likely that I will go to Grammont on Monday morning; so that is where you will address your letter. I will be very pleased to see our black Sisters at last occupying a comfortable and healthy house, after being put to harsh trials by their very friends. Our good God is wonderful in the way his Providence works. Let us always have confidence in him and without anxiety count on his ineffable goodness. I say this even more to myself than to you, my child; I feel how small I am and what little confidence I have in thousands of circumstances. Pray for me and believe that I want to be without any restriction

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th February 1836

L.S.J.M.J.

6-30

Although I feel the need, Reverend Mother, to spare you the cost of posting letters, I cannot put off the moment of obtaining for you the satisfaction you will experience on reading the letter from Sr. secretary of our very Rev. Mother. The spirit of your divine Spouse makes himself felt so keenly in that letter; everything in it so noticeably radiates true piety and the pure love of God that I have myself been moved on reading the reply that is address to you. May our good God be blessed!

I am pleased with the dispositions of the two postulants who left for Wacken this morning. They are true children of Mary and Joseph.

Here is a short letter from our postulant (Clothilde) V.M. Read it but keep it a secret. My sister Van Wymelbeke came yesterday to talk to me about the wish of her daughter. God is visibly arranging this matter and it is providing us with fresh marks of his goodness. Let us testify our gratitude to him by a new ardor for obtaining his greater glory: but let us do so more peaceably, more humbly and generously.

I wish you not to tire yourself by doing your accounts. You will be able to tell me the result succinctly. More important things claim your attention and your health needs to be taken care of.

Read the enclosed letters; the one from Sr. (name crossed out) requires attention; it contains instructions that will be useful to you. The one to Sr. (name crossed out) puts you in a position to see our heart as it is in regard to that sister. The one to Sr. Clothilde may be handed to her open and in private, so that you may direct the movements (reactions) it produces.

I think it is good to install this officer without delay, so that they are used to her before your journey to Ghent. You will assemble the community in the chapel to inform them of our decision and to install the new assistant.

Today is the feast of the most holy Name of Jesus. I have been praying with a good heart for you and all my children. May that august name enlighten us, correct us, strengthen us and sanctify us. The name of Jesus is sweeter than honey in our mouths; it is a true melody in our ears and a joy in our hearts. Pray to Jesus for

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th January 1836

Lost/missing

6-31

L.S.J.M.J.

6-32

A little phrase in your last letter, Reverend Mother, has occupied me very much; it is one in which you tell me that Sr. Gonzague is making a novena to know whether she is to leave the Institute or whether she is to stay. The meditations on the Passion of Our Lord brought the thought back into my mind in spite of myself. It seemed to me that I could say to Jesus Christ that we (myself and my children) are seeking him to get to know him, love him and serve him with all our hearts. Yet, the idea that there is among you a sister who is examining whether she is to break the bonds attaching her to Jesus, whether she is to prefabricate, whether she is to apostatize, struck me strangely. The remark Jesus made to the troop that was seeking him to put him to death: Whom do you seek? made a deep impression on me. What are you seeking, you my spouse? You whom I have raised out of the mire of sin to put you on a throne by my side? You seek; you see whether I am worthy of keeping you, the sad, shameful motive of your searching! Strange blindness! Where then is the madness of passions leading that poor Sister? This behavior makes me tremble. I beg you, Reverend Mother, to speak about it to Fr. De Vos. That worthy man who knows what is meant by perpetual vows will be frightened like me by the situation of Sr. Gonzague, and he will make her see the disastrous consequences of seeking Jesus Christ, in views as bad as those that preoccupy that Sister. There is another reason that urges me to inform Fr. De Vos of this matter: it is that the Sisters, at least some of them, and the Dean, have noticed that this Rev. Father has the charity to help Sr. Gonzague. If, after following that guide, she ends up by giving the scandal which she seems meditating, I can see troubles of a fresh kind; and Fr. De Vos is far from deserving them. So reveal all the conduct of Sr. Gonzague to Fr. De Vos.

You know how sincerely I am your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 28th February 1836

L.S.J.M.J.

6-33

On returning from my confessional yesterday evening, my dear Reverend Mother, I found your letter, and although I always experience great satisfaction at the sight of your letters, a sad presentiment warned me that I was to experience a painful sentiment. I began to pray before reading you, and in spite of that means, my heart was painfully affected by the news that the unhappy rebellious child gives me. However, your good sentiments, my dear child, and those of your other Sisters eased my pain. The night gradually restored me, and after the celebration of Holy Mass, I find myself not only relieved but consoled and in profound peace, submissive to the adorable will of our good God. I can even see a good for the Institute in the misfortune of a person who does not want any of the happiness we wanted for her. A dead branch cut off from the trunk frees the latter and makes it more vigorous, more long-lived. So, console yourself, my child, committing everything to divine Providence who draws the good of his glory out of evil itself. No more sadness, no more heartbreak; but peace, meekness, complete submission to Jesus Christ. Let us put everything into the hands of that true and generous friend who loves our humble Institute much more than we could do. Let us not forget that it is by crosses that love is made and sustained. It was thus that St. Joseph brought it about that we commemorate this month in his honor, during which great graces await us.

Let a deep silence be kept, no one speak of this matter. Let no one even know anything about it. See the letter I am writing to your poor sister and urge her to do sincerely what I am asking her to do.

I recall here that it was also pride and ambition that destructed the convent at Namur last year and (word illegible) momentarily the boarding school that was there; as so on as the gangrenous members were cut off from the body, everything was restored to a better order than had been seen there for a long time, and the boarding school already has about sixty pupils. Thanks to the good spirit of your children, Reverend Mother, that at your place may it be found that the

evil has been concentrated in a single person. We do not know the designs of God, but it may be hoped that after this trial your establishment will receive new strength from on high; let us have confidence. You do not tell me whether you have read my last letter to Fr. De Vos. You may remind him of what I have just said about Namur.

The Lord is also trying our convent at Bruges: Sister Augustine is ill and Sister Joséphine has been; she is convalescent. Would there not be a way to send your Sr. Claire there? If your reply is in the affirmative, send that sister to my place without delay.

I am struck by the beauty of the following words by Fénelon that I have just read at a very opportune moment: "I want to desire only what pleases the master of all; you must likewise want the whole without sadness or grief. Oh! what a great and fortunate resource one has when one has found an all-powerful love that takes care of us and never does us any hurt except in order to load us with good things!"

And these are not less fitting to strengthen us: "Oh! how happy we will be if we are all together one day in heaven before God, loving each other only with a single love, rejoicing no longer but with his single joy and no longer being able to be separated from each other. We are already happy in the midst of our troubles because of our attachment with this happiness." So let us suffer, my very dear child, let us hope and let us rejoice in the Lord. That is the most ardent wish of the heart of

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd of St. Joseph's month 1836

Praise and adored be the risen Jesus!

6-34

Very dear Sister

I have just said Holy Mass, and you can feel my joy at the memory of the triumph of our loving Master and merciful Savior has not been mediocre. I make it a sweet duty of mine to come into your midst to rejoice with you at the subject that causes the joy of the whole Church. I have not forgotten my other children, but it seems to me that, as you are deprived of the presence of your dear Mother, you deserve a little preference from me today. So, all is accomplished, my Sisters; the decree condemning us no longer exists; the blood of Jesus Christ has wiped it out; that is our ransom! Our debts are cleared; heaven is reconciled with earth. Jesus Christ is risen, death and hell are conquered; they have no more power over him. This is truly the happy day the Lord has made; let us celebrate it with all the joy and all the gladness of which we are capable. Let us bless Jesus Christ that we have shared his humiliations and sufferings with him, of having renounced the world and sin through his grace and having won with him an important victory over death and the devil. Let us rejoice in the triumph of this meek and peaceful conqueror. Let us give our souls up to transports of a lively joy, a holy joy that expresses the feelings of which our hearts must be full today. The risen Christ is also the model of our resurrection: Once risen, he dies no more, says St. Paul. We must be firm in the resolutions we have made; we must be more and more united with our divine Spouse, through recollection, moderation, the forgetfulness of self, that renders us so dear to the heart of Jesus, and at the same time so useful to our neighbor. In all our needs may our usual refuge be the thought of our beloved Savior who sees us, protects us and hides us in his wounds, those glorious trophies of his victory.

How fortunate you are, my dear Children, to be always with Jesus and to work exclusively with him and for him. Your Rule and the voices of your Superiors indicate to you in an infallible way what your divine Spouse is asking of you in every circumstance. So be very docile, be courageous and you will advance with God our Savior from triumph to triumph until you are admitted to contemplate him unclouded and enjoy him without division and without interruption.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, Easter Sunday 1836

L.S.J.M.J.

6-35

Reverend Mother

I thanked our good God very much for the consolation he deigned to grant me, last Wednesday, my joy was mixed with anxiety; but it seemed to me that on leaving you, I could entertain the hope that you will recover your health completely provided that you are docile and do not spoil these good dispositions we have obtained from the Lord. Submit blindly to the diet prescribed for you and make it a duty to sacrifice your natural taste every time it is in opposition to our recommendations. That, my child, is what duty requires of you against yourself; be faithful to what it dictates; you must mistrust your self-love, will and natural inclinations.

I count on leaving for Wacken tomorrow after dinner. From there I will go to Belleghem and finally to Mouscron. There will be a first communion which provides me with the means of informing you of my reflections. According to all appearances, our very Rev. Mother will arrive at Ghent on the 24th or 25th of this month and I think that you will then be summoned there to make some arrangements and decisions together about matters not yet finally decided upon; Sister Henriette will accompany you, I think.

It is beyond doubt that the Church does not require her children to abstain from work on feast days that have been suppressed. The only wish that she indicates is that one should hear Mass or be present at the Divine Office. To say or exact more would be to act against the wish of the Church; it would result in false consciences.

The Bishop is less uncomfortable; but I think his life is continually in danger, though he walks about his garden. I have reason to think that there need be no more fear as regards the occupations you dread for me. Do not worry any more; I think I have definitely warded off all danger.

Sister Flore asked me to whom the Lord said he would himself be our very great reward: it is to Abraham that this magnificent promise was made.

Do not pay for the 2 dozen art of letter-writing that Spitaels has sent you. There is an account to be settled between him and me, and the amount of your bill can serve for that purpose.

Finally, my dear child, carefully nourish the good sentiments that God has put into your heart during your illness. Be a true Mother to all your children. Be amiable with everybody although they come and interrupt when you are in the middle of other occupations; think that it is the Lord who is calling and you will easily leave God for God. Apply yourself to your work in moderation and never for a long time at a stretch until I allow you to do otherwise. I am always with all my heart and without reserve

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th April 1836

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-36

6-37

Reverend Mother

From a full heart I have thanked the author of all-good for the graces he has deigned to bestow on us during these days of mercy. I still hope to obtain from his goodness those we will need in order to respond to so many favors, and to fulfill the designs of God for all of us. In the midst of so many blessings, I sometimes feel an anxiety I must not hide from you; it is, my dear child, that you expose rather lightly the health your divine Spouse entrusts to you for you to use it with prudence. That constraint that God requires, and those precautions we do not stop telling you about are means of pleasing Jesus Christ all the more surely as (erased by fold) at your place I find less sympathy. So be docile in that, as you are so easily in everything else; your children would only have to gain by it; simple obedience is worth as much as the lessons of mortification of self.

I have looked over the two notes you sent me; I approve of them absolutely; they express the spirit of your holy Rule. The one about going out to see one's father or mother on their death-beds is to be placed immediately after No. 17 in Chap. 5. I think we have corrected what there is in the preceding No.15 about (Rev) Mothers going out with their assistants. Please examine it, and tell me when you write to me. Look at the ceremonial I am sending back to you on pages 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24; these words will have to be put to the chant of the Church, 26, 28, 29, 31, 32 the

adjective mortuary does not say what is needed. Look for the name that is given to the cloth that is put over coffins during the services for the dead, 33, 35. We will do well to get Mimie Van Wymelbeke, when she is at your place, to copy out all that deals with the clothing and the profession; in short, what the priest must have during those ceremonies. We will have it bound, but that must be written on strong, good quality paper, 91, 92, 93; I do not know whether I have said anything different in my notes that you took away.

I see no objection to the history being in the notebook you tell me about but the editing and also the writing must be done carefully.

I am very pleased to know that you have paid back the bond of Mr. C. and have found the means to pay for the breakfast for the first communion children. I made it my duty to specially recommend those children to our good God.

Being afraid lest my letter of Saturday be sent to Grammont and you may not know to whom to turn in regard to the various questions my dear Sister Aloÿse had put to me, I am sending you my letter and the ceremony today.

I have not done the corrections of the two prayers because I doubt whether it is right to give you such formulae. What do you think about it?

My kind regards to my dear children and especially to Sister Aloÿse.

Do not forget in future to put a date on your letters.

I am always, as you have known me to be, yours very devotedly in Jesus Christ and entirely disposed to prove to you that I understand the meaning of the term spiritual Father; do me the pleasure of showing me that you dare in all circumstances to count with confidence on

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd of Mary's month 1836

Lost/missing

6-38

L.S.J.M.J.

6-39

I sincerely thank you, my dear child, for the assurance you have just given me that reasonable care will be taken of the health of the two that are, as you know, very dear to me. I had not until now full reason to feel easy in my mind on that count; you must agree that those deposits (trusts) confided into the hands that, without injustice, I could suspect of not working according to my intentions in all things. I again thank both you Reverend Mother, and all your children, for the prayers you are offering for another (one's) health that you wish to see restored for the service of the good and merciful Master we have in common. May the Lord deign to answer us all and to give back to you the hundredfold of the good that your charitable hearts wish me to have! I am already feeling the effects of your good prayers and your divine Spouse is granting me more than you have asked of him; another more dangerous illness than languishness of body has been making me groan for a long time. It really seems to me that I can see my spiritual wretchedness a little; that the Lord is at last succeeding in opening the eyes of a blind man and his generous hand is pouring a health-giving balm on the wounds pride has caused in my poor soul. May I at last respond to the voice of our merciful Father and profit by the graces your charity and kindness are procuring for me in a tangible way! My great desire, Reverend Mother, is for us to help each other to become worthy instruments of the designs of the peace and of reconciliation that animate the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ whom we have promised to serve until death.

Our diocese is successively undergoing great losses: a brilliant light has been extinguished by the death of Fr. Rijckevaert, titular canon, member of the Bishop's council, President of the Seminary and the most learned man in Belgium in ecclesiastical matters; and now the charitable and active Fr. Triest, another titular Canon and the Instructor in Belgium for the Sisters and Brothers of Charity, has also just been called to go and collect the crown he has merited. Fortunately, the source from which they drew light and zeal is inexhaustible, and the prime mover and only real author of all perfect good is impassive and immortal.

You will find my replies to the various questions you have submitted to me in the notebook I am sending back to you, and you will also find in it some corrections.

The health of my niece Van Wymelbeke has been restored. They are preparing for the separation with much courage. In a few days time, the family farewell dinners are beginning (effaced by line) ...

... happiness for me to see this blessing from heaven on a person so close to me. I am praying our good Mother Mary to accept my thanks, and to get her divine Son to accept them, for the honor he is doing me by calling my niece to be his Spouse in the family of Mary and Joseph. I see nothing greater on earth; nothing that better shows the goodness of God towards us. I am not telling you to help me to testify my gratitude to the Lord, you must have understood my desires and anticipated my requests. Our postulant will come to you in a fortnight's time.

Here is a parcel of books for the library of the pupils; some of them are very pretty; they will be pleased with them.

Please talk to the printer Spitaels and conclude the business according to my instructions that you will find at the bottom of his bill to our brothers at Grammont. I am enclosing it here.

Good-bye, Reverend Mother, have confidence in God and foster the good desires your heavenly Spouse puts into your heart. Your last letter exhaled a perfume of religious sentiments that are worthy of animating the true daughters of Mary and Joseph. You know, dear child, that I am speaking to you from the fullness of my heart. I pray Jesus Christ to complete the work he has begun in you with rare liberality.

Continue your prayers for

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th June 1836

L.S.J.M.J

6-40

If you feel, Reverend Mother, that you and all your dear Sisters are under obligations to me, I indeed like to admit to you that I am also under them to you, and it is to your prayers that I owe my restoration to health. I had hoped that I would have had to add to so many other favors that I owe to the most holy Virgin Mary, that of the cure of my eyes, and, in fact, my confidence has not been in vain; my eyes are better and my health restored. I have just thanked Mary Queen of Angels and our tender Mother, and, through her, her divine Son Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is finally to Mary and Jesus Christ that our thanks must rise. That is the center on which all the good sentiments our hearts conceive must converge, and it is from there that the rays of grace that cause us to act supernaturally come to us. Oh! admirable organization of the workings of the love of God for men! It is his invisible hand that distributes all good things; creatures are only the channels for them. Oh! my dear children, let us accustom ourselves always to distinguish the true author of the favors we receive, whatever the instrument his goodness uses to give them to us in the first place. See your divine Spouse everywhere and your hearts will be more and more inflamed with the sweetest sentiments towards him. Your gratitude will be an ever-renewed motive for new graces that Jesus will be pleased to give you and from this conflict of generosity and gratitude there will arise spiritual treasures which will make you instruments of the mercy of the Lord and beautify your crowns for eternity.

I have learned these days that my dear godchild Colombe is going to the convent, after the holidays. I hope it will be the convent of St. Joseph.

I beg you to read my letter to Sr. Colette, which I am enclosing, and to explain it to her.

Do not forget to see the boarders a little more often, especially at the approach of the holidays.

If Sr. Clothilde's feet swell more than usual, you must have recourse to the bandages and the other remedies used two years ago.

I am going on from here. I see in the letter I received yesterday evening that you are not fully restored to health. I wish to make with you and Sister Aloÿse a novena to our Holy Mother, in honor of her Immaculate Conception and in honor of St. Philomène. You will wear a medal but not do so conspicuously; Sr. Aloÿse will do likewise, we will say the litany of the Blessed Virgin and a prayer to St. Philomena daily. We will begin on Saturday so as to finish the novena on Sunday the 17th of this month. We will ask for the recovery of your health and that of our Sr. Aloÿse, so that

you may each, on your part use it for the good of the Institute, of which God has given you the grace to be members. Our request will be subordinate to the most holy Will of God which we put above everything else.

The first family dinner to say good-bye to my niece has taken place. There were many tears and then we were edified and enjoyed ourselves. The separation of Mimi from her parents will be a hard blow for her but she is making her sacrifice generously. I hope God will accept it. We are counting on arriving at your place on the 19th after dinner. We will have dined at Melle. There will be no ceremony. The postulant will be cordially welcomed and it will be restricted to that. I will leave the same day with my sister. You (word illegible) the nieces with confidence.

The letter of Sr. Colette gives me great pleasure. Please tell her so and then read my short letter that is addressed to her. You will add a few explanations to it. Does it not seem to you that Sr. Clothilde should have taken advantage of receiving the books to write to me? If you think so, tell her so from yourself, when the opportunity arises. A little more delicacy in her feelings towards her superiors would not be bad for her. Act very prudently in this respect; one could make things worse by imprudently applying a remedy at the wrong time.

I do not stop praying God to bless our efforts and not to withhold his generosity towards the children of Mary and Joseph, because of certain human imperfections the greater part for which I am perhaps responsible. So pray for me, my child, I am in spite of my imperfections,

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th July 1836

Lost/missing

6-41

L.S.J.M.J.

6-42

Reverend Mother

I regret I did not have more time to spend with you, and was so incapable of using well the little time I spent at your place. I was very tired and incapable of concentrating my mind on anything. The honor God was doing me as well as my family by calling my niece to the outstanding happiness of one day becoming the spouse of Jesus Christ, had made an impression on me that the weak constitution of my body did not easily bear. I have been edified by the marks of faith and the spirit of sacrifice that animated my sister and her husband. May the Lord be a thousand times blessed for them!

I greatly approve of the mistress of novices being at table placed near her children or pupils, and that at all times, in the rather large convents, even when there are no novices. It is excellent supervision for the young Sisters who are placed too far from their Mother.

This is what I think I must say to you about Sister Agnes: I am convinced that it is time for me to occupy myself with this Sister in a special way; the enemy of God and of the souls that are consecrated to him has taken a certain ascendancy over her. Her heart (text torn) is virtuous but her spirit is rather odd and capricious, and her imagination is lively and used in her case to take place of her judgment in many circumstances. Now this reversal of order, letting the crazy one of the house (as the imagination is often designated in ascetic style) perform the functions of reason, is a source of great upsets both in body and in soul. So Sr. Agnes must be put on her guard against the dangers of the imagination and of that oddity of spirit that all the Sisters have noticed and our Sr. Agnès does not see. I will even tell you that some ecclesiastics have noticed it and that it is said that there is at least one stubborn, capricious Sister in your convent, a fact which would end up by doing harm to your community. Here are my other remedies: for some time Sr. Agnès will exercise no authority over anyone, she will be served and directed by you alone and by the infirmarian alone. She will avoid all peculiarity in all things. If you find it good, she will do manual work, make beds, clean the house, help in the kitchen. She will leave aside every occupation that makes it easier for her to follow her inclination to exempt herself from any community occupation.

After some time, you will inform me of the results of my remedies. If the evil happens to persist, I will send this Sister to another convent. Unfortunately her caprices have ruined her reputation at Mouscron among the Superiors. So, it would not be there that I can place her.

You may read the preceding to Sr. Agnès.

I like to think that my niece has spent the two preceding days, if not cheerfully, at least generously. That is how I wish her to lay the first foundations of the great edifice she is called to raise to God. Generosity, love of God, confidence in Mary and Joseph will make things as sound and lasting for her as they did for our Savior himself. She knows that I do not forget her in my prayers. Her happiness is great; it is reflected even on the members least solid in their piety among my relatives. As for me, I do not see how I can testify my lively gratitude to the author of all these blessings. I beg you Reverend Mother, help us thank our good God for the great graces he is granting us.

I am leaving on Sunday evening for Wacken and Belleghem. I will go to Mouscron, please God.

Take care of your health out of obedience and keeping God in mind.

Good-bye, Reverend Mother, always count on the prayers of your devoted spiritual Father whose great regret is that he does not have any to present to God that may please him more.

C. G. Van Crombrughe

22nd July 1836

L.S.J.M.J.

6-43

Reverend Mother,

I do not know how urgent some of the errands are, the result of which is in the enclosed packet.

I was edified, my Child, by the sentiments that our good God is giving you and that you have set down in your last letters. The very Reverend Mother will make it her sweet duty to unite her prayers with ours in order to obtain perseverance for you. There is a passage in your letter, in which I think I notice thoughts showing excessive mistrust, as if you lacked the grace to correct yourself. You are right to conclude that discouragement does not lead to any thing. Oh, what a disastrous experience I myself have had of that! Let us count on the goodness of God but mistrust ourselves; we are indeed very wretched but God is powerful and merciful.

The first time you write to me, you will send me the last letter you received from your very Reverend Mother.

Our dear Sister Aloÿse writes sound reasons to me against having silence at breakfast. If you have not yet changed that custom on this point, wait and let us submit the matter to a fresh examination.

I have received the formulae for the consecration to the Blessed Virgin drawn up by the Sisters at Mouscron. I have not been able to examine them yet. I would be very pleased to receive yours by my nephew Henri who will call at your place on next Tuesday or Thursday.

The parcel of letters from Mouscron will prove to you that the journey of Sr. Marie Anne has done good and so will the reply of Sr. Flore to Sr. Bathilde. The last-named sister is better but the passion she has satisfied too much, (her passion for study) has held her back for a long time in the way of perfection and she has done harm to her health which is even rather impaired.

I was very consoled to learn that our dear Sisters Clothilde, Euphrosine and Colette have responded to grace, and the wounds that was threatening the well-being of their souls has been recognized, prodded and in some way cauterized. I admit to you that the fault of generosity in the first of these Sisters, the lively imagination and unmortified will of the second and that tendency to draw attention to herself of the last-named were more than sufficient causes for stopping them advancing in the way of perfection. Do not neglect, Reverend Mother, to keep them up-to-date as regards the efforts you notice in each of them on the part of their personal enemy. The roots of the evil could well grow again, if one did not watch very closely.

I am pleased also to learn that the classes of the day pupils are going very well. I like to think you will be able to tell me the same thing about the boarders and the progress of the sisters in knowledge and good manners, as well as in generosity towards God and amiability towards their neighbors.

Receive my blessing, dear Child

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th August, the 47th anniversary of the happy day on which I became a child of God by baptism. Please join with me in thanking the Lord for his blessings and asking pardon for my innumerable sins and acts of ingratitude. I am speaking sincerely to you.

Lost/missing

6-44 to 6-46

L.S.J.M.J.

6-47

Reverend Mother,

As usual your letter gave me much pleasure. I thank you for the charitable sentiments you express to me. Mr. Van Wymelbeke and my nieces are very pleased with their journey.

I have read your little speech and am very pleased with the sentiments you express in it. The style would need to be more careful and more polished.

You have not sent me all the acts of consecration. There was only the one of Sr. Colette which is very good for the author. Instead of answering the question I had asked you about the amount your house is burdened with, you tell me that the money raised at 5% interest amounts to over 10 frs. This inaccuracy which does not escape you for the first time, arises, I think, from the fact that you do not re-read the letters at the time when you answer them, which is however indispensable if one is not to subject oneself to omissions. With the help of Mlle De Brandt, please look at the deed of purchase of the house and find out what the amount is that is mortgaged, and then, with Mlle Colette as intermediary, consult the notary Evit on the way to reimburse it. After that, write without delay, to the Reverend Father Superior at Grammont asking him to bring you the money. It seems that, instead of January, it is in December and even perhaps at the beginning of the said month, that the amount at 4% will be handed to him.

I hope we will profit with zeal by the season of Advent to prepare ourselves for Christmas.

Good-bye, my dear daughter, believe that I am as much as one can be

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th November 1836

L.S.J.M.J.

6-48

Reverend Mother,

I am very pleased that the letter I sent last Saturday has eased your mind about the state of my health. For a year, I have not been as well as I am now. Thank God, it seems to me that I sincerely wish to use this health and all the gifts I possess through his generosity for his greater glory and for the benefit of the education of the young. I thank our good Master also with all my heart for restoring you to health; I know that you also have no other ambition than to use all you have in the service of the heavenly Spouse. May God be blessed for that!

Yes, my dear Child, your post is an important one, but it is not beyond your strength when supported by grace. So, count on grace and do not worry: you can do all things, like St. Paul, in him who gives you his strength. Have pity on the weaknesses of Sr. Pauline and treat her cordially. Be convinced that she herself does not believe in what the enemy is suggesting to her: you are right about the chapter on preferences and, on that point, all your Sisters are of the same opinion. You could perhaps get Sr. Euphrosine to feel that she does not humor Sr. Pauline enough to whom she owes respect, as her senior, and that she could perhaps be a little less zealous in coming to consult you during silence. However, I leave that to your prudence.

You will do well to employ Amélie provisionally, as you plan to do, as long as you have no replacement or else she has no other post. I look upon it as a subject leading to many inconveniences to admit lay sisters who do not understand French. I will send you one from Mouscron where I am sending some in turn to learn your language a little.

I am surprised at the conduct or rather the plan of the sodality members. Is not Sr. Gonzague present at their meetings? If she is, she must have hundreds of reasons for opposing those indelicate pretensions. Keep to what you write to me, or else take back the chairs at the

price they cost and make the sodalists pay for the candles, fire, use of the chairs and the day's or half-day's wage to give to the person who will clean up every time they meet, etc.

I think it is not right to speak of me in these discussions, except to Mlle Colette who has too much commonsense not to feel rather upset at the sight of such ignoble proceedings. Pardon me for that expression which has just fallen quite naturally from my pen. Does Sr. Agnes not understand the unsuitability of this conduct any better? I would be surprised at that.

You will not have the carpet fixed to the stairs except by means of iron rods or something similar so that it can be easily taken out to clean it. On the lower stairs, a coarse material must be used to cover it when the weather is bad; for want of these precautions, the carpet will last only a short time.

I give my blessing with a big heart to my dear daughter Olympiade.

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 28th November 1836

Praise be Mary our Mother and her divine Son Jesus Christ

6-49

Reverend Mother,

What a lovely day this 21st of November is for the happy daughters of Mary and Joseph! What a magnificent sight was offered to us by the whole of our Institute prostrate before the divine Spouse surrounded by his angels of peace and all the heavenly court, receiving the renewal of the sacred promises of his beloved spouses! Our good Mother as mediatrix offered her son the outpourings of your hearts and passing through her hands, your offerings were doubly pleasing to him. Yes, Mary was pleased to show that she is your Mother. Now you are all more pleasing to Jesus; you are filled with abundant graces (word effaced) and have become perfect instruments in the hands of mercy. It is with very real pleasure that I contemplate these marvels of the love of God and I will joyfully acquit myself of the sweet obligation I have of adding my thanks to those of my children. I have offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for all of you and did so with feelings of lively gratitude. May we preserve that generosity we felt this morning and even cause it to grow every moment of our lives!

Here is a note that the good Fr. De Vos wrote to me when he passed through Ghent. You will keep it in your archives, Reverend Mother. It is a precious souvenir of an honorable man who gave us great signs of affection during his stay at Alost. We will accompany him with our good wishes on the apostolic journey his zeal has made him undertake.

There is a hope of finding ten thousand francs at 4 per cent. Please tell me what sum the loan amounts to with which your convent is charged at an interest of 5%. I think we will get that sum towards the New Year. There will be all the time appropriate forgetting information on the method of repaying that ruinous sale. But go about it prudently.

I am sending Sister Clothilde a remedy for you. You will take it with simple resignation to my wishes. Our duty is not to neglect any ordinary means of obtaining your recovery. Would you not be happy, my dear daughter, to be able to work for a long time in the vineyard of the Lord? Oh, have we not a generous and loving enough Master? May his adorable will be done; but let us not hinder his plans. That is what I am asking.

Here is the report Sr. Adélaïde sent me on the mistresses of the convent of St. John the Baptist. Except for a few insignificant mistakes this report is well made. You will examine it at leisure and send it back to me when you have the chance.

The little note or Rule for Sisters doing manual work that I am enclosing fell into my hands some time ago. I do not know whether it is to be inserted in the Holy Rule. Please examine it also and put a word about it in your reply. The matter is not urgent. I have finished or nearly finished the writing on the education and instruction our sister are called to give. I like to think you have found the first notebook and will hand it to my niece Maria.

I have with me a young brother who is giving signs of the most precious abilities in all respects. His company is useful to me and even very pleasant. His excellent character, happy attitude for study and, above all, sound piety gives me the well-founded hope that he will render great services to the Institute of our dear Brothers of St. Joseph. That is a real relief to me. May our good God be blessed for it! But is it not a waste of your time, Reverend Mother, to

keep you so long? I had a little spare time and have used it generously without reflecting on the fact that you perhaps do not have any. But you will read me when you have the time. You know how much I like to talk about things Providence has deigned to entrust to me and I know what share you take in them through your love for our common Master Jesus Christ. It is in him that I want always to be

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 21st November 1836

Here are a few samples of colored paper. If you want more, I will get it for you.

6 (a) 20/25 fr. 1.20
1 (a) 12/15 12

1.32

L.S.J.M.J.

6-50

Reverend Mother,

I am hastening to satisfy your wishes and to inform you that the adverb is in the positive: I am well and I give thanks God for it who has deigned to grant me this favor; also I will try to use it in his service. The Bishop on the other hand is quite ill. His Lordship will probably receive the Last Sacraments to-day or to-morrow.

The drawback of not understanding Flemish does not last at Mouscron, French is learned there, when one is not too old. You could perhaps try for a month or two the girl you tell me about. But as she is a servant what will she do if she does not succeed with us? Besides, has she money to pay for her trousseau? I am waiting for an answer from Mouscron where I asked for a lay sister for you. It is possible that your postulant would be able to go and replace the one who comes. It is for you to examine whether that will be possible.

Having money that costs you 4%, you must at once repay your loan; without that precaution you will be paying 4 and 5, i.e. 9%. I hope that Mr. Evit will point out to you a way of avoiding that result, by showing you how you can stop the course of the interest.

I am truly sensitive to the testimonies of interest you and your dear children give me, and above all to the happy disposition the grace of God has accorded to Sr. Stanislaus whose behavior has often made me anxious. You will continue your motherly care of her for she will need it still for some time. The enemy had taken an ascendancy over her that he will not lose without resisting and making new assaults.

The way in which you have expressed to me the satisfaction you have all experienced on receiving marks of devotedness and true friendship from me, was very pleasing to me. May God be blessed for giving us the means of helping each other to procure his glory and to console each other.

I have no spare time for writing to the sisters this time. You may tell Mlle (illegible) that I charge you with announcing to her that I will receive her, but on condition that she does at least six months' preparation by studying, and as a boarder at Mouscron. I would like to know when she hopes to be free, and whether meanwhile, she could not give some time to study. If she writes to me on this subject, I will answer her directly, addressing my letter however to your place.

It seems to me that it is right for you to dine with the pupils on your feast-day. One must do something for the children in such circumstances. That is useful in more than one respect. I am seizing this opportunity to wish you a happy feast. I will give you a special memento that day at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I repeat... (End of Letter cut off)

L.S.J.M.J.

6-51

Reverend Mother,

As I find it impossible to reply to each of our dear Sisters whose letters gave me great pleasure, I am addressing you to beg you to act as the interpreter of my feelings to all your dear children. I am ashamed at knowing I am so far from the idea your filial piety has formed of me; but, Reverend Mother, I admit to you and your sisters quite simply that I do not despair of

obtaining many favors from divine generosity with the help of your prayers, in spite of the infidelities of which, unfortunately, I too, often make myself guilty. Let us make unanimous efforts to triumph over the obstacles that our corrupt natures so frequently put in our way. Let us study the childhood of Jesus, and we will find in it treasures of light for our conduct.

The infant limbs of God made man; his gestures and tears have said more to you more successfully than any man could do. Lovingly follow the sweet impulses the grace of Jesus has made us feel and let your prompt and generous obedience to his voice be a source of merit for all the days of your life; each day will exact sacrifices that are more or less difficult; always, like the Magi, have your heart's eye on the star, whether internal as inspiration, or external as your Rule or the orders of your Superiors, and follow that star promptly and generously and so like the Magi you will always come to Jesus!

At the moment, Reverend Mother, I have just received the news that our good God called our good Sister Eulalie to himself yesterday at 9 o'clock in the morning at the convent of St. John the Baptist. Her end was so edifying that the parish priest of Mouscron did not hesitate to say that the death which takes our dear Sister from us is the death of a saint. Adorable Providence of God that grants our Institute such signal favors! Let us thank that merciful Master and yet pray for the repose of the soul of the Sister who has gone to swell the number of our children in the abode of the blessed.

It seems to me that the conditions presented to us on behalf of the family of Mr. Morus are of a kind to make us prefer to terminate the contract, and safeguard ourselves against every obstacle relating to that neighborhood. If you obtain the reduction in the rate of interest on your loan, we will use your money at Mouscron. I thank you once again as well as all your Sisters, for your good wishes and lovely letters and I give you all my blessing.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. van Crombrughe

Ghent, 6th January 1837

Please, give my compliments of the season to Mlle De Brandt and tell her I urge her to pay a visit to Ghent, if her health is not completely restored.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-52

Reverend Mother

I was very pleased to learn that you are well and everything is going on as one could wish it to do at the convent of St. Joseph. May our good God be blessed for that!

My occupations like yours have been greatly increased all this month. I am beginning to breathe and am giving myself the pleasure of conversing with you.

I have received the money you sent me yesterday. You did well to subscribe to the first two conditions proposed by the de Ruddere family. The third might have caused problems for you in the 40's; it was not certain that you would be able to find money at a fixed time.

If you can build next summer, will you not be regretting that you have not kept a good part of the sum you sent me? I will not say anything yet to Mouscron before receiving your reply on that subject. If the house of Mr. Morus is ours, we will perhaps do well to add what is needed to the boarding school building to double the dormitory and the classrooms.

Could I not announce to Mouscron that Sr. Marie Charlotte will arrive at the end of this month? She would be there for a fortnight with Sr. Aloÿse who would then go and replace her at Alost.

Examine whether the sister of your Mme Roelandt could be suitable for a house like Belleghem or Bruges. In that case I would accept the offer of your big boarder who will not suit us, I think.

Very well-founded remarks have been made to me against your reports to which the accounts are attached, embarrassing the parents and not always permitting them to entrust them to strangers to settle that account when, for example, the report is not very good. It is not fitting either to write before payment is made, that you have received the total amount of the account; that indicates too great a desire to receive payment immediately. Do not put lavage (washing) but "blanchissage" (laundering); in actual fact "lavage" is not French. Put coucher (bed

linen) instead of literie (bedding). There are mistakes in (words erased). You wrote: "Lettre que vous avez daigné~~z~~ (pour daigné)= (Letter you deigned) to write in the letter you wrote yesterday. You also say in it: "Mr. de Rudder assures me that they will approve of what the others have done"; after weighing things up a little, I made up my mind. Between the words done and after, a period was needed instead of a semi-colon; it is the end of one sentence and the beginning of a new sentence. The meaning at this point in your letter is hard to grasp because of this mistake in punctuation.

The parish priest of Alost seems very pleased with the Sisters of Mary; they tell me that the Dean is also very satisfied with them. I thank our good God for these good opinions.

Take care of your health, my dear daughter; God wants you to do so. Remind yourself often of the spirit of your Institute; you must act according to that spirit if you want to obey God and do his work in accordance with his adorable will. We can go wrong by following our own impulses and we can never fail if we conform to the wishes of the Lord which are so clearly expressed in your Rule and in the recommendations of your Superiors.

I repeat that without exception your letters please me very much; tell your dear Sisters so again. But it is impossible for me to answer them. I find this month exhausting; it takes away my time and to some extent my peace of mind; but God wants it like that.

I have not sent the letter of Sr. Colette to her parents. She must write another one and not speak of the religious state in it to her sister who could not be received by us. So one must not increase her desires and her regrets.

May the Lord Jesus be your model, consolation and reward! May his holy Name be adored throughout the universe!

I am always very sincerely

Your most devoted Father,
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(January 1837)

(Beginning of letter is missing)

6-53

I have told you, on my last journey, that I was not counting much on the effect of my prayers. That statement has a very dubious meaning: as it comes from a sinner, my prayer is not worth much; but my prayer can be effective, as prayer, through him who answers us and through the hands of Jesus Christ. My assertion was contrary to confidence in God. Woe to me if I do harm to that confidence in the minds of my children by these types of expressions that are unworthy of us and sometimes escape from us!

Since you have said nothing to me against the departure of Sr. Marie Charlotte, it will therefore remain decided that on Monday week your novice will depart accompanied by Sr. Mathilde. The latter will come as far as Ghent and on the Tuesday she will be back at your place. I like to prove to Marie at my place that our lay sisters are happy. That does away with certain prejudices my servants have against these Sisters. I think that Mr. Van Wymelbeke will go and accompany those two Sisters on Monday, the 30th of this month. Sr. Marie Charlotte must prepare his sister Annette for her departure.

Like you, I admire that description of the rights and obligations of the King of (word illegible). That may be of use in time and place.

If you have the ceremonial written by Sr. Euphrosine you must send it back to me when our two sisters come to Ghent. If you do not have it, you must let me know without delay so that I may ask Mouscron for it.

Receive, dear Child, my blessing. I beg Jesus who is so worthy of our love and affection, to give you the lights and the strength you need to love him sincerely and serve him faithfully. Such are the wishes of

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th January 1837

Please, send the enclosed letter to the post at Alost and not elsewhere.

Reverend Mother,

It frequently happens to us that our letters cross and that you receive one from me at the same time as I get one from you. There is nothing much wrong with that, when we have the leisure to write; I even consider it as a very pleasant occupation and one that is often very useful.

Everything will remain as I said yesterday as regards Sr. Marie Charlotte, only you will give her Sr. Dorothée as a companion instead of Sr. Mecthilde, and Sr. Fideline will go and replace Sr. Dorothée at Alost. I have asked Mouscron for the medals.

I will look into your plan for the bulletin and write you my opinion of it. You will do well to get it printed at Alost. We will put off our building plans until next year; that will be the most prudent thing to do.

To-day I did the statement of the cash enclosed in the bag my nephew handed to me and of which he assures me that he took great care. Here is the statement:

1000 pieces of 10 fl. converted into fr.	= 4232,80
600 id.	= 1269,84
40 id.	= 84,65
5 double Louis	= 236,00
1 single Louis	= 23,55
In pieces of 5 fr. 4080 or perhaps 4044)	= 2020,00
In small change	3,45

7870,27
=====

If this sum does not agree with the statement of Rev. Fr. Superior about the number of pieces of 5 fr., I am sending you this piece and invite you to find out the reason for the difference between:

9070,28 and that of	7870,27
8870,29 plus Melle	1000,00

-----	-----
Difference 200	8870,27

I am going to take some shares in Rime, so as to assure you of 5% and the possibility of making money at will.

The life of your amiable patron provides me with numerous maxims to corroborate what you wrote to me yesterday. I began to read it yesterday evening and I might well copy out for you some of these maxims; we will see if I can get any spare time to do so. All the same be convinced, my child, that a word said in an amiable way for the love of God can be worth more to you than harsh mortifications that God would not require in your position.

All yours, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, whom I wish to see loved by all of us with all our might.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

20th January 1837

It will be Sr. Adélaïde who will come and bring our dear Sr. Marie Charlotte to Ghent and it will be Mr. Van Wymelbeke who will go and take his daughter to Alost. Tell Sr. Dorothée to be very polite, to stay near her Sister and to say all the good she has in her heart about her holy state. She must not believe her to be a servant but a true religious.

Reverend Mother,

Yes, your life belongs to Jesus, and it is for that reason that I think you must take care of it as something not exclusively your own possession. But I have said enough about that in my last letters and count on your docility, with confidence

I myself could be the thief of the money missing from the sum you sent to me. In that case, it would not be a sin; I would have done it inadvertently, and your convent will not bear the loss due to the deficit. Be reassured on that account; I will arrange the whole of this matter.

It will be enough to tell Mr. Spillebout what happened to our postulant from Alost and to make him suspect that you are not saying all you know, but only what he needs to know, to avoid the same eventualities. You may say that I was consulted and was appalled by the imprudences committed in these very delicate matters in which man must never set, or imperil himself to setting his will in the place of God's.

I am afraid that Sr. Gonzague consults only her own inclination to do something new, and that prevents me from granting her what she is asking. Tell her please, that I will talk to her about that on the first visit I make to Alost. Moreover this sister has so many other more urgent things to learn. Then she has her position as mistress general.

Read the two short letters I am enclosing and seal the one addressed to Sr. Euphrosyne before handing it to her. Take care that the sealing wax is really set before handing it to this sister who pays attention to such matters, as I have told you.

Celebrate the feast of St. Francis de Sales, very dear Child, with that moderation regarding which that saint gave both such fine examples and such admirable precepts. You will not forget me, I hope, that day. I have always loved St. Francis de Sales; I ought to have imitated him; God frequently urged me to do so, but, to my shame, I must admit that I have not. I am going to begin again to make efforts, although age and deep-rooted habits no longer render the practice of meekness as easy as it would have been in my youth. Help me, I beg you, through the meekness and mercy of Jesus Christ.

If it is possible, I will come and see you next week; the occupations of the month of January are over; I am following my ordinary routine. I will look into what I can and must grant as regards the Lenten fast.

I am always, as you know, in our good Master Jesus Christ

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1837

At your earliest opportunity, speak to Mr. Spillebout so that the errand is done before my arrival. I will finish, the business by myself, by word of mouth if need be.

I have invested on behalf of your convent 2554 fl, 50 cents which will bring you 130 fl. and some cents, the whole "argent dechange". This sum added to the 1000 frs. given to Mlle De Brandt will be converted into bonds in favor of the Institute of our Brothers. Our Institute of Sisters has taken the remainder of the sum? sent to Ghent which will complete what you received from the Father Superior.

Sister Clothilde will be pleased to know that her relative, Mlle Marie Vermake from Waeken, is in the novitiate as a postulant and that Mlle Devin is there as a boarder. Mlle D...
Remainder of letter is cut off)

6-56

Reverend Mother,

Your letter found me at Ghent, fully recovered from my minor ailments. Our very dear Clothilde had written to me last week such good news, and had done so in such a charming way that I was encouraged by it and, as it were, electrified during the whole of my journey. Our good God has allowed this consolation to his poor Minister and, in spite of all appearances, I hope he will restore to us a health that I charged you to use for the glory of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls redeemed by the price of his blood and that he entrusted to our care. Oh! my Child, let us be simple and let us be prudent; with the two auxiliaries you tell me about and the two qualities I am pointing out to you, we will go far and advance, and will be useful to several people. I am charged with seeing that grace is working in you and your dear Sisters.

You will do well to write to Mme Kochaert to tell her to try and go to Mouscron for a month or thereabouts. If all goes well, she can announce that she will stay there as a postulant; if not, she will return to her parents without anyone taking any notice of it.

Our dear Sister Seraphine writes to me that she has had the happiness of receiving the Last Sacraments and is perfectly indifferent to all that our good God is pleased to send her. She is edifying all her Sisters.

All yours, Reverend Mother, in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th February 1837

L.S.J.M.J.

6-57

Reverend Mother,

I forgot to tell you that I have a novena of the Prince of Hohenlohe for your convent; it begins on the 19th and finishes on the 27th. Please inform you dear Sisters. I will join with you and we will obtain fresh favors; everything is working at this time towards increasing our confidence in our Savior Jesus Christ. May we truthfully say that we want to see Jesus reign in us, without our resisting him and to allow him to exercise his sweet rule over our hearts and over our minds, and over our words and over our actions, and over the internal man and over the external man, not only according to the general laws of his Gospel, but especially according to the Rule that his love of predilection has given us! Such are at least, Reverend Mother, the rights and desires of your divine Spouse. Urge all your children in my name to renew their good intentions to redouble their efforts during this holy season of the passion of the God Savior, in order to live as faithful and generous spouses and to obey Jesus Christ, in spite of the repugnances of nature of unruly passions.

Here, Reverend Mother, is the total of the sum we have used to acquire the three Roman certificates:

The capital	1486,88	"argent de change" Carriage of cash from
Ghent to Antwerp	50	
Brokerage and commission	5,00	

"Argent de change" 1492,38

You will see from that what the loss will be in subtracting the money you will receive from the above sum. But we will have to examine until what date the interest for you will be augmented. You can see by the note I sent you that the interest is due to us from last December 1st. I do not know whether it has been handed over to us or whether it is being sold or negotiated with the capital from December 1st to the day of alienation.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th March 1837

L.S.J.M.J.

6-58

Reverend Mother,

If you lack expressions for testifying to the Superiors that our good God has given you, the sentiments of gratitude your heart feels, I can also tell you that they do not offer themselves energetically enough, in my mind, to represent that devotedness the Lord makes me feel for the children he has been kind enough to give me. But in this mutual powerlessness to satisfy our hearts' desires, I find nothing better to do than to address our common Master, to rejoice in him at the opportunities and means he procures for us to help one another, and to arouse within us the wish to courageously fulfill the designs of mercy he has for us. That, dear Child, is the best and even the only means, it seems to me, of satisfying the needs of our poor hearts. What do you think about it? Would you be very far from having that opinion?

As a result of the feelings Jesus Christ gives me towards you, I am hastening to send you the visible guardian angel he has put at my disposal. The poor body that you do not take enough care of, will therefore be subject to the direction of this envoy and I give you full powers to address him for the needs of your soul.

So now, you are safe. Join your Father again in thanking God for the great subject of joy this event causes us.

I like to think that the novena will bear its fruits. I beg the tender Savior Jesus to have pity on us.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd of St. Joseph's month 1837

I have learned that the loss of your Roman shares is greater than we should have believed. We must be patient; I am sending you the interest on your Brazilian bond. 29 fl.de ch.76cents.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-59

Reverend Mother,

The news you made known to me yesterday gave me much pleasure. I thank our good God with all my heart for the favors he is granting to the members of our family in all our houses. I have been very satisfied with my journey to Mouscron.

I will weigh up before the Lord the matter of your girl from Roubaix; then I will send you the result of my deliberations.

Please tell our dear Sr. Aloÿse not to write out the ceremony of the renewal of the baptism of the children. I have a few remarks to communicate to her.

I was forgetting to tell you that our good Sister Séraphine is quite ready to go and receive the crown her divine Spouse has prepared for her. I think that the time for going to enjoy eternal happiness is not far off. Sister Louise is having trouble regaining her health. Sr. Marthe is still very weak. All our other Sisters and the novices are in good health. I hope, my dear Child, that you will obtain for me the pleasure of seeing you restored to health in awhile. You know how much I wish for it for the glory of our very good Master.

Receive my blessing, my very dear Mother, for all your family which I love sincerely.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th April 1837

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-60 & 6-61
6-62

Reverend and dear Mother

I have offered my apologies to Sister Aloÿse for my misplaced complaints, I offer them to you also, Reverend Mother, and I consider that it is all over.

I have not taken the cloth you wrote to me about. A little later, we could ask Mlle Meurisse of Alost to have a hundred albs made for us.

I would not dare to allow the pupils to address each other familiarly; that is too far removed from our Flemish customs. We will see later; but I do not think it is done in any convent in this country. Work must already be started on your St. Joseph. I pester the sculptor from time to time.

How sweet it is for me, dear Child, to unite my thanksgiving with yours to testify our gratitude to our good God for the infinite blessings he is granting us. I do not forget you above all at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass; I know that we are very much indebted to the Lord's love and I find that it is sweet to thank a benefactor. It seems to me however, dear Child, that you cannot abandon yourself too much to the movement of your soul; being limited in everything, do not lay claims to what is incompatible with our feeble natures. So, moderate your sentiments and work with simplicity as your divine Spouse wants you to do. Distrust all violence, as I have already told you, and go forward with moderation. That is the way you must keep to, every other one could take you away from the goal.

I fear that incomplete explanations only (word erased) impressions contrary to what I desire. We have (word erased) extraordinary confessor for the pupils; I have not heard (word erased) the need to have one for the boarding school. It is enough if in certain circumstances one is obtained extraordinarily for such or such a pupil.

I would like to know how the pupils and other persons have taken a dislike for Mouscron. Could it be that Marie or Colombe have been talking imprudently? Do me the pleasure of getting some information but do it prudently. Marie is getting her trousseau ready; it will amount to about 2000 frs. and she will pay 400 frs. annually, which is approximately her present income, if you deduct 100 to 200 frs which Henri and I as a trustee have already disposed of. If Melanie goes, she will have a ... heavier trousseau and will pay 1000 frs per year.

I want Colombe to be treated prudently. I know that her sisters have told her their secrets. I will do what I can to safeguard that child; please work with that in view on your side, for the sake of God and the good of our Institute.

It is in God that I want to be always,

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd July 1837

It seems to me that it would be prudent to give Sr. Flore and someone else whom you think suitable charge of following up closely the pupils who are thinking about their vocation. That is important in order to prevent the neighbor from putting his scythe into our corn. Well-ordered charity begins at home.

I have just learned that if Colombe wants to do so, she will go to the convent of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart at Jette after the holidays. I make the sacrifice to the adorable will of God. If she is destined for us, she will come back educated and formed. Say nothing about this to Colombe. Submit also, my dear Child. Inform our dear Sister Flore about this.

Three fragments of letters are attached to this letter:

1) That is a lot of work. But it is not to be done at once. Take care of yourself and do not deprive yourself of any of the time given by the Rule to sleep. Moderation in everything! You know that is what I have to recommend specially to you; then a little exercise, a little relaxation of the mind and a wise diet; that is what God is asking whatever our foolish, bizarre imagination thinks of it. Would you refuse our good God anything?

I am all yours in the love of this same God.

2) ... of Alost, and the next week I will repeat the ceremonies at Mouscron for Mlle Descreme who has the (word cut out) Celestine and for the other novices. You would do well (words cut out) Mlle Valentyne and Mlle Brisaert, if you have not (words cut out) unknown to me, who would be opposed to it.

Our Sister Euphe (word cut out) the niece of Rev. Fr. Franquille, the Rector of the Jesuit novitiate. It would be desirable for the uncle or at least one of the Fathers...

2) (Reverse side) ... Sister Aloyse very much in my mind. We will deal with the matter of your retreats by word of mouth; meanwhile, Reverend Mother, and dear Child, be at peace, be cheerful and, as far as it depends on you, keep well. You know how much this point interests me, that it is enough to remind you sometimes of my wishes in this respect; I count on your docility and blind obedience. One is usually such a bad judge of one's own cause. So believe that God has given you in me,

A very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

3) I am afraid that you find it hard to read my writing; I am ashamed of it; you will perhaps be scandalized at seeing me write so negligently. I beg your pardon; my pen is running away with me, I have laid the bridle on its collar, as Mme de Sevigne says, and it is really running like a fool. Fortunately, my heart is more reliable than my hand. You do not doubt that, do you Reverend Mother? You have for such a long time been acquainted with...

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-63 to 6-67
6-68

Reverend Mother,

I thank you for the details you have given me about our affairs of Brussels. Our good God is arranging a rich and plentiful harvest for us in that area. Let us be faithful in following the impulses of his grace and we will have the happiness of making our divine Master known and loved by souls that are capable of great things.

I approve of what you have done and of what you have decided. If you persist in the plan concerning Sr. Stanislaus, it can be carried out. I like to think that Mlle her aunt of Berlaymont will not be offended.

The trial her divine Spouse has sent our dear Clothilde will produce, I hope, the effect that her loving solicitude is expecting: an increase of merit and good dispositions in the soul of that child.

I am praying God to take care of the convent of his good foster father and to deign in his power to grant you the help of a chaplain.

I have prayed for you very much, dear Child, and St. Teresa has undoubtedly been kind enough to help me in this ministry of charity. Abandon the care of your soul completely to the Lord and especially the matter you wrote to me about. Jesus is my Master as he is yours: it is for him alone to do with you what he likes. Neither you nor I must have any other pretension than that of obeying him in everything. Do not pay any more attention to the thing that has caused you excessive fears. You know how much you can count on the sentiments of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st October 1837

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-69 to 6-71
6-72

Reverend Mother,

I am plagued with a worry and I think I must make it known to you. The work I gave you to do recently adding to your usual occupations is going perhaps to make you commit some excesses. The very natural violence I have noticed in you and which has received fresh nourishment from the retreat, obliged me to take precautions. In the absence of Sister Aloyse whose sweet and humble virtues were a great help to you, and which a certain innate harshness that I find you even needed in order to correct itself, I think I must repeat to you that I renew the recommendations I have already made so often about the moderation God is asking of you. I pray your divine Spouse to give you the docility you need in order better to obey his voice rather than that of an ardent imagination that is easily set on fire.

I beg you also, my Child, to give this satisfaction to

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th November 1837

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-73
6-74

Reverend Mother,

Here I am again and I am ashamed of making you pay twice for the carriage of letters. My excuse must be in the multiplicity of my tasks and the weakness of my memory. I have realized since I sent off the packet that it is morally certain that we will still find mistakes to correct, and that we will have to get our dear Sr. Clothilde to recopy the whole thing; then send it to me for a last time. These are the alterations I think necessary: at the head of the writing one must put: Constitutions of the Ladies of Mary. The first paragraph which deals with the origins must be placed by way of a foreword, and separated from what follows. Where we speak about going out, the paragraph must be begun as follows: Except for the lay sisters who, under

the orders of the Superior, do the messages for the convent, the sisters do not go out, etc. It will be concluded from what we have written that the lay sisters do not go out either.

Dear Reverend Mother,

I will take advantage of the present occasion to again say a word about yourself Reverend Mother. The fact that I have been so slow about speaking my mind fully will prove to you that I have mistrusted myself and consulted our good God quietly. It seems to me that you must moderate your natural ardor and treat yourself more as a weak child of Adam, to whom it is not given to see God here below, in any other way than it has been to others, except the saints who did not think they were angels and who were not any more than you are. To avoid the unfortunate results that would be produced by excessive strain, of the fibers or other instruments the head uses for reflecting, I renew the recommendation already often repeated to you and make them into orders - never to occupy yourself with spiritual activities whether by study, meditation or even sustained conversation longer at any one time than an hour! And to make you understand my thoughts in a plain clear way, you will not make an annual retreat nor any other until further orders. I ask our good God to give you the necessary docility to obey with simplicity, and better than you have done until now, the voice of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

I apologize for sending you a letter full of erasures and so very badly written, when I sent the little roll of paper yesterday.

It is for the innumerable time that you will notice a great discrepancy between my theory and practice. Pray our good God to have pity on me.

May it please our good God that Mlle Terras will at last yield to the invitations of the grace of Jesus Christ. I do not forget her in my prayers. I like to think that all your postulants are well.

Here are the letters of my nieces by which they have invited me to their clothing. I find that of Melanie's perfect.

May our very holy Mother Mary deign to help us and prepare you all to offer yourselves anew to God with simplicity and confidence.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th November 1837

Mr. Van Wymelbeke was very pleased with the welcome he received at your place.

Lost/missing

6-75 & 6-76

L.S.J.M.J.

6-77

Reverend Mother,

Ten days have already gone by since your arrival at Malines and nothing from you has reached me, I have not had any news! Judge whether I had not the right to complain and to be a little anxious. Fortunately the Infant Jesus was before my mind; and who would dare to murmur in the presence of that model of every virtue? I humbly give thanks to God the Savior for the help he is according to you and for the consolation the few lines you sent me have just brought to my rather anxious mind. All the same, I do not consider you released; as soon as your tasks allow it, I am demanding all my rights: you owe me all the details of what has happened to the little colony you went to set up at Malines. I can see from your plans for letters that you have to congratulate yourselves on the welcome the Archbishop gave you. May God be blessed for that! I am praying with confidence to the Infant Jesus, to Mary and Joseph for all of you and also for your poor though devoted spiritual Father.

At Ostend we are forming an establishment of our Sisters of St. Joseph in honor of and under the auspices of the Infant Jesus. This establishment is for the daughters of the poor and the middle classes. To begin with, there will be day pupils only; later there will be boarding

accommodations for orphan girls and other little ones who are unfortunate or lacking in worldly resources. There will be a good deal of work to be done; thanks be to God.

Take care to have all those letters written correctly, without abbreviations or carelessness in punctuation.

I think you will do well to write also to the two Vicars General, but not to somewhere else. You will receive visits in reply. It will be good for you to be there to relieve our dear new Reverend Mother.

You will note that I have erased all that says directly that Father de St.. is your parish priest. You will probably be exempt; but let us not pretend anything; let us avoid establishing precedents that could later be opposed.

From the depths of my heart I give you or rather beg our good Mother to give you with the hand of the divine Child a big blessing the effects of which may be felt by all the dear Sisters of the house of the Queen of Angels.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th November 1837

6- between 77 & 81(1)

My dear daughter,

I have just read your two letters. One tells me things I would like to (word partially cut out); I really do want to. I think you know my good will; and that is what is guiding your pen. May our good Jesus reward you for the prayers your charitable heart is offering for the spiritual Father the Savior has found it good to give you. In the other letter you satisfy my curiosity with care and an amount of detail for which I cannot thank you enough. Now I am up-to-date and satisfied. You know, dear Child, that this is what my heart needs: I want to follow you in all your undertakings and even in your plans. It is a satisfaction I ask, I will say, of the indulgence of the filial piety of my Children in God.

I persist in thinking that it is not fitting for the Ladies of Mary to go out with their pupils, not even to go to the church. I imagine that that will do away with the respect they need in order to put themselves or keep themselves at the pinnacle of their vocation.

It would be desirable if you could have a school for the poor. But what will the children do? Lace making? But are not the Sisters of Charity your neighbors? If you can occupy them in (illegible) I will feel better about the usefulness of the enterprise. Weigh that up again; we are praying to our good God to enlighten us. If you think that 500 frs for the boarding fees will not be an obstacle to success, I am not against your asking for that.

My kind regards to the Superior at Malines. I am sure that she and her children have been praying for me. Tell them I do not stop doing the same for them and for the success of their undertaking. The month of Jesus is precious to us. Let us know how to profit by it. It is impossible for me to give the convent of our loving Queen of Angels the testimony of my devotedness these days. I.... (End of letter missing)

Date on postal seal: 7th January 1838

6- between 77 & 81(2)

(The beginning of letter is missing)

Again, very dear Child, receive the assurance of my true devotedness; tell our Reverend Mother at Malines that she occupies a distinguished place in my memory, at the altar. Oh! How happy we are to know Jesus and to be able to work together for his glory, in the sentiments of that charity he has put into our hearts, and that unites us to him! That is how I uniquely wish to love you and always to be in reality,

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th January 1838

L.S.J.M.J.

Reverend Mother

6-81

When I received your letter, our Reverend Mother General had already been gone an hour. Our good God wanted it like that. It would be impossible to permit Sr. Henriette go to Brussels, even if she were in good health. I like to flatter myself that the cold of our dear Sr. Aloÿse will have no ill effects. If the opposite happens, we will move that good child to Alost or, if that cannot be done, send her a Black Sister from Grammont. My letter answering Sr. Gonzague's was handed to that sister at the very time when I was reading the one you sent me. I wrote to Sr. Aloÿse and the Brussels novices at the same time. You doubtlessly think that recommendations to our invalid are not lacking in my letter; you are not mistaken. I am counting on the docility of that dear child.

The prospectus as you have corrected it is good, if the word wash may be found in it. I think that launder which means to wash linen, etc., is less trivial and more suitable. I do not know what Reverend Mother Clothilde has in mind when she wants to leave out 'Roman Apostolic'. For my part, I am not very keen on it, as the word Catholic says everything, now that we are no longer in the midst of Protestants. I also do not know whether it is fitting or not to leave out flower arrangements, etc. But I should not be talking like a master of social graces. I am sending these notes back to you. Please send back to Malines the testimonial of the postulant I wrote to you about. You could receive the 150 frs. that Spitaels will owe me before long, at the end of the month, if I am not mistaken. Read my letter to Sr. Clothilde, there are many things in it that concern you. I would like to know whether it was a ciborium or a chalice that was bought at Malines for 40 frs. That (effaced) me. It is a pity that the prospectus is not ready, as our Reverend Mother Clothilde wishes; but it is nobody's fault. I doubt whether you will get this reply this evening; however it will be at Alost. In these kinds of circumstances, it would be good to send to the Hotel d'Autriche the time of the arrival of the coach in order to avoid the delays caused by the negligence that sometimes occurs in the distribution of letters or parcels.

The Very Reverend Mother went away more clear-sighted than ever, about the article on mortification and penances; in a conversation this morning our good God gave us ideas of striking clarity; shafts of light marked that discussion. Be temperate also, my child, about extraordinary penances; illusions are so much to be feared! The will of God, that is what is to be our compass. Our will obviously seeks to satisfy itself and one easily makes the changeover; one follows some passion that one takes for the attraction of grace and we wander away from the will of God.

I am closing by giving you my blessing. May it prove to you, if you are still in doubt about it, how sincerely I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1838

I think that our Very Reverend Mother will find some funds for you at Bruges and Ostende. In the latter house, I think the postulants will have nearly two thousand francs to hand over to you.

Lost/missing

6-82

L.S.J.M.J

6-83

You will find my answer in the packet, Reverend Mother. I am adding some ideas here that have come to me since the packet was sealed.

I have learned that Sr. Euphrosyne reads a newspaper that a pupil who is charged with giving it to some other person after school, brings to her. It seems to me that it is not right for that Sister to do so. Set the matter in order prudently. I am longing to have news from you of our dear Child at the Holy Angels, and what plan of action you will suggest to me if the thing seems to be becoming serious. Meanwhile, I recommend everything to our divine Master who knows the needs of our small family of Mary and Joseph and is even more keenly interested in them than I am. However, he also knows that nothing in the world is closer to my heart than the interests of that family. Above all, I find the time I give to it well spent; with me everything gives way to the least of its needs; my heart brings me back to it by so natural and easy an inclination that I need make no effort to concern myself with it. But I feel all this is nothing, if the Lord does not help us. So let us

pray and act but do so meekly and with confidence. I have already recommended our affairs to our good St. Francis de Sales, I will do so still more specially to-morrow.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th January 1838

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-84
6-85

Reverend Mother,

Good and evil things are wisely distributed, and our good God does not stop giving us marks of his love. I had just received the pleasant news that your two postulants have actually arrived at the novitiate and are already tasting the happiness of being exclusively concerned with their perfection, when I received news from you yesterday which although presented in a cheerful, generous manner worthy of a soul that recognized it has received many blessings from God, is however at bottom a little hurtful to a father's heart. However I am neither worried nor saddened; your good dispositions and those of your sick ones make it a duty for me to rejoice in God and thank him for his blessings. I acquitted myself of that to the best of my ability and recommended these matters to Mary and Joseph. I am so often in spirit in your infirmary, that if that spirit had its body with it, you would at the very least already have noticed some shadows. What a fine invention that one will be that will one day transport us wherever our thoughts go! I do not despair of it; the railway and the machine of Mme Clothilde are a tremendous step taken in that direction of speedy transportation. Meanwhile I must be content with the old way and write to you about what I see with some sadness in your infirmary: your poor Mme Henriette has her bed there and has a right to that privilege; I also see a couch there for Mme Marie Charlotte who is expiating the little excesses she committed during the time of her reign on the day of Holy Innocents, a very long time ago; but what do you give to the Lady with rheumatism? That very miserable creature who utters only the words miserable, mercy, misery, even keeping her joyful countenance that cheers up the whole company of invalids, tell me, is there not anything to support her aching body? If I spoke to you about all I see there I would write you a book instead of a letter, and what that would be if my mind were endowed with the power of feeling? Fortunately, its sense of smell has stayed at Ghent with the organ that makes it work. But joking apart, where do you put your infirm sisters and where do you go yourself, seeing that your infirmary is so small? Let us pray God to cure all your sick since he has not granted your convent an infirmary large enough to hold them. It would be better than having a big place.

Keep the 150 frs received from Mr. Spitaels for the account of the Institute. I am troubled about your day pupils; let us solicit in their favor the grace of having Mass at the convent. Urge the matter with the Dean; tire him with your importunities; he will end by listening to you, in spite of the secret desire he is cherishing of having those pupils at his church. I will help you, Reverend Mother, everywhere I can. Count on our good Mother Mary, on St. Joseph and on so many friends and protectors we have in heaven. I pardon you your bad writing on condition that you allow me to write to you as I can; you see that my knowledge is indeed very little, but what I will never permit would be measuring by that feeble appearance the firm will I have to see you perfect, in other words, the strength of my affection for all of you.

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th February 1838

Let our Mme Marie Charlotte take care not to have too much of a grudge against her own body, the soul of which it embodies needs it for doing the work of our good Master. A little rest, a diet and cheerfulness of mind, these are great remedies. I give her as well as all your sick a big blessing and pray God to attach to it the power to ease their ills and cure them if that is in accordance with the designs of his Holy Providence. I will take care to inform your good Mother General of what you have written to me.

Three letters lost/missing between

6-85 and 6-90

L.S.J.M.J.

6- between 85 & 90

(Corner of letter torn)

Reverend Mother,

I am sorry that they did not get the Malines prospectus printed at Alost. That prospectus has already given me a lot of work and our good Mother Clothilde is such a novice that a mere nothing stops her; then she makes alterations, then she has doubts about our observations and makes fresh alterations; a fresh observation is made to her which is followed by fresh changes. In short, I would like to do two than to help her again to rewrite hers. I am also afraid lest she informs her whole world of her affairs and later experience consequences that are not always easy to put right. Her natural timidity prevents me from commenting to her about this. You know how tactfully I must treat her in this respect. She has just bought two chasubles and I think her inexperience has let her be deceived a little by the sharpness of the saleswoman. She was made to sign, by way of payment, a draft on Lyons for 170 frs. payable at the end of July. She came very close to buying a set of vestments or rather a second white chasuble for 300 frs. I congratulate her on not yielding. All this is rather worrying at a time when we do not know what means to use to face up to unavoidable expenses.

My Child, what sad news I have just received from Brussels. Our dear angel has perhaps received the last Sacraments this morning! I adore the ways of God in silence; I humble myself and with all my heart beseech our good Master to have mercy on the family of Mary and Joseph. What a blow! But I am saying nothing and abandoning myself to Providence. No, Lord, I will not despair of your goodness; it is (letter torn) it surpasses my wickedness. Mary and her holy Spouse will not abandon us. Angels of Heaven and all you, our good Patrons, hasten to help us. Look upon our needs and present them to the mercy of the Lord. However, may the will of God be done!

On beginning this note this morning, I hardly dreamt that I would have to finish it with so serious a matter. May the adorable will of God be done!

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th February 1838

L.S.J.M.J.

6-90

Reverend Mother,

Being without news, I concluded that the fears I had this morning were untimely. God be praised! Our very Reverend Mother writes to me that she has begun a novena to our good Mother Mary; I for my part had begun the same exercise. May our merciful Jesus deign to listen favorable to us in consideration for his most holy Mother!

My dear Child, our good God is also trying us elsewhere; put into practice the strength that grace is giving you, and try to get to Alost as soon as possible; Mr. Jacques is trying to exclude our sisters from the division of his little yard, etc., and your presence is indispensable. I have answered Sr. Agnès and recommended her to do nothing before your arrival except to beg Mlle Colette to take pity on us and not allow my poor children to be crushed at a time when the Lord is trying them in so many ways! I am going to Grammont on Monday to give the holy habit to some novices. If you need a Black Sister for Alost, please write and tell me and address your letter to Grammont. I have also commended your invalids at Alost; it seems that Sr. Marie Charlotte is continually relapsing: that is dangerous and you will do well to call in a second doctor, if on your return, the illness has not yielded to the remedies. We must avoid what is happening at Brussels. At Ghent, they treat this illness with very meticulous care, because it is considered dangerous at the present time. Tell your dear Sisters that I do not cease to pray for them. Oh, my God, let yourself be touched at the sight of our troubles, your goodness is great and Mary and Joseph are for you. We humble ourselves before your Majesty, whom our sins, mine above all, have angered.

Courage, my Child, keep your peace of heart and the calm of the Superior will sustain the community. The divine Child will do the rest; let us count on that.

Thanks be to God, my soul is at rest and I am bearing my cross with confidence.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th February 1838 in the evening

Three extracts from other letters attached to the back of 6-90)

1) My kind regards to Mme Henriette. I have rather upset her by tiring you; but I think our good God has pardoned my importunities and your good infirmarian will not refuse me the favor of restoring me to her good graces when she considers my intentions. As for you dear Child try extra hard to be submissive to that little person, so as to make my reconciliation with her easier for me. We will all gain by that.

2) My compliments, I beg you, to all your dear children and especially to your sick ones, on condition that they are getting better; otherwise no compliments to the latter. I except, however, from this harshness your generous rheumatic sufferer because of the Latin she treats me to and that I have not been able to understand.

Good-bye, Reverend Mother, let us all faithfully follow our star without turning aside from the path it is tracing out for us. That path is the only safe one for us.

3) I have been pleased to see that there still remains some hope of our preserving our dear invalid. Let us not stop importuning our good Mother and her holy Spouse; the Lord will perhaps be pleased to let the Institute keep so useful an instrument who is a very great help to me, as you...

L.S.J.M.J.

6-91

Reverend Mother,

I am taking advantage of the dispatch of the belongings of our dear Sister Stephanie to renew my recommendations to you regarding the health of the Sisters of the convent of the Holy Angels and yours in particular. The fatigue, emotions and upsets inseparable from the events that have succeeded each other for a few weeks, must have exerted an adverse influence over all of you, notwithstanding your submission to the adorable will of the Lord. Ask for dispensations from fasting and do not risk anything on that score. My Child, use the resources of character God has given you to cheer and to strengthen the Sisters; be cheerful as the friends of Jesus Christ should be and occupy yourselves with pleasant things; your minds and your bodies equally need it.

I am wonderfully well and am beginning to get used to the privation God has been pleased to impose on us. Our saintly Child will intercede for us more powerfully with her divine Spouse and we will not wait long to experience the effects of her protection. So let us be at peace in the joy of the grace our humble submission will obtain for us. Once more, take care of your health. That is the recommendation of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th February 1838

Lost/missing: three letters between

6-91 and 6-96

L.S.J.M.J.

6- between 91 & 96

Reverend Mother

I was expecting that proof of your pious, loving memory, and far from being unpleasantly affected by all, you will tell me about that dear child, you will bring true relief to my heart by talking to me about her and reminding me of any one of the circumstances either of her exemplary life or of her holy death. Like you, I have that earthy angel continually before my eyes and the sight of her encourages me; like you also I have gathered together with religious exactitude all her writings that I have been able to find. I will make use of them one day, please God, for the edification and the instruction of our Children and their pupils, and those who succeed them.

One day this week, finding myself rather too much absorbed with sad, painful thoughts, I received a consolation I had not felt for along time; it was on reading these words of our divine Master: As my Father has loved me, so I have loved you. God loves me and he loves me with so

tender and great a love that my past sins do not restrain him! I was another man, and the idea of the sweet and innocent smile of our Sister Aloÿse presented itself to my imagination, I remained more courageous and more animated in the service of a God so infinitely merciful. I am nourishing these sentiments.

Take great care to keep all that comes from our dear departed one; all that was for her personal use, her instruments of penance, etc. Make the same recommendation at Malines and elsewhere. It seems to me that you will do well to stay there at least until midday on Saturday. But do not travel in the evening.

I am praying and will pray for poor Stanislaus. What a difference between her and our Aloÿse! However, grace is not refused her. Let her be simple and faithful to that grace and she will be able to do what our holy departed one was able to do.

May our good God always deign to console us, help us and direct us in the ways of his holy love. That is the prayer I am offering for you, my dear Child, and that I urge you to offer also. No more imprudence, no more of those little excesses, I beg you; moderation, gentleness, confidence in the love of your divine Spouse, such must be the means you will use, if you have any consideration for me. It seems to me that my heart tells me I deserve a little from you, and the goodness of yours prevents me from harboring the least anxiety on that account. May the Lord continue to give us his blessings, my Child; next month let us strive to acquit ourselves of what we owe to our good Father St. Joseph. Receive the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th February 1838

L.S.J.M.J.

6-96

The end of St. Joseph's month 1838

Just a few words, my dear Child, to tell you we are continuing to pray with confidence and submission. That you must generously condemn yourself to rest nourishing your mind with sweet thoughts that help to calm you in heart and body.

However pleasant a letter from you must be to me, it would cause me pain if it arrived before our good God deigns to obtain for me that consolation. So do not anticipate the rights of our divine Master; it is for Jesus to give us true consolation. Without him there is only bitterness. So it is in Jesus our adorable Savior, that I am unreservedly devoted to you. It is also in Jesus that I entreat you to be cheerful, generous and peacefully submissive.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Lost/missing

6-97

L.S.J.M.J.

6-98

Reverend Mother,

The great change in atmosphere temperature and a little overwork or where everything is small, the least cause immediately produces its effects) had kept me at home during the first days of the year. By singular contrast, on Saturday evening, I made an east to west journey of about fifteen leagues on Sunday morning and adored the divine Child, the expectation of the nations, in the chapel of the convent of the Queen of Angels. Before my Mass and before I had spoken to any Lady, a little cough informed my ear that Mme Marie Charlotte had replaced another Lady who twice out of three times takes care to absent herself when I present myself there.

His excellent Eminence who sees with the eye of an eagle, big and little things, remarked to me that the Ladies of Mary, whom he honors with real esteem, are all very pale. We had much discussion about that; for my part, I find myself on my own ground there, as you know my Child; now the result of our discussions has been that our Ladies of Mary who are all young and weak will say their office in a low voice, and for some time, will have eight hours of rest at night. You will kindly comply with that provisional decision except on Sundays or certain feast days when you may chant some parts of the office, and still excepting the Ladies who are older in age or not taking classes, as there are perhaps some at Mouscron. You will write to Brussels about this, please.

If that dear Lady, who flees from me at Malines, had been in that area on Sunday, I would have told her that, thanks to her care, my health has been constantly maintained all this winter; I

am excepting a few days of last week. If Mme Henriette heard that statement, she might indeed be a little jealous. If in the stage of perfection she has reached, one is still susceptible to jealousy. ... (Second page / end of letter is missing)

L.S.J.M.J.

6-99

Reverend Mother,

I thank you for the details you have just made known to me, and I admit to you, that in the midst of our wretchedness, we must also see the generous hand of the Lord. Yes, God is always good, and even when we do not understand the action of his Providence, we must remain at peace, convinced that that good Father is unceasingly working for the good of his Children. Your letter to the very Reverend Mother reveals your heart, my dear daughter; I see in it all that has passed in your soul since you have been replacing the angel whose visible assistance is taken from you. However, I notice one thing that I must take up with you; our model did not offer us examples of mortification so exclusively as your inclination makes you believe; she also conceded it to the duty of gratitude, that she should wisely and thankfully enjoy the relief that divine mercy is pleased to grant to our weakness. The moral virtues consist in acting with moderation, in a wise middle course; they do not want to be exclusive, but they require us to be sober, even in wisdom, and to practice them each in its turn according to the circumstances and to the designs of our Sovereign Master. Our beloved Mme Aloyse had understood that remarkably well.

What you tell me about the classes in Brussels makes me doubt whether our Mme Gonzague can remain in the post she occupies. I will not say anything to her about what you have written to me. Oblige her to take a class and what will she do with her time? We will then examine at leisure what Providence will allow us to do. However, I think we must dream about Mouscron; that matter is less urgent.

I have finished the first part of the Holy Rule, by adding a chapter or an article, on Discretion, in accordance with a note in your writing. There will still be in that same note the wherewithal for adding something to the Rule for the mistress general of classes. I have already done about thirty pages of the second part; it only remains to do the articles on the Visit, the Second Novitiate and what I am asking you in the enclosed note. I had the same ideas as you on the designation of our sisters. So I have included what you did. I ought to have the Rule of the Lay Sisters in order to judge in what place it is to go.

Let us have great confidence, my dear Child, the Blessed Virgin is giving us fresh marks of her love for us. Take care of your health; you will in that way give me a precious proof of your docility. You know how my heart needs some rest; so do not refuse me that rest; in vain we are making a Rule if people do not take the trouble to observe it. ... (Second page/end of letter missing)

Lost/missing

6-100

L.S.J.M.J.

6-101

Reverend Mother,

I was pleasantly surprised to see that in so few days you have done so much work. May our good God who gives the mind, the strength and the goodwill be blessed and glorified! I approve of the arrangements you have made, and the replies you have given to Malines, and I will examine your remarks, several of which it seems to me must already be welcomed. Kindly tell me, dear Child, whether the large ceremonial is already written. The words that you mark for me should be corrected in it and later I would need to see what is prescribed as regards visits and other things.

What a joy this cure is of dear Mme Euphrosyne! I thank God with a big heart for this favor, as we have had to thank him for the illness which has had such salutary effects. I am delighted with all you tell me about our children at Alost. Glory be to Mary, our admirable Mother! You will be informed, Reverend Mother, of the time when I will be going to Mouscron.

Are you not afraid that Mlle Colette is easing us out of the big garden in favor of an establishment for old ladies? Let us go with caution. The behavior of that excellent person in regard

to us is inexplicable. What price are they offering you for the house opposite the church door? If that price is not very high, we will keep what we have.

Please have a look at the letter from the Reverend Mother at Mouscron and tell me what must be thought of whose actions she is talking about. Send her letter back to me with your answer. I apologize, dear Child, for causing you so much trouble. You see, I need help; but do not be in a hurry, the answer is not urgent. I am very well; I have recovered from the tiredness you perhaps noticed in me, during your last stay in Ghent.

I have the book of portraits. It seems to me that the letter of my former Master cannot be of any use. I have not answered it yet. You forgot to let me have the letter from the young lady you spoke to me about.

Good-bye, my Child; let us calmly and with confidence go on with our pious petitions to Mary. I am expecting great good from the kindness of that incomparable Mother.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

19th of Mary's month, 1838

Cesar returned to Melle alone. He is well. His brother has written in a very satisfactory way to the Superior. Urge your whole community on my behalf to spend the ten days preceding the feast of Pentecost in a holy way in the company of Mary and the disciples of Jesus. It is a time of special graces.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-102 to 6-129
6-130

Reverend and dear Mother,

I cannot sufficiently express how much the letter that I received this morning relieved me. It seems to me that my confidence will be greater than ever and I will zealously go on with a novena to our good and very merciful Jesus. Our beloved Master will take pity on us; you will have the happiness of still working in his vineyard, and we, that of having the help of the means divine munificence has entrusted to you. Oh, my Child, the harvest is rich and the laborers are few.

My kind regards to all your dear children; let them be cheerful, polite, courageous and remaining full of a tender love for their divine Spouse.

Receive the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th January 1839

(Extract attached to 6-130)

... you know in order to finish the work we three are doing.

The fresh difficulties that arose last night are putting your courage to a rude test. God will help you, my child; listen peacefully to the voice of your divine Spouse. The good of the soul and that of the body equally calls out for that help. It seems to me that the trouble with Sr. Gonzague will last only a short time; so her removal will not be necessary; and moreover, it is not the time for making any change that is unwelcome to the pupils at Alost. Like you, I am putting all my confidence in God; we could not do better. Tell your invalids on my behalf whatever your heart suggests. I do not stop praying for them and for you.

Your every very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th February 1838

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-131 to 6-133
6-134

Reverend Mother,

I cannot thank God enough for the favors he has granted you, nor recommend you enough not to reveal the graces received from the Lord. On this occasion I will tell you what has been worrying me a little these days. The example of the Reverend Mother Superior has perhaps

resulted in three abuses in our Institute; those of 1) not allowing our religious substantial enough food; 2) exhausting herself by saying extra vocal prayers; 3) not being cheerful enough. I have just been informed of this by Bruges. Health is being ruined, cheerfulness is disappearing and the house is suffering. Consider that remark in the presence of God and correct matters without delay, if there is good reason to do so. It is a matter that could destroy our Institute at its birth. Our Rule wishes: 1) that the religious should be well-fed and have substantial though simple food; study and the post of teaching require that; 2) that one should be content with the prayers of the Rule and confine oneself to them; 3) that one should be cheerful as I have been repeating for several years to the point of boring you.

A young lady of good family came to-day to corroborate my fears, by declaring to me that her sister had some liking for entering with us, but that the bad food at Mouscron put her off. That young lady has entered another Institute. Will it not be necessary to give a little meat in the evening two other times a week?

I have finished the Rule for the Mother or special Superiors (effaced) examination to be made on the days indicated and that I have left it to your experience to compose for me. That must be short. It seems to me that my work includes many things in few words. Mlle Flore will copy it out after you have gone over it with her. It suffices if you get it done for me towards the end of January. So, do not hurry.

The letter of Mlle Cels is perfect. Oh, if our good God deigned to cure her and to grant us a few more subjects of that caliber. Let us try to merit that favor by obeying our Rule and by avoiding destroying it by acting as I have said just now.

I have composed two more points to be added, one to the article on the summary of the Rule for the Superior General. You will send them on to Malines if you approve of them.

Mlle Hage came to see me; she is weak and sickly and yet retains the hope of entering, if our good God gives her the grace by restoring her health. My letter did her a lot of good, I think.

I agree to Mme Bathilde going to Alost. I have written to inform our dear Superior at Malines.

The courage of Mme Euphrosyne is a subject of consolation to me, and because of her rheumatism, you will, Reverend Mother, single out that dear Child in the compliments you make to your community on my behalf this New Year. Let our good God deign to answer my prayers and you will all be perfect in every respect! You will all respond to the distinguished sentiments Jesus bears you; you will all love him courageously and serve him cheerfully and you will all be well as regards bodily health.

I have refused to let Brussels make the projected alteration to the chapel. I am told one must act very prudently in regard to our origins for the Congregation. Mr. Boon could suddenly leave us in the lurch and move off elsewhere with his congregation.

Good night, very dear Child; may the year 1839 bring us the happiness not only of repairing the gaps the current year has made in us but also of establishing ourselves honorably in the various posts Providence has entrusted to us.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, the last day of the year 1838

I have just seen that you are worried about the use you made of the letter of Mme Clothilde. Rest assured, dear Child, there is no lack of consideration between us in that matter.

(End of page cut off. Letter continues on the back) ...

Requiring too much from our weak nature is tempting God since it is requiring him to reverse the order he has established or, in other terms, it is asking unreasonably for miracles. Weigh up that matter well but without getting upset about it.

I think I will be obliged to get Mother Elise to go to Bruges to establish that house. On the 7th of January, I am counting on having Reverend Mother Superior and Mother Elise there.

Do not write too much, my Child, do not tempt the Lord. Act prudently in all things.

Tell our good infirmarian that I give her full powers over you as regards your body and that you must obey her.

However, do not be anxious, my Child; I am well and have great confidence in Mary and Joseph and count on the powerfulness of the beloved Child who is the object of our adoration these days.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-135 to 6-143
6-144

Reverend Mother,

Your letter gave me great pleasure; always write with the same attentiveness, hastening slowly.

I like to think that you are now going to profit, in all simplicity, from the discoveries you have just made. I say in all simplicity because I think that, far from deriving any advantage from them, you will be overwhelmed by the weight of your miseries, if you consult reason alone which is bowed down under the influences of your rather ardent character and rather melancholy temperament. This last disposition has been making a noticeable development with you for some time. I must even admit, my dear Child, that I am more afraid of it than of your other woes. Furthermore, I add that it has already done you notable harm and that if I did not know your confidence in me, I would have grounds for predicting that it would spoil all the good inclinations God has put in you.

This is what I have decided after mature reflection: You will at once stop examining yourself and hand over all the papers connected with those searchings and discoveries to Mme Flore, who will keep them in reserve until I ask for them.

You will no longer write down any reflection, not even resolutions; (words cut out) nevertheless, you will, in all simplicity, make short notes of a few lines to help your memory, etc.

(The end of the page is cut off. One can read in the middle of the next line) ... "reading the treatise on Christian cheerfulness and for"...

(Reverse side of letter: 1st line cut off)

... of your meditations, consoling and calming matters. Scrupulously avoid all that arouses the rather violent movements, all that causes exaltation of mind and heart. You will not occupy yourself with any work of the mind, writing, reading, for longer than an hour at a time. You will vary these types of occupations and interrupt them and mix them with bodily exercises.

You will not make a retreat and you will only make the meditations and do the readings in the Rule. The state of your mind and that of your body which are both rather tired require this

You will try to act with simplicity in everything. You will not willingly dwell for a moment on the idea of death, the preparation for that great act, nor the time God in his wisdom has fixed for it. Let us avoid the pretension of wanting to penetrate the secrets of Providence.

It is easy to conclude, my dear Child that I suspect some illusion or snare of the enemy that your physical and moral dispositions would hide from you. Your docility and the confidence God gives you in me will hold you back from the snare and ward off the evil. Now be at peace, and submit in all simplicity. The moment has come to forget yourself a little! This sight of your failings would do you nothing but harm. As a kind of diversion, you must devote yourself to your duties without worrying about yourself, following what I say in the "Manual for the Young", p. 58, 1st part, No. 2.

When you have used these remedies, it will not be two days before you are congratulating yourself on your docility and thanking your divine Spouse for enlightening me about you. Simplicity will be reborn more pure and your submission to my desires will please your divine Spouse more than all the measures of apparent prudence you could make use of to become more pleasing him.

Submit without allowing yourself any reflection of your own whether to cause you some (illegible) of sensitivity, or inspire you with anxiety. Tell yourself that I have made the decision and you have submitted. Fiat! No further reasoning.

I am writing to you on the day after the anniversary of the death of our dear Aloÿse who understood that teaching so perfectly, and many times stopped your rather excessive projects with these words: Our very Rev. Father would not approve of that. May the memory of her or her spirit still render you the same service.

It is on these conditions alone that your efforts to know yourself will in the end be useful to you. In vain would one be over meticulous in the matter of perfection, exhaust oneself in seeking to find methods leading to holiness, everything must be reduced to this simple maxim: Do the will of God, prefer it to our own, and love to fulfill it in everything.

That is the summary ... (The end of the letter is cut off)

(22nd February 1839)

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-145 to 6-150

6-151

Reverend Mother,

I have quite recovered from my travels, the fatigue of which had already cured me of the sleeplessness caused by my winter occupations. I thank our good God for it, and I am burning with the desire to consecrate the fresh strength he is deigning to grant me, to his glory, the honor of our august and good Mother Mary and the good of her children. Let us work in harmony during this (word cut off) month so that we may deserve to reap an abundant harvest of spiritual favors and temporal good that will help us to fulfill the designs of Providence. May grace enlarge our hearts and fill them to capacity so that we may become good instruments in the hands of divine Mercy!

I was edified by the good sentiments of our children at Mouscron. Crosses have been abundant there, they still are in a large enough number to frighten common souls; but the manner in which (word cut out) bears them foretells a fine future. Subjects are lacking that are capable of raising that house to the height of the designs and needs of our Institute. Making due allowances, the same marks are applicable to Waeken. But it is only in talking face to face that we will be able to see the means to be used to obtain our end in these convents.

It is reassuring for us, my dear daughter, to see His Eminence so keenly entering into our designs and supporting my opinion as regards our plans for Malines. I more and more cherish the hope that the premises of Mr. Lefebvre are destined for us by Mary and her holy Spouse. Let us prudently moderate our efforts and we will not belong, I hope, in reaching the time ordained by Providence. Let us prepare our materials and beg our good Patrons to procure for us the help of all kinds that we need, subjects, houses, pupils, everything. ... (The last line of page is cut off)
... to seize it in order to draw from it all that it contains for the good of our religious family.

I have seen Mlle Honorez; her state worries me in every respect. Mlle Leroy was not at Mouscron. The postulant from Mouscron has not presented herself, and here is what the one I saw at Belleghem writes to me. Let us not go on with less hope; the lovely month is just beginning.

You gave me great pleasure by telling me that the day pupils have improved in their appearance and that their classes are getting on better. It was time that in that respect, the convent of St. Joseph should show a state of progress worthy of our Institute. I do not know to what to attribute the little success of our efforts with the day pupils at Alost. Please, Reverend Mother, draw your attention especially to this matter so as to discover the cause of this evil, the return of which I dread as detrimental to our reputation.

Look also for ways of making all our Ladies write correctly and with a firmer hand. Writing, like spelling, leaves much to be desired. The letter of Mlle Alexandrine, which I am enclosing so that you may judge of the sentiments of that fervent novice, proves what I have just said. Burn that letter after reading it. I will answer it shortly.

By telling me that the house on the other side of the river that flows through the property of Mr. Lefebvre at Malines, brings in 4.50, they have proved to me that they need to be taught the

rudiments of arithmetic. Four francs fifty centimes yielded by several houses! When they wrote to me that the same lady is asking 100,005 frs for her property, I could not stop laughing at the figure: one hundred thousand and five francs! The grammar mistakes are as striking, and Mme Adelaide told me very naively and without any malice that the Lady whose mistakes in the science of figures I am pointing out, has never written a letter without mistakes to our Ladies at Mouscron. Judge, Reverend Mother, what remedy you will prescribe for that Lady to correct her of these types of blunders. I entrust that matter to you, being convinced that you will not look upon it as unworthy of your solicitude.

Please tell Mme Honorine I am pleased with the sentiments she expressed to me in her letter of the 18th of April. Mme Euphrosyne has written me a letter worthy of the brave soul with which God has endowed her. Believe me, if that Lady carefully follows the impulses of grace, she will attain to great perfection in every respect. I am keeping that letter as an indication of what the Lord wishes to do with that Child.

I rely on your care, as regards what your postulants and the novice Victorine require of you. Act prudently, remembering what I told you on my last journey.

The letter of His Eminence the Cardinal must be carefully preserved; I am sorry the address has been detached from it. One must have more respect for documents so precious to our Institute. Inspire sentiments for all that recalls events or persons that have honored us with their esteem or protection. They are precious treasures that our successors will find and from which they will write up our history when the time pay to God and our... (End of letter cut off) ...
(Spring 1839)

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J

6-152
6-153

No indeed, Reverend Mother, God does not condemn reasonable solicitude, a wise application to the duties of one's state; he does not disapprove of that unremitting care, that exact economy, in short that attention at every moment to following the designs of Providence. What he forbids is the anxiety, the agitation and worry that give rise to a sharp temper, grief and murmuring within oneself. What he condemns is that kind of inversion of order by which the weak, powerless creature seems to want to put itself in the place of the Creator, by force of the steps it takes, really upsets the course of certain events and designs of the supreme arbiter of our destinies. Working with a zeal that is too natural, getting agitated or worried would not be recognizing Providence enough, and counting on it too little. Do you find anything that wounds your maternal heart more than the distrust of one of your children? Always beware of insulting in this way our heavenly Parents, that loving Mother and good Father who watch over us. Let us shun the idle confidence that natural laziness inspire in us with as much care as we do that anxious eagerness with which a sharp temper decks itself in the appearance of zeal and passion substitutes itself for the action of grace. Does not man work in vain, if God does not bless his efforts? Let us work courageously, that is fine; let us even be diligent in the various duties our office imposes on us, but let us leave it to the wisdom and adorable will of our divine Master to decide whether we succeed, and humbly adore what the Lord has found it good to allow. May the glory of success be his alone, and ours the confusion of the failure of our enterprises however ill-devised our means have been.

That, Reverend Lady, is what I have to reply for the moment to the questions you have asked me on the present matter. Please recognize in it those sentiments of devotedness I bear you and my duties as a spiritual Father inspire me with; in this capacity, I am yours without reserve,

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th May 1838

(Note attached to the end of the page)

You are too polite, my dear Lady, to wait ten days after leaving me, without giving me a sign of life and saying a few helpful words to me about our work. This is a proof that you are ill; this silence is more significant than the few lines you would have written to me. Make a note of that for

the future. I would really scold you a little, if the great mysteries we are dealing with did not oblige me to be mortified and patient.

May Jesus be both our courage and our reward and may he deign to bless you, my dear child.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-154 to 6-163
6-164

Reverend Mother

Your letter did me great good. It was not only the illness of our dear Superior, but the series of difficulties that house is presenting at the moment, that caused me most anxiety. Your solicitude makes mine bearable; I thank our good God for this help he is granting me in my weakness. I readily believe your suppositions and congratulate myself on seeing you enter into my views about Mme Marie Charlotte and the doctor. Last Saturday I read to Mr. Van Wymelbeke the nice letter of his daughter, in which I am informed in the amiable way, that the Superior is better and Mme Marie Charlotte is going with her pupils on a trip to the country. The last statement surprised her father and he thought the country meant the convent garden. To hide my own embarrassment, I had nothing ready to say than that I attributed that remedy to the dogmatic ideas of the doctor. In fact, these outings are so remote from what is practiced in convents, that they cannot easily be explained. I know no proper convent where these remedies are used. I do not even except Berlaymont which is situated in the middle of Brussels and has gardens that are not at all vast. However, do not change anything about all that for the moment. Get some information about the doctor, but do so very prudently and from various persons.

What is Mme Angelique doing at Malines? That Lady would perhaps provide the means of changing Mme Stephanie whom I would like to see at Mouscron or Brussels, because of the accent which is not of the best in Brussels where they are getting used to that (accent) of Mme Gonzague. We still have Mme Philomène to change from Waeken. But leave all that for the holidays.

I am sending you back the certificate from the doctor at Brussels. We did well to take that measure. I am sorry for the postulant, but we will not be able to accept her. Deal with her affair as you find good but with great tact.

May the Queen of Angels deign to bless her children.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd July 1839

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-165
6-166

Madame Superior,

The very merciful dealings of our divine Master with our dear child Bathilde must increase in us the confident love he asks of his favorite friends. By submitting to his adorable wishes we are honoring that good Master and drawing his blessings down on ourselves more and more. I had once more commended Mme Bathilde this morning at the Holy Sacrifice and hope to-morrow to offer the august mystery for the repose of her soul. I have already asked Bruges, Ostend and Grammont for prayers. I am counting on the wise resignation of all your children and especially our dear Madame Flore.

You will do well to withdraw the concessions made by the Bishop in favor of our chapels in order to conform on every point in regard to the Dean. For the rest, I approve of the precautions you are taking to avoid alarming the pupils and others. This is a point of importance and I am pleased to see you have understood it.

I congratulate your postulant Mlle Loix on her good beginning. It seemed to me that Mary and Joseph are preparing favors for her.

I am delighted with the dispositions of Mme Euphrosyne. God be praised for them! I do not have the leisure to write to her or to Mme Honorine who has informed me of the changes that had taken place in the condition of Mme Bathilde.

It seems to me that we are right to be satisfied with the price at which the belongings of Mlle (illegible) have been estimated.

(A sentence crossed out in letter)

I am acquainted with your feelings regarding me, my very dear Child. I thank you for the prayers you do not cease to offer for your poor Father in Jesus Christ. I also thank all your dear children who, I never doubt it, also think of me when they are in the presence of God.

I give my blessing to all of you.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 27th July 1839

(Note attached to the end of the letter)

Here is my answer to poor Thérèse. May she obtain forgiveness of the enormous fault her guilty action made her commit! May that dreadful example make all the religious prudent, whatever order they belong to, who get to know about it.

I will try to pass through Alost on my return from Malines towards the end of this week. I too have many things to inform you about. It seems that the crosses the Lord is strewing on our work, are a sure guarantee that our efforts are pleasing to him. I am edified and very much encouraged by the zeal animating my Children; the courage displayed in all our convents and the spirit of charity reigning in them are a touching sight for all of us.

I am very pleased with the letters of Mesdames Flore, Théodosie and Marine. Please tell the two last named so.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-167

I share your opinion, Reverend Mother, as regards the postulant from Brussels that I saw at Alost. If she has the wherewithal to pay the expenses of her trousseau, you may send her to me; I will direct her to Belleghem and admit her to the clothing at the end of this month (the month of August).

It is not correct to say that I asked the curate (not the parish priest) of the Beguinage to send us some of his penitents, but subjects suitable for helping us in our undertakings. I did not mention lay sisters since more present themselves than can be accepted. It is very possible that the remains of the old Adam have some share in Mme Gonzague's opinion of Mlle Hyacinthe.

I have received from Mme Marie Charlotte a charming letter, with a delicacy of feelings that doubles the pleasure one experiences in reading those types of writings. Mme Clothilde had added to it a few equally amiable and sensible lines but she expresses in them an idea that very really made me laugh, and proved to me again that her judgment needs to mature with age; the English girls told her that Mlle des Camps will not be in a fit state to teach English in September, that she would need a two or three months stay with English people. Thereupon, our dear Mme Clothilde proposes, seriously I think, to send Mlle des Camps to English people in Brussels; being near the convent, she adds, she would perhaps be out of danger.

Here is the account from Mouscron. I forgot to send it to you until now. I do not know whether you will understand it.

You are mistaken, Reverend Mother, in putting the subjunctive after vu que (in view of); it needs the indicative: vu le peu de monde que nous avons (in view of the few people we have).

Let us come now to the important matter concerning Brussels. I have been praying the Holy Spirit to enlighten us about the wishes of our divine Master, for our whole ambition is to behave in all things like faithful servants. Does it not seem that the rightly understood interest of our family for the moment, requires us to strengthen the positions entrusted to us, and there to await the further help our good God will deign to provide us with at the time fixed by his Providence? By getting ourselves more and more favorably known, we will obtain a confidence that no other establishment will take from us, and then we will see what the other are doing in order to do better, if we can. We are being only told about plans that need to be executed out before they can

guide us with serenity, and meanwhile we will gather together our materials, we will count our forces, and we will sharpen our weapons. Being little known outside Brussels, our advertisements would be less well received than those of the S. de N .D. So, it is in Brussels that we must above all get ourselves appreciated and that can be done almost as well in the place where we are as in other districts or bigger premises. I do not however think we are permitted to neglect what perhaps divine Providence is pointing out to us as means to be employed, but it seems to me that it is to following its direction rather than anticipating it that we must tend all our efforts. Let us work calmly but not spare ourselves; let us consult grace and be faithful to its divine impulses. That, dear child in Jesus Christ, is what I think I have to say to you at the moment. I am not clinging to my idea; I will abandon it at once when I think it is not in conformity with the adorable will of my good Master. If your divine Spouse gives you any lights, pass them on to me; you will find me as docile as a child of Mary and Joseph must always be. That at least is what I wish, with all my heart, to make you see in this Brussels affair as well as in every other one.

If, Reverend Mother, you decide to send me the postulant for the Sisters of St. Joseph, you must not let the community know of our plans for that girl. I will send you our Sophie as soon as possible. I will be very sorry to lose her, but I am not permitted to oppose the designs of God. I would think I was acting against his designs by retaining, longer than is strictly necessary, a soul far from the graces of the life led at your house.

I am sending back the beautiful letter of Mme Euphrosyne; keep it, it may be useful for cheering up that child in moments of trial; those moments may still occur.

Good-bye, dear daughter, you know how sincerely I am

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 29th July 1839

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-168 to 6-177
6-178

My dear child in Jesus Christ,

I am eagerly seizing the first moment of rest that I have at last, to bring you up-to-date on many things that I have not had time to inform you about.

So, I will tell you: first, that I have passed a few remarks to our Reverend Superior at Malines about the complaints the Mlles de Sejourne had made to their former governess, Mme Flore's sister. Mme Superior has learned from them that all was not going on for the best in the world at her place before the holidays, and that she must be a little more wary about the protestations of a few pupils like Mlle Steken -and others. That she may indeed allow additional pious practices that her fears of displeasing certain people had not allowed her last year, etc.

Then I pointed out to her that good order to be good must be well done. That her enthusiasm is a bad counselor; that her English girl, in spite of all her brilliant qualities, did not allow us to upset a whole convent, which is not a house of converts, but an educational establishment, etc. I have seen that girl and allowed her to go to Brussels, if she wants to do so, to our Ladies to be examined or instructed, etc. ... (Bottom of page cut off)

... of humility. Mme Gonzague has received from Malines where Mme Brisaert (word erased) ... similar information on the same subject. Mme Gonzague will have learned to mistrust her judgment a little and to be more prudent. I have received that postulant on the same conditions as she has been received at Namur. We must now examine whether we immediately keep Mlle Bonte at Mouscron, or else give her the veil beforehand without a big ceremony so as to advance matters a little. We could perhaps, grant the same favor to your two postulants; it would be a long time to wait until March. If you approve, I could make the journey to Brussels in November, and there, without informing the relatives and just among ourselves, give the religious habit to these three girls. Please, give the matter serious consideration. If we decide on this course, we will immediately

send to Mouscron those we want to make their novitiate there, at least in part, and we could keep only those we would need elsewhere.

Mlle Victorine will perhaps have more inclination now. We could talk more firmly to her, for I think she will set more value on that grace of becoming the spouse of Jesus Christ than she set on it before her journey.

It is a pity Mlle Hyacinthe cannot be at either Alost or Mouscron. She is not being trained at all at Brussels; she needs to be carefully directed; it is (words effaced) ... the black veil has somewhat turned her head. ...

(End of letter cut off)

L.S.J.M.J.

6-179

Reverend and dear Mother,

I thank our good God for the sentiments he is giving you, and especially for that wish to help me to work for the good of the family of Mary and Joseph. You know how my heart feels for all that dear family and needs to be consoled a little from time to time. Crosses attach us to it more firmly indeed, especially those the Lord has been pleased to entrust to us for some time. The thought of the virtues of our earthly angel is very useful to me; I am convinced that her prayers have already obtained precious gifts for us. I have brought back from Mouscron all the papers about the Institute and our dear Sister Aloÿse. I will spend some more time arranging what is concerned with our project and pass my ideas on to you.

The plan of your Mothers for a journey needs to be examined. I find it has pros and cons. I will write to you about it another time. Do not appear to agree to it nor the Sisters either.

Good-bye, my Child, let us pray our good God to favor our Sisters and pupils with the gifts of his holy love. Those are the ones that will be most useful to us.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, last day of the month of our Holy Patron, 1838

Except for the following letter, all letters between 6-179 and 6-191 are missing.

6- between 179 & 191

(The top of the letter cut off)

Your last letter, my dear Child, gave me much pleasure. Yes! Obedience must be your compass; your character, your temperament, grace, everything must make it a duty of yours. I have examined what you told me you have retained of one of the instructions of Fr. de Vos, in which you were told you must strive towards perfection without mortal sin. That doctrine is strikingly inaccurate, as I used to say. It is love and not fear that must bring you to perfection. So abandon that dreadful thought that shatters bolder persons than you are. It is a wrongly expressed opinion. One could not without mortal sin (in religion) neglect all the means to perfection one finds there because such behavior would indicate contempt for the Rule and the practices of perfection one is dedicated to by the vows. So bind yourself more and more with the bonds of charity, but cast away from you those (illegible word crossed out) that originate in false doctrines.

Excuse my appalling writing and be convinced that, if my hand indicates a certain amount of fatigue, my heart (word effaced) not any the less strength as it burns with the desire to see you happy, you, dear Child, and all your Sisters in God.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th October 1839

(3 lines, a little illegible, on the reverse side; the top of the page has been cut off and a piece of paper attached on at the end)

... Philomène and Bernarde that they remain Ladies of Mary whatever may be the fate of divine Providence has in store for (illegible)... Sr. Térèsa. I have good reasons for telling them that decision that it...

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your modest appearance adorned with what pleases me more than anything, gave me very real pleasure. I thank you for the attentions you show me and the prayers you offer for my happiness. I am vain enough to believe that I deserve to get the former from you, and have a good enough opinion of you to hope that your prayers will be useful to me.

I approve of your answer to Mlle Des Camps and the expedient you have made use of to reconcile yourself with the mother of Mme Séraphine. Do with your two postulants (word illegible) what you think good.

Here is a letter from Mme Gonzague; she gives me the details I asked her for in my letter which she must have sent to you.

But there is another very important one. Mlle Pauline has send me two letters at the same time, one to wish me a happy New Year; the other which is the one enclosed and which, because of the spelling mistakes it contains, seems to me to have been written secretly. I think I now have more (illegible word) reasons to believe that her vocation is known to me. It remains to be known whether Mlle Pauline will be brave enough to overcome the difficulties with which our good God is surrounding the gift he is offering her. These difficulties will be great; but the help of heaven will be great too; everything will depend on fidelity to grace. I am going to her write before long. I will say that the retreat has been put off and that she will be informed as to when it will take place; that I will talk to her face to face in a few weeks' time at Grammont, etc. Meanwhile, we will commend in our prayers this dear relative who is perhaps destined to render us great services. May she be faithful to the voice of God.

Please give Mme Colette my greetings for the New Year. I will make it my duty to commend her specially to the Lord. Kindly tell her so. She will set more importance on that than on a formal letter I might write to her, if I had more free time.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

8th January 1840

Lost/missing

6-192 to 6-197

L.S.J.M.J.

6-198

Madame Superior

The last news your gave me cheered me a little, and I am cherishing the hope that our good God will preserve our dear child Stephanie for us. I have not dared to open my mouth about it in front of Mlle Colette for fear of renewing painful sensations and doing so very uselessly. Take care to avoid these calamities by paying more attention to the early stage of indispositions. I also hope you will give me no more cause for anxiety about yourself; my tone in my last letter, must have made you feel that your little excesses do not edify me, but that more than ever I require wise moderation on your part.

I am delighted to learn that your feast day was a pleasant occasion for you to perceive what is wanted of you. Take these indirect lessons into account; they are often useful to both parties, inferiors and superiors.

(Another letter is attached to the above letter. Below the attached letter, one can read)

Here are a few words for Mmes Euphrosine and Marine.

(Reverse side of the letter)

As our needs seem to be increasing still more, I thought it would be useful for us to make a novena to the Holy Angels and to call to our assistance our angelic Aloyse, our other children who are in heaven and our Holy Patrons. I will begin on the 13th of this month so as to end on the 21st. I

will say Holy Mass for this intention; you could hear Holy Mass and say, on each of the nine days, three Hail Marys in honor of the nine choir of Angels and their Queen, our Mother Mary. If you think it a good thing to do, you can speak to your community about it and write to the one in Brussels. I will see whether I would do well to write to Malines about it. They must calm their spirit a little over there, and I think they are making a novena in honor of our Blessed Virgin at present.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th February 1840

You will do well to send someone to the Hotel d'Autriche to await the arrival of Mme Philomene to-morrow evening.

Lost/missing

6-199

L.S.J.M.J

6-200

Madame Superior

I admire and bless the loving ways of divine Providence, and I share your confidence in Mary and St. Joseph and in the help of the Holy Angels together with the efforts of our dear children who are already in the presence of their heavenly Spouse. I am continuing my prayers which are the only resource I have for helping you effectively. Unless two or three thousand francs can do something; because I could lend you that much, if you want it or, rather, if you are absolutely in need of it; it seems to me that the offer of Mr. Dellafaille is not to be disdained; the publicity that would perhaps be given to it would not do us much harm, so it seems to me. So I am altering your petition just a little and sending it to you with a letter for your kind Baron.

I do not need to go through the book about the subjects of the Institute; I know there is nothing to be found in it at the moment.

Please get my letter send to Mr. Dellafaille at or about the same time as your request. You will take care to seal it with wax before sending it to his address.

Mlle Thienpont is charged by me with saying certain things that will prove to you that all we said about the impossibility of steering our Brussels boat by ... was not exaggerated.

I have begun my meetings with a Jesuit Father about the revision of the Constitutions. I see that I will be able to evade the difficulties Mme Clothilde find in the spiritual director. There will also be a few other changes for the better. I am rather confused when you thank me for what I am doing for you, since I am convinced of the small means I have for being useful to you, and I am rather displeased when I hear you say it costs you to be a submissive daughter to me.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th February 1840

Lost/missing

6-201 to 6-204

L.S.J.M.J.

6-205

Madame Superior

Here is a letter you will want to send to Brussels if you approve of its contents.

I presume you have written to Malines and that Mlle Clothilde, like you, will be arriving at Ghent on Monday during the morning. I have not written anything about it.

The modest learned Jesuit, who has just finished the revision of your Constitutions with me, has been very useful to me. You will be of the same opinion as I am, I am very sure, and will be pleased with our work.

I like to persuade myself that your health has not been the cause of your long silence.

Bring back to me the volume of the work of St. Francis de Sales that was left at your place, as well as the Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

If you, or anyone else who might be elected Superior General, had been present at our discussions, you would have been surprised to learn that the Jesuits and personages most eminent in learning and sanctity, would not be able to give the name virtue to your repugnance. You would be humiliated by the designation they would give it.

My compliments with my good wishes for a happy feast day to your dear invalid and all your dear children.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th of St. Joseph's month 1840

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-206 & 6-207
6-208

Madame Superior General

Yesterday, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Lord called to himself our beloved Mme Stephanie. She is one more protectress in heaven for the religious family our good God has just entrusted to your direction. Let us rely in faith on our powerful Patrons, and we will experience the fact that with less human help we will succeed in fulfilling the designs of the adorable Providence of our heavenly Master. Ask the chaplain to say five Masses for our dear deceased sister and give him ten francs as an offering.

Mme G. wrote to me on Thursday to repeat the request she had made last Monday. I am putting off answering her until your arrival. All is going on well at Malines as at Alost, and I think we will receive equally pleasant news from Brussels, where Mme Clothilde must have arrived yesterday. I am preparing some notes on various subjects so as to make use of your stay here.

Since your nomination, my heart has felt more relieved, and I like to think that your submission will obtain great and abundant graces for you. Count on Mary and Joseph, our holy children who are surrounding the Lamb and especially on Jesus Christ himself. You know how much I wish to prove to you that I really am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th of St. Joseph's month 1840

My compliments to all my dear children at the convent of St. John the Baptist.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-209
6-210

Madame Superior General

Your letter has been a real joy for my soul that is rather overwhelmed by hundreds of petty annoyances that have been assailing it for a few months. I thank the good Master we serve, for this relief he is deigning to grant me, through you for this support he in his mercy is granting to my weakness. As you wished, time has contributed powerfully to make me docile to the guidance of grace on the journey I was dreading, and have just undertaken. The most precious interests of a whole branch of my religious family were calling for action on my part, and I was feeling keen opposition in myself to resolving it. In the end I triumphed over my repugnance and the Lord amply compensated me for the efforts I made.

Msgr. Corselis was looking out for me when I came out of the railway station at Bruges, to inform me that the Bishop was expecting me to dinner, and would be pleased to be able to have a chat with me before the meal. After a brief appearance among my Sisters, I went to the Bishop's house, and the excellent prelate, more embarrassed than I was about the position that had been taken up, broached the matter only when I had made the means of doing so easy for him. I had no difficulty in putting him on my side or, rather, on the side of the truth; and in spite of the clever instigations of the little person and the inconceivable simplicity of a man whom age and position should have rendered more cautious, I had the consolation of achieving a reconciliation that the spiritual needs of the Sisters of St. Joseph and my most ardent wishes had been calling on for some time. I remained within my rights; but I think, by abandoning N., I will add to the advantages you and I have obtained for the Ladies of Mary, that of giving material proof of my inclinations in favor of those persons who were thinking they had lost my affection. The great thoughts one gets by meditating on the passion of our divine Savior, made me abandon several means of defense in

which my self-love would have found satisfaction. Let us, my dear daughter, try to do all with God in mind; that is what Jesus teaches us.

I think we will however have to begin a school for the poor. We must justify the expectations your petition has aroused.

The letter to Mlle (name illegible) is appropriate for inspiring that person with useful thoughts. You are not wicked in it, but foreseeing.

It seems to me that we must not be of the opinion of Maria Wilmaer as regards Mlle Des Camps. The air at Malines (word effaced) be as advantageous to that postulant as that of the world (word effaced); while admitting that I hold the judgment that Sr. Clothilde makes of her postulants of little account, I think that if one could without unpleasant consequences put Albertine back until September, Hyacinthe would bear better the delay we are obliged to prescribe for her.

The ill-considered way in which the Reverend Mother at St. John the Baptist received the news of the departure of Mme M. A., makes it our duty to defer carrying out the plan we had formed for Mme Marie.

Do not write any more to the Minister nor to Mr. Dellafaille nor to the King.

Get your dear children to find sentiments worthy of their divine Spouse in meditation on the sufferings the Church is concerned with these days, and count on the willingness to be always useful to you of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th April 1840

Lost/missing

6-211 to 6-219

L.S.J.M.J.

6-220

Madame Superior General

Those delicate attentions of His Eminence that cause him to seize natural opportunities of showing himself our protector are a real consolation for us. Let us try more and more to deserve the manifestation of his feelings; it is precious to us. I also think that more moderation is indispensable to you, and that the soul as well as the body is also crying out for it. You are convinced of it now, but habit and nature combine so well with each other to put you off the track, unless you are continually on the watch, they will regain their rights and carry you away; the slope is so natural and the setting off so easy! Would that I could appear to you during those moments of extravagant zeal, I would not let myself be put off with bad reasons and I would make you blush at your eagerness to do more than our good God wants.

I have written to Waeken in a tone that will assure your novice of a welcome. I learned from Mr. Van Wymelbeke that Mlle Constance was on the train yesterday. That gentleman was edified by the air of recollection of that religious. Talking of Mr. Van Wymelbeke, I recall that my god-daughter is meddling in making predictions; I was not aware of all the qualities of that child. Mme Marie Charlotte will be kind enough to tell Louise that I am rather afraid vanity will enter into it one day. We had a good laugh at that young prophetess.

Next Monday I intend to go to Grammont where I will spend the week and return to Ghent not (words illegible). I will return home a week after this journey and then I would certainly be able to go to Malines and Alost. I must admit to you that I am longing to see the novitiate, the Mother house and the convent of St. Joseph where everything seems to me to be going on so well; our good Superior speaks well of her religious and pupils.

I am always as you know, entirely devoted to my dear daughters in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th June 1840

L.S.J.M.J.

6-221

Madame Superior

Although I am not yet rid of the excesses caused by visits of the New Year, I can no longer put off giving you some sign of life. I will not occupy myself with proving to you that your good wishes pleased me; you know that well enough, I am convinced that your feelings towards me leave nothing to be desired. You are not ignorant either of the fact that not a day passes but that I commend you to the Lord, you and all your dear and pious family, and without often repeating it to you, I take advantage of the opportunities afforded by the solemnities of the Church to redouble my usual prayers in order to obtain more special graces for you. So, I limit myself to that at the moment. However, be kind enough to act as my interpreter to my nieces, thank them for the letters they addressed to me and tell them I am also praying for them. I have again specially asked our good God for blessings for Mlle Maria and her worthy virtuous mother, so that grace may work in these souls that are so dear to the Lord and in which we have such a keen, religious interest.

I have received nearly 50 francs interest from your two Roman shares. I will tell you the exact amount another time. I do not have the papers of the banker before me.

My dear daughter, see whether a two-day retreat can be useful, without doing harm to your community and act accordingly.

What was the effect on Coloma of the floods that occurred in your neighborhood?

I am very pleased you have admitted (name erased). We will congratulate ourselves later on having this subject among us.

May the love of Jesus Christ increase in you and in your spiritual Sisters and in your pupils. Such is the continual wish expressed by

Your ever devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 15th January 1846

L.S.J.M.J.

6-222

Madame Superior General

I am delighted to know that His Eminence will deign to lay the foundation stone at your convent of the Queen of Angels. That is a true blessing from heaven. Also, I am convinced you will have understood the importance of that favor and will thank St. Joseph. It seems to me that your arrangements are well made; the weather will, I hope, allow you to make a real feast day of this ceremony both for the pupils and for your religious.

It will not be possible for me to come and enjoy the beautiful sight presented by this laying of the first stone; we must make that sacrifice. It is also impossible for me to deal with the inscription at the moment. Throughout this month, I will be overburdened with work; if you think that this matter brooks no delay, you will have to apply to some obliging friend in your town; if on the contrary, the matter is not urgent, I will be only too pleased to deal with it later.

So now it is 29 years that we have had the happiness of working under the protection of St. Joseph in an enterprise that, we cannot doubt, is pleasing to God. Let us make ourselves ever more capable of responding to the aim of our Institute and thus meriting the continued protection of heaven. I will pray to our Holy Patron with great confidence and I hope we will again experience the fact that such confidence is pleasing (end of line cut off).

I beg you, Reverend Mother, offer my good wishes to all your dear children on the occasion of the feast of our good father Joseph and receive my blessing for all of you.

Your always devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 10th of St. Joseph's month 1846

L.S.J.M.J.

6-223

Madame Superior General

After saying Holy Mass for our Ladies at the convent of the Holy Angels this morning, I set out for Ghent so as to be at the Council at the Bishop's house at 10 o'clock. To my great regret my haste was useless; there was no council meeting. If I had been able to foresee that, I would have got off at Malines and we could have dealt with a few matters face to face. So, I will tell you here that I am satisfied with my journey; the Ladies of the convent at Brussels are all animated with a very good spirit and are in good health. The Superior had led me to fear that several, according to

her last report, would have aroused some anxiety in me; fortunately, I saw the opposite and could reassure Mme Clothilde and give her, on this occasion, a short lesson she will make use of for her peace of mind and that of her Ladies and Superiors.

Mme (name effaced) has received from Mme Pauline a rather odd letter which will oblige us not to enter quickly into our plan for Mme Alexandrine. I have told Mother Superior not to make any direct reply to the difficulties of Mme Pauline, but to seem to touch on them only to humiliate the latter. I have tried to prove to Mme Clothilde that her judgment is often at fault, and that she must impose silence on her rather gloomy temperament, and at other times on her imagination which is too lively.

You must have received the two notebooks sent off from here last Monday. If they have not been delivered to you, complain about them to the dispatch office at the railway station at Malines. They form only one parcel.

On the train I met a Lady from Doorzele accompanied by a lay sister. The Lady had a coat of the same kind as the ones I saw there on another occasion; the Sister had one of a coarser material, a type of half-coating. Although these religious were beside me from Malines to Ghent, they did not say a word to me. It seems that they keep great silence during a journey. That appeared rather excessive to me.

While approving of the novices taking part in a bodily game, I think that their mistress, and still less the Superior General, cannot join in these types of exercises. I doubt whether it is fitting for any Lady ever to take part in these types of games, even with the pupils. It seems to me to be against decorum. I do not say as much about certain gymnastic exercises in the form of a lesson. I would be more inclined to permit that to the Ladies.

I pray God to give abundant blessings to your retreat and that for your Institute the Reverend Fathers may draw from it sentiments of charity and devotedness. I will even say Holy Mass for that intention. Speak to the Reverend Fathers of the sentiments I always have for their Society and the keen gratitude I have for all they do for you. But avoid saying anything that may revive the memory of what happened through the inexperience or rather extravagant zeal of some of their men. Give a good opinion of your religious family and prove that you have an excellent one (opinion) of that to which these brave workers belong.

Here is the impression made by the seal of your convent at Malines. (Words effaced by the seal) that I order the others for you; tell me what you think of it.

I think I said too much when I put forward the idea that it would not be right for a man to be admitted to your quarters. That must be given more deliberation, before coming to any definite decision, as long as there is no particular superior having her particular parlors. Tell the Reverend Ladies of your council that I have experienced much consolation in our short sessions and will often make a special memento for you and for them at the Holy Sacrifice. I will also make it my duty to pray for your novices and for the Ladies of the convent of the Mother House, whose good spirit must be reflected on all our dear Institute.

You know, my dear daughter, how sincerely I can call myself,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th July 1840

Lost/missing

L.S.J.M.J.

6-224 to 6-229

6-230

Madame Superior General

I approve of sending Mme Bathilde to Brussels; however I do not know your motives. If they made this request for help to you, by quoting my approval or wish, you can believe that Mme Clothilde has not been acting with simplicity. Have you sent that novice, with the black veil, in accordance with our decision about novices sent to other convents.

It is necessary that you point out to Mme (name effaced) that her melancholy, and sometimes despondent look does singular harm to the interests of her convent and Institute. Do not let it be known that I have written to you about it. I have been struck by the force of her example on all the subjects in her convent; except Mme (name effaced) and the lay sister, everyone

there had a sad, taciturn look that I have never found in the convent of the Holy Angels. That made a great impression on me that reflection has much increased since my return.

I approve of your travel plan. But you will be accompanied, I hope; decorum and even decency require it. As for the profession, we will talk of it another time. For the moment, I think that the time will be well chosen and that you must ask His Eminence to be kind enough to do it; but the decision is for another time.

Mme Justine is to set out from Waeken for Mouscron to-day. I have put off the departure of Mme Bernarde so that we may give it still more thought and then decide where this Lady can be most useful.

I do indeed share your feelings about the precautions to be taken in regard to the health of our children. Try to impress these feelings of foresight and submission on the Superiors.

As regards Mme (name effaced) do what our good God puts into your heart, after asking to know his holy will.

(Three lines are effaced)

In your letters you repeat too frequently the name of the person that you are writing to. My very Reverend Father occurs three times in six lines and 14 times in the letter. I really think that in your style of letter-writing you out do the politeness that our dear Mme Justine displays in conversation. You deserve the prize.

You may tell Alost that during the holidays black veil will not be worn by the novices who are there, and this is to be stated to the pupils, without making a mystery of it, as a matter decided for the novices who are employed in classes outside the novitiate. However, if you have found any difficulties since we talked about it, leave things as they are.

It seems to me that the figure of speech you used to express the satisfaction of Mme Marie Charlotte, a pint of blood (une pinte de sang), is not in use; I did not find it dignified either.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 29th August 1840

I have just learned very much by chance that Mme Clothilde is counting on having verses of her own composition printed for her prize distribution. It would be a great imprudence and an act against her Rule. It seems that Mr. Vaes, who easily admires what that Lady does, is urging her to make this very dangerous request. I am afraid lest this good gentleman ends by increasing the number of warm friends who are then going to become cold towards the convent of Mme Clothilde. Mr. Vifkens and Mr. Rodenback should probably however have cured this Lady. It is also surprising that I was not told anything about this plan, when I saw the Ladies at Brussels. Do not mention me when you speak of it to the Superior of the Holy Angels. ... (End of letter?)

(Letter attached to the first page of 6-230)

L.S.J.M.J.

23rd July 1840

Your letter gave me great pleasure, my dear child, not because of the rather flattering things you said about me in it, but because you understand that my devotedness has not been idle; that I have constantly proved that I have in view one objective that can be acknowledged, the glory of God, the good of the dear Institute and the perfection of your soul; three things I hold very precious. My great desire actually is that you do not neglect the means of attaining this threefold objective and that you help me greatly without straying from the path of holy moderation. Amen! Amen!

(The following two extracts of letters are attached to the reverse side of 6-230)

1) The large number of things I had to put in my packet that has just gone, and the arrival at the same moment of the Superior of Melle, made me forget for the second time to tell you my opinion of the silver censer. That object however, for which I may still make you pay the carriage, I beg the pardon of Mme Marie Charlotte. You would do well to buy that censer. It is a vessel destined to send up towards the Master of heaven and earth, material incense that our position allows us to

accompany with a very great mark of respect, by burning it in a vessel of precious metal. May the incense of our pious desires go to God, issuing from our hearts purer than the most perfect metal! One can help the other to refer all things to their author.

Although I have said nothing, or at least very little, about your two letters and those of Sr. Marie Charlotte, I was no less delighted with them. I thank you for the sentiments you expressed in them and for the exactitude of Mme the secretary in informing me of the state of my accounts. I thank you for that since I have the opportunity of doing so here.

It is possible that next week, I may have the pleasure of seeing you, as I pass through Malines on my way to Tirlement. Although I often repeat the expression of my devotedness, it does not get worn out; the sentiments it expresses are more sound than the ink and paper and are more lasting than life; they must be eternal.

2) On rereading your Rules, it seems to me that I constantly find we have sought with the help of God, to establish in the religious family of the daughters of Mary and Joseph, a wisely organized administration, the motivating forces of which are simple, and bring together the lasting elements that man can give. Let us try to form a devoted personnel, that may worthily respond to the needs of each task; and we will have the happiness of deserving and retaining the confidence of the enlightened public that is attached to religion.

I am pleased to see, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that you are preparing with zeal for the feast of Christmas. In the mystery of that solemnity there is something so delightful for the Christian soul that we can never be concerned with it without experiencing an increase of tenderness for the one who so generously humbles himself to draw us from the abyss into which sin had cast us. So let us occupy ourselves a great deal, but always with love, with the great object that recalls the feast of Christmas. Communicate this devotion to all our children; they will draw from it treasures of grace and the most sound consolations.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 12th December 1840

Except for the following, all letters between Letter 230 and Letter 243 are missing.

L.S.J.M.J.

6- between 230 & 243

Madame Superior

Only those subjects that Mary and Joseph have chosen can be of use to us. Let us try to get that kind and we will only have to congratulate ourselves; our heavenly parents know our needs and their choices will respond to them. Then the duty of forming and keeping them is ours. I have not kept a very great opinion of the postulant from Brussels; I wish to be wrong about her; time will tell. I am sending you the notes I put down on paper so that in time you could make a short account from them for each convent. I think I remember we have already made use of them at Alost and that an account of the Institute exists. If that is not so, try to make something presentable by means of this material and the note I made last year about the common origin of our two Institutes. However, avoid useless details and do not forget, when you are composing it, the changes that have taken place in the last ten years or so. Before you have your new account copied out, you would do well to let me see the document. One must not hurry when it is a question of things to hand on to posterity. Piety, common sense and style, must all be assembled to help each other. It is not enough for us to go on living among our successors, to have our short say in their pious recreations, to slip some remark into their evening chats or even into their conferences; we must show ourselves worthy of the choice our good God deigned to make of us to found a holy family; they must find us wise in all things, our words must exhale sweet piety and that happiness Jesus Christ communicates to his faithful servants and our ways of life and judgment must not detract too much from our respective positions. That is now it is appropriate for us to live, as long as there are children of Mary and Joseph who will be concerned with us on earth.

I approve of your plan to form yourself to that amiable virtue so well described by our amiable Fenelon, and that other by St Francis de Sales. Go about it gently, but courageously; the grace of your divine Spouse will render this study easy. What a lovely sight will be presented by a

Mother at all times giving her Children the example of wisdom adorned with cheerfulness, humility and submission to the adorable will of God!

You did not guess correctly, Madame Superior, when the good weather led you to predict that I would be visiting the convents. I was well and truly nailed to my chair, those days; it was not because I was unwell; my health is completely restored and my head no longer feels the fatigues of September. They were doing my portrait and my painter has succeeded, they tell me, in capturing fairly well the fleeting features of my mobile face. You will know later the purpose of this act. However, if the weather holds, I will go to Belleghemon Monday, then to Mouscron, and perhaps to Waeken. My visit to the convent of Alost will take place the following week, if it pleases the good God.

Be kind enough to tell Mme Marie Charlotte that I was very pleased with her two sisters during their stay here with their dear mamma. We did not talk at all about anything your good Lady wrote to me about, but nothing was done nor said either that is to do harm to the matter.

The Mistress of Novices rejoices, I think, at seeing her Children cheerfully advance along the way on which divine mercy has placed them. I admit that I am pleased to go over again in my mind, the admirable guidance of Our Lord Jesus Christ in regard to several of your novices; the hand of Providence is visible in many of the circumstances that these dear children have made known to me. I beg Mme their Mistress to remember me to all the young Ladies, without forgetting my niece (Mlle Narcisse Faston).

You will find enclosed the letter of Mme Marine; you will do well to keep it. I am also sending you the letter of Mlle Bathilde; on rereading it I found less grounds for doubting that she must think of another state. You will one day tell me what you think of it. Read also the letter from the Vicar General of Liege. I told you at Malines how I answered it. It is good for you to see that document, but burn it after reading it and meditating on it.

I beg you also to give my compliments to all your Ladies and Sisters. As you asked me to do, I give you all a big blessing. May the Lord deign to add his through Mary and Joseph.

I say always with pleasure,

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 16th October 1840

Read rather attentively my notebook of remarks and see what must be hidden from other Ladies. You will then give my notebook back to me. I recommend to your prayers Mme Henri Van Crombrughe, my niece who is dangerously ill.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-243

Madame Superior General

After reflecting on the plan to begin a day school in the upper part of the town at Brussels, it seems to me that if we have subjects suitable for carrying it out, we would do well not to reject it, but to sound the dispositions of either the Dean at St Gudule or the parish priest of St James, or even both of them, but talking with each of them in the interests of their respective parishes. It seems to me also, that except for some modification, in the note of Mme Clothilde, you would have just about the right personnel. It would be enough to have premises of some appearance; you will need only a parlor and some nice classrooms.

I do not think it is appropriate at this moment for me to write to Mme Clothilde about it. You would seem to have treated too lightly a proposal that seems to appeal to me at first sight. Profit, my dear daughter, by any circumstance that presents itself to get Mme Clothilde to understand that she makes many spelling mistakes in her writing. Her excuse of attributing this to the supervision she is doing in class is unworthy of that Lady. It pains me to see that Mme Flore is no better in this respect than Mme Superior of Brussels. So as not to weaken your remonstrations by examples contrary to your precepts, always re-read your letters before sealing them. Never forget that what one has written is lasting.

Mme Clothilde is wrong about the postulant from Waeken. The one who is already at Alost is much better educated than she is, and moreover, by beginning with Alost, she would be another one to add to the number of boarders at St Joseph's; this is not to be despised.

It is a very unfortunate thing to have only small pupils at Brussels, whether as regards age or condition, I do not know what could have brought this about.

On Sunday we are celebrating the feast of the Most Holy Name of Jesus. I exhort you to celebrate it with zeal. In so doing we will get fresh proofs both of the love and of the power of our merciful Savior. Remind your dear children that at the adorable name of Jesus, everything bows and yields in heaven to send down favors, on earth to bring about the triumph of the friends of the God made man and even in hell to bind the enemy of our salvation. So let us address ourselves to Jesus with confidence, and let us follow the example of Holy Church which ends her prayers through Our Lord Jesus Christ who lives and reigns forever and ever. ...

End of letter missing: Letter not dated ...

Lost/missing

6-244 to 6-253

L.S.J.M.J.

6-254

Madame Superior General

Although you are no longer writing to me, I do not want to dispense you from reading my news; I even think, in spite of appearances to the contrary, you will not be very much upset by my severity. The great solemnity we have just celebrated has provided me with precious opportunities of frequently commending you to the Lord; you, my dear Madame Superior and all your Children, have been the special object of my prayers in memory of the sufferings and triumphs of our divine Savior. May we understand more and more how dear our souls are to God, by considering what Jesus Christ deigned to do to save them!

I am sending you two books in which you will find very good things. One will provide you with excellent things on education and the other useful instructions for your pupils. The first will doubly surprise you, when you think that all that is said in it comes from a person who seems to see things only through the eyes of man; without the help of the practical and positive teachings of the faith and the principles of religion. I have also to inform you that I have admitted a very promising postulant. The details another time. I still had to ask you what you have decided about the profession, but the letter young Beaudumont has just delivered to me on your behalf gives me reason enough to understand that no decision has been taken and that you are waiting for me at Malines. If I had known, at a favorable time, of your desire to talk with me about various matters, I could have come to your place to-day; unfortunately, not knowing anything about that desire that you seem to have been nourishing for some time, I will not be able to satisfy you before the second week after Easter, my other days until then being irrevocably given up. If nothing intervenes, I will try to arrive at Malines on the 26th of this month. Please tell me if that date suits you.

You will see in my response to Mme Clothilde that I am telling her about her plans. It seems that Mme Théodosie is still unwell; we will have to consider whether that Lady does not need more bracing air like that of Malines.

I close, my dear daughter; my nephew Charles will tell you I am well. I fasted more easily than ever.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 13th April 1841

Lost/missing

6-255 to 6-281

L.S.J.M.J.

6-282

Madame Superior General

I did indeed take a very difficult route; but thanks to a courage I did not know I had, and a quickened step that at certain moments resembled a running pace, I at last reached the station just as the train was about to leave. I was expecting today to feel the results of that excessive fatigue, not only in my feet which were all raw, but also on my limbs; but how surprised I was, on waking

up, to feel I had entirely recovered! It is through your prayers, my dear children that I arrive at a result so unusual in such circumstances.

Your plan of going to explore the districts next to the place you are in, please me very much; but go there with Mme Flore or, even if that is not possible, Mme Adelaide would perhaps do instead in some less important places accompanied by you or Mme Flore. We will then see what it will be appropriate to do in those areas. But conceal yourselves as best you can, if not your persons, at least your intentions.

My visit to your convent of St. John the Baptist will leave pleasant traces in my memory. Above all, my heart will retain good impressions. I savored that faith and that heavenly charity pour into the heart of a father when he witnesses those pious expressions that the grace of Jesus Christ inspires. You love your divine Spouse and for his sake are fond of the guide he has given you. Judge what that means to a heart that is not insensitive on that count.

I like to think, my dear daughter, your health will not always cause us anxiety. Mary, our good Mother, will soon bring us a little relief, I hope, on that respect. St. Bernard tells us so definitely that it is unheard-of to have recourse to that all-powerful patroness in vain.

I have delayed writing to you because I have been very busy since my return.

Receive, my very Reverend and dear General, my blessing for yourself and all your beloved pious family.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th October 1842

L.S.J.M.J.

6-283

Madame Superior

I have this moment returned from Brussels and I am writing to you at once for fear of not having time to do so to-morrow. I am very pleased with the convent of the Holy Angels, but foresee that we are preparing tardy regrets for ourselves, if we leave Mme (name effaced) there any longer. The good Superior does as well as can be expected of her, but it is indispensable for us to go to her help and that of some other subjects: 1) by banishing for ever the notion they have conceived that you were not at all pleased with Mme Superior - to achieve this, it will be enough not to make any further allusion of any kind to what took place and skillfully to show confidence but without expressing affection; saying for example, when the occasion arises, that you are longing to have a secretary or something to that effect. 2) Mme Colombe is going to ruin her health and harm some of her sisters, if we do not move her to another place. Her black mood has taken such a hold of her whole person that the inclination towards perfection that could have been seen in her previously, has disappeared leaving no more than the very small qualities the existence of which I have more than once pointed out. I must however say that at the convent they are far from thinking that I brought away from there any apprehensions; I had reason to have them, I left contented and I showed them I was. But, at my age, one begins to understand that one has reason to be satisfied in certain circumstances, but at the same time, one must promptly see to the means of removing the causes that are about to destroy the satisfactory state of the present moment.

It seems to me that, under one plausible pretext or another, Mme Colombe could be changed with Florence from Alost, by sending Mme Marie Angelique to Alost, if you prefer that, Mme Colombe to Malines and Mme Florence to Brussels. The fact that it is a New Year could be the excuse for this reorganization, but Mme Colombe could not without danger know that I have any part in it.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ, receive the repeated assurance of my devotedness and of the satisfaction I felt at Malines.

All yours in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th December 1841

I think you are intending to make a short visit to Brussels. That would be the moment and means of making this change as one coming from you alone.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-284
6-285

Madame Superior General

I am taking advantage of an opportunity to send you a few words to Brussels, where you are now. First of all, I will beg you to get Mme (name effaced) to understand that I wanted to instruct her and not scold her, to humble her and not cast her down. Then I will tell you that, although I no longer get information about the state of your health, I have none the less kept the right to recommend that health to you and no less to desire you not to waste it either by working with success above all in the evening, or not concerned enough about food. Be moderate in everything, my dear daughter, that is my usual recommendation. Try to understand it; as I know you are convinced of the rectitude of my intentions and the sincerity of my feeling, you will find in them,

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th December 1842

(The postscript cut off; a sheet of paper has been attached to the reverse side of the original letter)

I am sending you herewith my answer to Mme Pauline. God alone can speak effectively to that unfaithful soul that is already more or less blinded by repeated sins. May she understand her position!

The other addresses are all the more consoling; the unanimous chorus of expressions of happiness and gratitude spreads a little balm in one's heart and eases many pains. There really are precious dispositions in our Children, Reverend Mother; we must carefully cultivate these plants that our good God has entrusted to us. Say to each of your Ladies, your novices and your Sisters all the most encouraging things your heart dictates to you and be the interpreter of my sentiments which are so well known to you and which you are in a position to express according to my views.

I cannot help recommending to you again the devotion to the Guardian Angels. That devotion is so right, so useful so conforming to the heart of our heavenly Mother, the august Queen of Angels. Receive the blessing of your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ. I am going to Alost this evening.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-286 to 6-288
6-289

Madame Superior General

I am taking advantage of the opportunity Mr. Moens is so kindly affording me, to say a few words to you. I am very touched by the charitable sentiments that animate my dear Children in Jesus Christ, beginning with their Mother who certainly seems to me very determined to act more and more with sweet and humble confidence in her divine Spouse. These dispositions are so consoling to me that it would be hard for me to express what they make me feel. To love God and serve him generously as the infinite blessings he gives us urges us to do, is not that all one can desire? I do not know any truer perfection that is less subject to illusions. So let us pursue that course and the end of it will very certainly be a happy one. May the meek and humble Child Jesus deign to grant us practical understanding of that doctrine; may he also deign to bless our efforts in the matters we are dealing with at the moment. I beseech him to do this through the merits of Mary and St Joseph. I like to think that in all our houses we will endeavor to establish this basis for perfection; it is the most solid and most in conformity with the needs of our hearts.

I am, as I must be, my dear daughter, and I want never to waver in my desire to be,

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th December 1842

Please tell my nieces I am very pleased with their letters and will send them my answer a little later

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-290 & 6-291
6-292

Madame Superior General

We have many motives for rejoicing these days; the resurrection of our loving Savior is a fertile source of sound joy for all those who humbly hope and generously work to persevere in the service of that good Master. So let us celebrate these Easter solemnities with all the joy we are capable of feeling.

Let us promise Jesus Christ that nothing will ever again be in a position to separate us from him, neither the world nor our own ideas, nor the devil will make us look back or stop us in our course, if we remember that our divine Head persevered even to death on the cross and that, once resurrected, he dies no more.

If notwithstanding our firm intentions to remain on the new way on which grace has set us after our spiritual resurrection, we still feel certain inclinations towards the earth, certain movements of a vicious nature, certain deliberate inclinations of a weak heart, let us humble ourselves about them, but not be upset or discouraged; these sorry scars do not essentially mar the beauty of a soul that has returned to the Lord, they even add to its merits by increasing the number of victories. That is what I am asking you to say on my behalf to all your dear family.

It is impossible for me to tell you which day I will have the pleasure of seeing you. It will perhaps be Thursday, or perhaps eight or twelve days later. While expecting all your children without exception to prepare a pleasant visit for me by obtaining for me the outstanding happiness of seeing them all happy in Jesus Christ.

I put all the rest off until I arrive. Rest assured that no one is more sincerely and eternally devoted to you than

Your Father in Our Lord
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 28th of St Joseph's month 1842

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-293 to 6-297
6-298

Madame Superior General

(The letter cut off after the greeting. Text on the back):

As for you, very dear child, moderate your ardor; in whatever way it tries to surprise you, you must mistrust it. Our good God has given you the precious means of success in the work he has entrusted to you; but do not claim to go more quickly than you are required to do by the movements that his fatherly hand impresses on you and on what surrounds you. Without that, one could indeed take steps, but they would lead one astray; one could go past the goal instead of reaching it. I am finishing this chapter by quoting to you two lines that come from your own scholarship:

Your courage alone gives us reason to fear:

Moderate its ardor, deign to restrain it.

I return to my prose, to repeat that I am as I must be, with all my... (End of letter cut off)
Not dated

L.S.J.M.J.

6-299

Madame Superior

It is a great consolation for me to learn that in the establishments the Lord has deigned to entrust to my care, a holy rivalry prevails to honor the very august Mother of our Savior with sentiments of confidence. I cannot express how touched I am by that surge of filial piety, such touching proofs of which I find everywhere. The joy I feel is a sweet and ample reward for what is required of me by the position divine Providence has given me. May Mary be favorable to what is suggested to my Children by the love their hearts feel for that Queen of Angels and Saints.

I am delighted to see that my niece Clothilde is responding to the designs of the mercy of God on her. I count on answering her in person as well as your novice Flavie in a few days.

Be kind enough, very dear daughter, to read the enclosed letters, and if you share my opinion, send my decision to Mme Marine.

I am always very sincerely,

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th of Mary's month 1843

Lost/missing

6-300 to 6-307

L.S.J.M.J.

6-308

Madame Superior General

I am very glad to learn that the older novices appreciate the favor our good God is granting them. It seems to me that the generous acquiescence to all their mistress requires of them, will bring down an abundant shower of blessings on the whole Institute. The truly religious spirit will dissipate the clouds that the human spirit seems to have piled up around our Institute, and seemingly hides from the eyes of the public who must see us, to give us their esteem and their confidence. Their prayers will draw down favors from heaven, and the good odor of virtues will bring pupils. I congratulate you in particular, my dear daughter, on the progress in meekness and amiability you notice in yourself. I also like to believe that the change I have at last obtained for Alost will forestall the ruin of a house worthy of a better fate. May my fear about Brussels be without foundation. I have also said for a long time that Mme Marine does not combine the qualities required for the office she occupies. I know that good child does all she can and her docility attracts blessings, I am very sure; but are we doing what we can to prepare a replacement for her more capable of bearing the weight of so hard a function? You understand that I am thinking less of the difficulties of the house she is governing than of the Institute she has to make known.

I will redouble my zeal to obtain from the powerful intercession of our good Patrons, what we are not obtaining with our own efforts. You know from what source comes what is said to you by

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th September 1843

I will be very pleased to learn from you what Mr. Bougenau has been able to do in the interests of my nephew Alfred.

Lost/missing

6-310 & 6-311

L.S.J.M.J.

6-312

The details you sent me gave me much pleasure. May we get the happy dispositions of your dear children preserved and even perfected! I permit you to ask earnestly for that through the mediation of our good Patrons and that of the never-to-be forgotten multitude of friends we have in heaven whose happiness is going to gladden us on these feast days! It is through the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ that the saints in all ages triumphed over hell, the world and the flesh. Will we not be able to do what they did, the same grace being assured to us as well as them? How happy we are to belong to that Church to which the Savior has entrusted the custodianship of his favors, and even to be in a very special position in it which makes our victory easy and allows us to aspire to a crown of greater distinction! So let us be courageous and prove by our generous efforts that we do not at any price want to be ungrateful nor to lose our advantages here below or in eternity.

Your ever very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th October 1843

I hope to be able to go to Alost on the 6th of next month and a little later to Malines and Brussels.

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-313 to 6-318
6-319

Madame Superior General

I am very touched by the testimonies of filial devotion you have addressed to me both in your name, and in that of your dear sisters, on the occasion of the beautiful solemnities we have just celebrated. Accept above all my thanks for the prayers you offered to the Lord for me during your pious outpourings at the foot of the crib where Jesus was resting, that pledge par excellence of divine mercy. On my part I have asked the Lord through the mediation of his holy Mother and St Joseph to let all my spiritual children draw from those touching mysteries a more ardent zeal to procure the glory of God in themselves and among the pupils that Providence is deigning to entrust to them, first of all by giving them a keen sense of their weaknesses so that humility may grow in them, and an ardent love of their divine Spouse so as to render easy the sacrifices and all the measures required of them by the numerous needs of their neighbor. May you, like Mary, keep gratitude in your hearts and lose nothing of the wonders you are concerned with these day. Then you will bear fruits of salvation; you will reap an abundant harvest; your work will be crowned with success.

I find it so hard to make out what you mean by your latest requests that I dare not take the responsibility of giving you a decision. Until God deign to enlighten me, I must refrain from committing you to any dangerous undertaking. I am continuing my prayers and will you on your part please, do the same. I even feel a great need for them, as I do not find I am getting any light from on high on your business.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd October of the year 1844

Attached to the back of 6-319

6-320

Please, tell Mme Emerence that among the various impulses affecting her soul, I clearly recognize submission of the will, and that, in spite of the tendency of a nature that wants to rebel, I find what I want to have in her. Grace will undoubtedly triumph over human weaknesses. Let faith be the guide for our new Superior and it will lead her along the most difficult paths to the goal that the good and generous Master we have in common wishes to indicate to her by our decision. We also have a duty to aid her by our prayers, our advice and our orders.

I accept with all my heart the good wishes you and your dear Children have addressed to me. I find them very pleasing; I know the source from which they come. That source is very dear to me; it is an affection formed and preserved by grace. I will pray with zeal for all of you, and I will have the chance to do so during these beautiful and very opportune feast days. Receive my blessing in advance; I give it to you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, through the sacred hands of Mary and Joseph

I am for ever your very devoted Father,
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th January 1844

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-321 to 6-329
6-330

Madame Superior

We have indeed great motives for rejoicing on the occasion of the recent solemnities. For those who share his humiliations and the war with him against the flesh, the devil and the world, the resurrection of our divine Lord allows the soul to give itself up to transports of the most lively joy. It is also the motive and model of our spiritual resurrection. The members must accept the lead given them by their head; once risen, Jesus Christ dies not more, St. Paul tells us. Let us strive to share in his glorious immortality by strengthening ourselves in virtue and in an intimate union with him. As children of Adam according to nature, we have borne the likeness of earthly man only too

long; now we have become children of God, let us hasten to bear the likeness of the heavenly man, Jesus Christ. Let us try to go deep into that truth; we will find abundant, salutary instructions in it.

I thank you, dear daughter, for the work you sent me. It will be very useful at the Council of the Reverend Father Superior of the Josephites, which is meeting at my house tomorrow.

It is obvious that we will have to make a decision about the premises. I am beginning to feel inclined towards the good work we specially talked about at our last interview.

You will see from the enclosed letter that Mme Flore sent me, opened by the post, that we must always be wary of Mme Célestine.

I will take care to remember at Brussels the matter of the 200 frs. etc. that I left with the Josephites. I must remind you of a thing I have been forgetting to bring to your notice for some time: in writing you make such glaring mistakes against the rules of punctuation, that one would be surprised to find them in the writings of a novice.

Your ever devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th April 1844

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-331 to 6-346
6-347

Madame Superior General

I came back from Alost yesterday and I am hastening to tell you that the house of St Joseph is such as we can desire it to be: it is a model to put before all our convents. That has to be, since it is the cradle of the family of the children of St Joseph and forms only a small community. I have brought the draft of the deed that we were talking about and that does not have the signature of Mlle De Brandt. I will try to draw it in such a way that it shelters us from all difficulties, and obtain the signature of Mlle Colette.

I have been reflecting on your building projects. It seems to me that you ought to get your ideas clearer about the needs of the future premises, by measuring the classrooms and your rooms large and small, and so putting yourself in a position to be able to judge by comparison. It appears to me that rooms of 30 feet are very big. Arrange some benches and see how many children can be arranged in a length of 20 to 30 feet, etc. I advise you not to incur any useless expenses, at the moment, either by clearing out ditches or (word illegible) the use of which is not known. The ditch by the side of the main entrance gate is so deep that it is frightening to look at; we will perhaps need to conceal it so as to avoid the fright parents will get on seeing it. It will be necessary to cut down a few trees and some shrubs in order to carry out this cleaning and one cannot be sure that these plants are unnecessary. People can already see into the grounds from the path by the canal, where I went to have a look. The wall that must surround the courtyard of the pupils will not conceal them from inquisitive people who may like to come and see them from the road and from the side.

(The end of the letter is missing. Two pages attached to the back of the above letter)

1) Your letter, my dear child, and that of (name effaced) heartened me. I thank God for procuring these consolations for me. My health was in need of some relief. I was really tired, but now I can breathe a little. May your bodily health and the spiritual resurrection of (name effaced) no longer give us cause for serious anxiety. I do not deserve so much good, but I dare to hope for it from the infinite goodness of the Lord.

I foresee that my journey will have to be put off until after the octave of St Bavon, that it to say, until the second week of October; I will be more free then and we will be able to see each other.

2) We are all going, I like to persuade myself, to prepare ourselves with zeal for the touching solemnities of Christmas. Exhort your dear Children, mistresses and pupils with reflections appropriate for increasing the gratitude one owes to God the Savior. Our wretchedness in time and

eternity could not be expressed. God took charge of delivering us from it and making us happy by becoming man and by coming to sacrifice himself for us. How wonderful God is in his goodness! Let us occupy ourselves a great deal with that truth; it is so consoling and so appropriate for making us love God. I will pray a great deal for you, my dear daughter, and for all your family of the children of Mary.
(Not dated)

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-348 to 6-352
6-353

Madame Superior General

To ensure the preservation of more or less useful papers, I have made portfolios representing each of your houses, and one in particular for your Institute. I see now that these portfolios will be better used at your place than at mine, to achieve the end I had in view. So, I am sending them to you with the papers they contain. Please look through these papers again. There are some that can usefully be kept in their respective portfolios because of certain pieces of information relating to each house; others contain proofs of the good spirit animating some members of the Institute, and still others are suitable for recalling edifying sentiments, etc. You will put these portfolios in a safe place and classify the items it would be of some use to preserve.

We must congratulate ourselves on having before us this suitable time for examining both our buildings and our actual resources. In this way, we will set aside all danger of error and consequently of tardy regret. It is also indispensable to ascertain positively whether there is a means of draining all the waters from the acquired land in order to prevent stagnation, which is the cause of miasma and consequently of diseases. ... End of letter missing)

On the reverse side of the previous letter

6-359

My dear daughter

In spite of your triumph in our grammatical struggle, I am far from laying down my arms. I no longer have my exhibits with me, so I cannot furnish the proofs necessary to invalidate the glory of your victory. However, out of the four headings that you allege in your favor as opposed (to) three under which you speak of condemnation, there is at least one I am taking the liberty to challenge; I do not remember the others. So the one I have remembered concerns the eyes of Mme Angelique: is it not true that the two eyes of that Lady are in the same line and on a footing of the most perfect equality? Now, how could you say that the sight has returned to her second eye? Do you not give it to be understood that you are inferring that there is a difference in rank or condition? Admit that you have not forgotten the customs of those human institutions in which everything was distinguished by castes and the equality found in modern nations was unknown. You talk of a second eye; so you claim there is a first. If Mr. Verhaeghe, the advocate, heard you put forward such an unconstitutionality, you would hear our parliamentary tribunes resounding with complaints and reproaches against a religious institute in which our Belgian girls are indoctrinated with so-called privileges that are at most worthy of the unhappy times of the despots, Louis XIV, Charles V and Philip II. So forget your expressions deriving from these periods of slavery and do not give any more pre-eminence to organs that nature has placed on a perfect level. What! in 1845, and in Belgium, you will say her first eye, her second eye! That savors too much of a system of government that is detested and lives no longer except in the history of centuries of ignorance and slavery.

If your three motives for cheerfulness, indicated in the missive of the 9th, are of the same caliber as that one, you see, Madame that you are in too much of a hurry to strike up the triumph of victory. ... (End of letter missing)
Not dated

Lost/missing
L.S.J.M.J.

6-354
6-355

Madame Superior General

What happened to Mme Angélique is at least an event likely to arouse our gratitude and revive our faith. I am firmly convinced that you have all gained some spiritual advantage from it.

You tell me nothing about the notebook I sent you nor whether I did well to count on your charity and the free time of Mme Théodosie. I have no doubt in that respect; but the fear of learning, when it would be too late to make representations, that the notebook has not reached you, would have made me wish to see by your letter that you received the parcel in due course. To spare you the trouble of writing to me again, I will conclude from your silence, next Monday, that my mind can be at rest.

As your subjects in general, have nothing to display as regards nobility of language and tone, it seems to me that they are not to be occupied too much with comic plays of the kind they performed during my last visit. On the contrary, perfect the good they have in that respect by providing them with models suitable for that end and removing what might remind them of, or make them revive expressions and manners familiar to them at other times.

I commend to the Lord the soul of the father of our good Fr. Moens. I ask you to offer my condolences to Fr. Moens.

Try, my dear daughter, always to work at forming yourself in meekness and to give examples of that virtue to all your children. It is the surest means of obtaining the confidence and affection of the pupils. The mistresses must form themselves on our example and the young people in their turn, will form themselves on that of their mistresses. The large number of educational establishments gives a guarantee of existence only to those in which one gets nearest to perfection in all respects. I am earnestly praying our divine model to make himself known to my children, so that the work with which we have the happiness of seeing ourselves charged, prospers more and more in the sight of God and man.

Your always very affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 21st February 1845

Lost/missing
See previous page for 6-359

6-356 to 6-358

L.S.J.M.J.

6-360

Madame Superior General

I am beginning by making excuses to you for my long silence; the multiplicity of my occupations has been such that I saw myself obliged to put off until now replying to your letter of the 24th of last month.

The news you gave me of your health pleased me very much. I thank our good God for removing from me all reason for anxiety on that front. However, I renew my recommendations to you about the submission you are to have to Mme Angélique as regards your health. Mother Pélagie has received the last Sacraments and Mother Elize is also very ill; the former at Bruges, the other one at Waeken.

The sentiments of Mme Clémentine are excellent. As for Mlle Dubus, I would like her to settle the difficulty by an act of courage without going beyond the limits set by prudence.

It seems to me that I have really understood Mlle (name effaced) that her vocation must leave no doubt. I approve of the step that Child of Mary has just taken as regards Mme (name effaced), her mother. Those two fine souls will understand one another; God will be obeyed; the Angels, ministers of our heavenly Queen, will defend the cause of the son of Mary who wants to have the young girl's heart, without sharing it, and is destining her to serve his church in the family of the daughters of Mary and his foster Father Joseph. It is for you, Mme Superior and your dear sisters to form this future spouse of Jesus Christ by explaining to her the ways of God, the precepts

of our religion and the sublime doctrine of evangelical perfection. May your example, no less than your lessons, keep alive that divine fire the Holy Spirit has lit in this heart that is so dear to the Savior. More active than all that comes from creatures and vanishes with them, this heavenly fire will consume all that nature and the world offer as obstacles to the designs of the Creator whose adorable and merciful will not fail to triumph, if you act with grace and in accordance with the principles of faith.

As for you, my dear daughter, you must show yourself grateful for the lights you have received during the month of your tender Mother Mary; you must be more faithful in carrying out the good intentions these lights have caused you to form. However, be moderate, be meek and humble, be attentive to the voice of your divine Spouse; as much as possible avoid what would prevent you from hearing and following that loving voice. You will always be as powerful in words and works when you are, as it were, the echo of the voice of Jesus Christ. Be faithful too in all that the edification that you owe your sisters requires of you in particular and in common. ... (End of letter missing)

Not dated

L.S.J.M.J.

6-361

Reverend Mother

Yes, the news you gave me was very pleasant. I am touched by the marks of kindness and protection that the Lord is granting to my Children, and tears of joy come into my eyes at the sight of the acts of generosity that faith and love of Jesus Christ inspire them with and cause them to perform. It is impossible for me to answer the letters you sent me and which gave me so much pleasure. I hope you say in person what my heart feels to the two young Ladies. You know how much I like generosity for the sake of God and independently of that disposition on my part to remind these persons that Jesus Christ said: he who comes to me and does not hate his Father, his Mother, his brother, his sister, etc., is not worthy of me. Now, not to be worthy of Jesus Christ is not that to be stricken by the most terrible of curses? However, these words do not mean that one is to wish evil to those persons. God commands us to love: to hate them in the sense meant by our divine Master, means to renounce their friendship rather than to lose that of God, or risk our vocation or salvation. Forgive me, Reverend Mother, for my bad writing. Lack of time prevents me from writing more carefully.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

25th November 1837

Lost/missing

6-362

L.S.J.M.J.

6-363

Madame Superior General

I came back from Alost yesterday. I have to praise our good God for the spirit of charity, of submission and of zeal he is deigning to grant to our children of St Joseph. Although fresh trials are taking away their day pupils, who are still going down in numbers, their courage and confidence are being maintained. I hope that the time will come when the good method used by our Ladies and the blessing of the Lord will raise us up in the mind of the people of Alost. May that period not be too far away!

I did not get the opportunity of talking business with Mlle Colette. I would have like also to be able to get Fr De Troch to feel that depriving the day pupils of the happiness of Holy Mass at the convent, might well have a bad effect and contribute towards making our pupils desert us. The weak health of Fr De Troch is the reason why the Mass takes place early and the day pupils no longer attend it.

I will pray with all my heart to ask the saints whose struggles and triumph the Church is reminding us of these days, to intercede for us so that we may become worthy of doing our work successfully and of being received in our turn into the happiness of heaven.

Your ever devoted servant and Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th October 1845

L.S.J.M.J.

6-364

Ghent, 15th December 1846

The news you gave me, my dear daughter, as well as the sentiments you expressed, give me great pleasure. I thank our good God for so many graces that he is granting to you and especially for making you attentive to his designs both for you and for your dear children. Continue to form yourself in this respect so that everything may be done wisely in conformity with the good pleasure of your divine Spouse and the true happiness of those entrusted to your care.

I am convinced that Mme Marie Charlotte will gradually recover and afterwards avoid all that may have been the cause of the indisposition that is keeping her in the infirmary. I am also confident that you will have precautionary measures taken at Mouscron and that you are not allowing the dear child we have been talking about to be exposed to an obvious danger of collapsing under the burden. Let us, my dear daughter, continue praying together and commending our children to God through the immaculate Heart of Mary and her Son Jesus Christ who became man for us.

My compliments to Mme Marie Charlotte and Mme Anne.

Lost/missing

6-365 & 6-366

L.S.J.M.J.

6-367(1)

Madame Superior General

The news you sent me, like that which Mme Marie Charlotte writes to me, give me great pleasure. I too hope that our good God will deign to give you some pupils so that you can continue to form faithful Christians.

Please, advise our dear Maria not to omit her meditation during the holidays, and above all when she is traveling. Time for relaxation is needed by our weakness; the projected voyage is very instructive. But one must profit by the advantages without exposing one's spirit of faith, without giving way to slackness. Prayer and especially devotion to the most Blessed Virgin, these are still resources in these rather uncertain times.

It would be rashness, my dear daughter, to allow you to give the retreat. You tire yourself a great deal in these exercises. So I have had recourse to Fr Bonnaert. You will have Fr Defou and another priest for the retreat. But it will only be on the 27th of this month.

I count on being at Grammont on Monday. On Tuesday the Chapter of our Josephites begins. So I will be away from here for the greater part of next week. I recommend this chapter to your prayers and those of your dear sisters.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th September 1846

Since the mammas are allowed to come to the prize distribution, the departure of the pupils will be permitted that same day probably? You will take back the 305 frs 90 ces. remaining of the 4257,10 ces. that I was to hand over to you for (illegible)

The following letter 6-367(2) and notes 6-367(3); 6-367(4) are attached to letter 6-367.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-367(2)

Madame Superior General

The news M. M. Ch. sent me caused me much pain. However, the Lord is teaching us, above all in our retreat, that one must expect vexations. The one concerning Aloist is not the only one I found on my return home. You have already known for a long time that crosses are the lot of the servants of the crucified Master. So, let us bear them with courage. I hope that (name effaced) has already come back to her senses. I am asking forgiveness, for her, of her divine Spouse who is

very upset by that fault committed by a Spouse who had given us cause to think highly of her and who owed our Master very different deeds.

I can tell you nothing about the projected visit. I have only just returned and find a mass of things to do or write.

May Jesus Christ, our good Savior, deign to help us!

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

27th September 1846

Profit by your stay in Alost to advance the business with Mme Colette. A case of death may (illegible) difficulties; let us try to prevent them.

(Attached note)

6-367(3)

... Before sending your money to the banker, I had prepared the cash statement and noticed that this time you had provided me with the means of generously reimbursing myself for my traveling expenses. But you are maddeningly perceptive. I do not know how anyone can go about deceiving your vigilance. The best thing will be never to try to do so. As for me, my decision is taken; I will not expose myself to the danger of providing you with the opportunity to unveil an undertaking that I cannot acknowledge without blushing. You will receive herewith the account of the use of the funds you had entrusted to me.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

7th December 1843

(Bottom of the page of original has been cut off)

6-367(4)

..... I am sorry, my dear daughter, that I have upset you. I did so unintentionally and without any ulterior motive. I did not know that you were thinking of Annette, and before taking any steps with the intention of ridding her of a prejudice, without all of us knowing about it, I wanted to be sure I would be acting for the good of our Institute. No, it is not to a cooling off that perhaps this step can be attributed to nor any other I may have taken clumsily but innocently. Let us say no more about it; count on my devotedness, though I do not repeat it, believing that it is not necessary after so many years of proofs mutually given and received.

I have to put off my visit; the cold is inspiring me with a great aversion to going out. It would be more useful, I think, to pay one to Alost, but I have not been able to make up my mind about it yet.

(On the reverse side of the letter)

We will have the results of our investigations.

The news you give me of Mme Hyacinthe, and of your postulants and pupils gives me great pleasure. On the other hand, what you tell me about Mme Marie-Anne surprises and pains me. Try, my dear daughter, to get her to understand how much these types of expressions bring dishonor both on the one who allows herself to make them, and on the members of the whole Institute if that gets known. You know how tactful we have to be about all sensitive issues.

I am very sincerely, even if you would not want to believe it,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th November 1846

Lost/missing

6-368

L.S.J.M.J.

6-369

Madame Superior General

It is with regret that I am subscribing to the measures of indulgence employed in regard to (name effaced). However, it is better to act with condescension than to expose the subject to sorry

misdemeanors to which cowardice accompanied by disobedience would be capable of giving rise to. Until we find the means of efficaciously remedying the ill, we must in a special way comment to St Joseph this subject who has been occupying our attention for some time, not without causing some anxiety.

I thank our good God for giving your pupils sentiments of generosity based on the principles of faith, and guided by a tender piety towards the august Mother of God. These acts will obtain rewards of the kind that Mary procures for her children, and we may conclude that special help will follow these pupils all through their lives. It will not only be as pupils, but also as benefactresses that they will share in the prayers and other good works of your Institute.

The touching solemnities we are celebrating are very suitable for inspiring great confidence. It was in fact, for sinful man and not for the just man, that God humbled himself and took our nature. What a great motive for hoping for the forgiveness of faults and then for graces to ensure for us the happiness that the Messiah procured for the descendants of Adam! May wise confidence sustain our courage in the midst of the subjects for anxiety that present themselves on all sides. Let us rely on Jesus; never does he abandon those who cast their lot in with him for time and for eternity. Mary and Joseph will never refuse the help we need. Let us with these sentiments end the year that is drawing to a close and begin in the same way the one that is approaching. I ask the good God for that for you and all your religious family, with all the zeal of which I am capable, Madame Superior.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 26th December 1847

I forgot to tell you that one of the three dignities of our cathedral chapter, that of chief cantor, having become vacant, through the death of my best friend Msgr. Pycke, his Lordship our Bishop has been kind enough to honor me. However, do not worry, the dignity in question is not of the kind to turn the head of the one invested with it. I can see only very little danger of that.

Please, present my greetings for the season to Mr. Curtin, to the archpriest and to those of our benefactors who have a right to my special attentions.

L.S.J.M.J.

6-370

Madame Superior General

With the occupations of the New Year period no longer exclusively requiring my time, I am seizing the first leisure I have to converse with you. The news I received from Brussels, Alost and Mouscron is good as usual, and I like to think that at your place things are going on just as well. I have acquitted myself with zeal of my duty to pray for my children, during the lovely feasts we have been celebrating, and I am counting on doing so again on Sunday on the feast of the Name of Jesus.

Please thank Mme Marie Charlotte and her sister, my niece Pauline, for the good wishes they send me and tell them all is well at their parents. Our good God is served there with zeal and generosity.

I do not have the time yet to concern myself with your new convent; however, you will do well to tell me when you write to me, how far on you are with the furnishing of it and what the plans are. I have been given the plan of the altar at Melle, but I do not know whether you can make use of it yet. So, I will only send it when you ask me for it.

Tell me how your councilors are. The Superior at Brussels wrote to me, already a few weeks ago, that Mme the Mistress of novices is disliked. A detailed account of the whole personnel would not be useless. However, if you have nothing very urgent to send me, you will do well to put off writing to me for another week. I am expecting the Rev. Father Superior and his Vicar. Their stay will be rather a long one.

All yours, my dear daughter in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 13th January 1848

L.S.J.M.J.

6-371

Madame Superior

May the Lord deign to deal with us in accordance with his great mercy and grant us filial submission to his holy and adorable will! Such is my reply to the letter you wrote to me yesterday. I am very sure it is the strongest sentiments also of my dear daughter Mme Marie Charlotte. I prudently informed the good parents of the invalid, of the event you told me about, but only roughly, without mentioning any alarming circumstance.

You will give me news without delay, and then, according to what the case requires, I will take consolation, or preach submission to what God is asking of us. Speak to that effect to our beloved daughter and assure her that I am praying for her.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd January 1849

L.S.J.M.J.

6-372

Madame Superior General

I did not answer your last letter immediately, but have not been any less faithful in fulfilling my duties towards you, all our dear spiritual children and even our dear pupils, during these times of benediction through which we have just passed. There are so many texts in the Easter offices that bring me back towards you, that it would be impossible for me not to commend you frequently and not to commend the spiritual family our good God has given us. May we really recognize that being resurrected with our loving Savior, we are seeking the things of Heaven and getting a taste of them!

I am pleased to see that Mme Marie Charlotte is continuing to grow stronger and that all your Ladies are making efforts to make themselves more and more useful to the Institute. I find the sentiments addressed to me by our three dear children, Mme Hélène, Mme Félicie and Mlle Florence, heartening. I congratulate them on the favors God has deigned to do for them and I intend to tell them so personally before long. Meanwhile, let them know that I have been praying for them with zeal and with great confidence.

I hope that during the course of the month of Mary, I will have the happiness of seeing you and rejoicing with you, my dear daughter, at the favors our Institute will again have received during that month that is consecrated to our heavenly Mother.

I give you all my blessing and sincerely call myself

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th April 1849

L.S.J.M.J.

6-373

Madame Superior General

You will have heard of the sad reason that kept me at home. I would have enjoyed the good weather in the midst of my dear children at the Queen of Angels, and we would have drawn up measures for making the whole Institute more and more conformable to our Rules and, consequently, more pleasing to God, more worthy of his blessings and more useful to souls.

Being uncertain whether our good God will before long call to himself, our good Sello, or if a notable improvement in the condition of that faithful servant, will allow me to carry out my plan of coming to you place, my dear child, I am sending you a few notes and urge you to look at them in council in order to make use of certain points without delay, and to prepare yourself to discuss with me the various matters I have just indicated to you, when I have the pleasure of being at your place. I feel a keen desire to bring relief to the Superiors and the inferiors; to increase their well-being according to the spirit and even according to rational nature. You will second this desire of my fatherly heart; your councilors will follow your lead and my visit, I dare to hope, will leave memories likely to encourage us all in the holy career on which we are embarked, and which is to lead us to the happiness of heaven.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, with the blessing, the assurance of the keen devotedness of your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th February 1851

L.S.J.M.J.

6-374

I thank you, my dear daughter, for the prayers you have offered for me during these days when the Church reminds us of the great, moving mysteries of our faith. Be convinced that on my side, prayers went up to heaven for you, and each day, I am renewing the request I make of the divine Child, lying before me on the altar, during the august sacrifice of the Mass for myself, (paper torn) and those who are cooperating with me in the work with which Providence has deigned to charge me. The important offices, with which you have been charged for such a long succession of years, make it my special duty to pray for you. Be assured that I am trying to acquit myself of that duty and I hope never to fail to do so. Persevere also in your sentiments of devotedness towards your Superiors and the work to which you have dedicated this very long succession of years. That is the wish cordially and very sincerely formulated by

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. van Crombrugghe

Bottom of page cut off: not dated

L.S.J.M.J.

6-(1) A

Madame Superior

The details you gave me about the opening of the month of Mary pleased me very much. There is reason to hope, it seems to me, that those exercises of religion will produce very happy results; Mary will deign to accept the efforts of her children to honor her and give her proofs of their love, and God, I dare to hope, will shower down abundant blessings on you and on your pupils.

I have no objections to your going to Mouscron on the 8th of this month. You will, no doubt, take all the necessary precautions to prevent such a long absence of 15 days doing any harm to the Mother House and to make it really useful to our house of St John the Baptist.

I have allowed Mme Angelique to accompany you. If you have no reasons to put forward against that change in your traveling companion, you will inform Mme Marie Anne of my decision. The novices will be glad of this change in our earlier arrangements.

Allow me, my dear daughter, to make you a few recommendations. Be prudent on the journey; speak only when the proprieties require you to do so. When among your children at Mouscron, manifest sentiments worthy of your position. Be modest, recollected, occupied with useful things. Appear often in the chapel, and always be one of the first at religious exercises. Unaffectedly give the example of good breeding, religious conversation and mortification of the senses and affections. In a word, be what you must be, a model for all your sisters to copy.

I will make it my duty to pray for you in a special way during your stay at Mouscron.

Your ever devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of the month of Mary 1850

(The top of the letter is missing) ...

6-(2) A

I have read your letters attentively, and applied myself to understanding what our good God is asking of you. There is no doubt that zeal for the love of Jesus is a grace and that you are not permitted to try to love this God Savior for those who do not love him enough. You may seek to surpass others, but not to supplant them; but I think you have not understood the meaning of the word supplant that you used; emulation is indeed not bad in a thing so holy and so worthy of our efforts.

As for this taste for bodily mortifications, I am also uncertain whether it is the spirit of God or a natural ardor that is urging you on; I am inclined towards the feeling that it is the latter and advise you to moderate it; it could give rise to physical harm without spiritual benefit. Then, the spirit of your Rule is very different from that of the life of the Carthusians or the Trappists, and I think you can follow the latter only at the expense of the perfection God is asking of you.

Your health, which I think is better than it was, does however require you to take precautions. I am repeating my recommendations to you. Always keep your feet dry and warm. Take food from time to time, but avoid anything that is overheating and anything that from experience you know is doing your harm. I forbid you to torment your stomach so much by refusing it the quality it is asking for naturally and in accordance with the will of God. In short, my dear child, be on your guard against every passion that excessively arouses your imagination and your sensitivity which is great, but which you must hold in check; your physical strength not being in keeping with it, the latter would be ruined imperceptible. So, be sober even in your affections, and in meditations, and on no pretext whatsoever, cut down on your sleep. Moderate your ardor; it could well supplant grace without giving you any warning and that would be a deplorable reversal. Finally, be submissive in all simplicity, you have the grace, but you must follow its impulse.

(Note: End of letter missing. Simone Vandensteene used (...) as method of indicating a 2nd page. This (...) appears at the bottom of the 1st page in the French text

The first page is missing

6-(3) A

... profession may take place. With the feast of St Joseph falling on a Monday, it would not be possible for me to spend it at St John the Baptist, on the feast day itself. You will soon have my definitive decision.

Here is my plan for organizing the personnel of Malines and the capital:

Malines:	Mme Clothilde, Superior	Brussels: Mme Flore, Superior
	Mme Bathilde, Headmistress	Mme Honorine
	Mme Stanislaus	Mme Eulalie
	Mme Angelique	
	Mme a fifth who may know Flemish	

At Alost, Mme Euphemie would take the place of Mme Honorine who will be useful at Brussels both on account of her learning and on that of her relationship to the Archbishop. Mme Gonzague would return to Alost and could be the assistant there with the permission this time of the Rev. Mother of that area. Weigh up this whole plan and give me your opinion by Sunday or Monday. I will know by then whether the ceremony will definitely be fixed at Mouscron. Here are some letters I have just received from Jette.

Good-bye, dear Child, I give my blessing from the depths of my heart. I wish you cheerfulness, courage, generosity and holiness. May the Lord deign to grant them to you with health.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th of the month of our Patron 1838

I must also say that Mr. Henri Derville wrote me a very nice letter expressing some very good sentiments to me. Turn over please.

I am adding a few more words. To-morrow it will be 21 years since the foundations of your Institute were laid at Alost. I admire the designs of mercy and power of the Lord. The seed of your family waited for a few years, unperceived and hidden, for God to send the rays of his invigorating sun. That moment kept us waiting, but as soon as it came, as soon as the power of the grace of the Lord made itself felt, that unformed seed, just as is seen in the case of natural things, took life, developed, expanded in a short time; and already it is filling eight or nine establishments, without counting nine in all, even eleven deriving from that stock, which occupy a distinguished place in the home of the eternal Father. Please God, the children of Mary and Joseph will continue to increase

more and more, and he will continue the ineffable favors he is really granting to them with remarkable generosity. May he be eternally blessed, and his graces never remain fruitless in the hands of the Sisters of St Joseph as in those of our Ladies of Mary! We ask you for that, Lord, and beseech our holy friends and our dear Sisters who are already admitted into the presence of their divine Spouse, to ask for it with us. So, let us try, my dear Child, to be faithful to grace and always submissive to the adorable will of God. Amen.

Pardon this digression.

6-(4) A

(The beginning of the letter is missing)

...

I thank you for the news you have just sent me; it is good, thank the Lord! With the ceremony taking place at Alost, it would involve moving five persons whose relatives are all nearer to Mouscron than to Alost, with the exception of those of Mlle Terrace. Then I would have to go to Mouscron to get in touch with Mr. Vuylsteke the architect of our sisters in that area, who is getting the work started for the rebuilding of the convent, etc. See whether the usefulness of Alost would compensate for that and write to me by the return of my nephew Henri who will be bringing you the packet. I am going to get your papers negotiated; there will be a loss on the Brazilian bond and some benefit from the Roman one. It is a pity that we have to get rid of the former at the present moment; the depreciation will not last. That wretched business of the house of Moens is causing us some unexpected unpleasantness. May Mlle Colette become more reasonable....

(The top of the reverse side of the letter)

... tions. Courage, dear child, our good God will help us; it is the month of our holy Patron and our dear Sister Aloÿse is smiling on our efforts. Oh, how I love to talk about that holy Child. Never was I so taken up with a death as with that of our Angel. I have frequently to renew my sacrifice to our divine Master. Do not take it amiss that I talk to you about her so often; it is through such a natural inclination of my heart, such a sweet sentiment that is useful to me, that it happens almost without my noticing it or at least without the slightest effort.

I have written to Mme Sermyn asking her to come and see me with the mother of our dear deceased one, so that I can record the circumstances of the childhood of that young, lovable and perfect religious. It will be difficult for me to come to Malines this week; we will see next week, but it is possible that I may come then, supposing that the...

Remainder of letter missing: not dated

L.S.J.M.J.

6-(5) A

Reverend Madame Vicar

Here is my Easter gift. It is the foreword of your Rule and the continuation and ending of all the first part of that work you love with all your heart. I think on this occasion, I am feeling more joy in offering you my present than you will experience on receiving it. I do not understand how in so few days I have managed to complete a work that was taking me so much time beforehand. It seems to me that our good God charged our very good and holy Aloÿse with helping me, no longer to write, as she used to do so perfectly, but to compose what remained to be done. I even think that charitable child has again focused her attention even on my handwriting. You will indeed be surprised, Reverend Mother, to find this part of the work much less pitiful than it usually is; fewer crossing out, few hieroglyphic forms, few footnotes and no places which I have seen myself obliged to recopy myself. You will want to look over the work again. Oh, if I could still say "with Sr. Aloÿse". But our good God has arranged otherwise. You will look over it again with Sister Flore and with Sister Marie Charlotte, if you see fit to do so. I will come to see you, next Tuesday, and we will settle various matters I have to talk to you about.

It seems to me that it will be all right for you to accompany your pupils to Malines. If you could put off that journey until Wednesday at least, that would be very useful: we would have settled many things. The enclosed letter gives you an idea of the poverty of spirit of certain people

and the necessity to withdraw her from a place where she was being maintained in her natural sadness. If I do not receive any news to the contrary, I will, please God, arrive at your place on Monday evening.

Meanwhile I will commend you very much to our divine Savior. Pray also for
Your very devoted Father in that good Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th April 1838

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME FLORE DELHAYE

Superior at Alost and Mouscron; Vicar of the Institute;

Superior General 1858-1885

Born Feb. 26, 1816; Professed March 19, 1834; Died Feb. 9, 1886

(113 Letters dated 1834 to 1865)

Praise be J.M.J.

7-1

My dear Sister

You have found so well the reason for the embarrassment one sometimes finds oneself in, before beginning a letter, that I have nothing to add except perhaps, that one reflects for a moment in order to arrange the subject matter and find the best order for setting it out.

It is only too true, my dear child, that one loves too little our good God, and I am not surprised that this reflection moved you to tears. However, you must not limit yourself to that, you must make the resolution to love your divine Spouse in future with all your might, and to do what is in your power to make him loved by others. You will achieve the former by the practice of the virtues of your holy state, and the second by doing well all that the good education of the children requires of you, as regards the heart as well as the mind. Put your hand to the work, form your character therefore in such a way that the children love you and may imitate you without danger to themselves; and adorn your mind with useful knowledge.

Thus you will become an instrument of divine mercy for the salvation of many. You will now understand the meaning of what I wrote to you a few months ago. You will really love God and be, in the hands of mercy, a means of attracting others to the same happiness. You will also see in what sense you can desire to have pupils and how pleased the Lord must be with such a desire.

How happy we are, my dear child, to be called to so holy a state, so high a destiny. What happiness it is to work exclusively for God and for the salvation of one's neighbor! Oh, may your heart be filled with sentiments of gratitude and your mind be occupied with the marvels of divine love. In accordance with these principles you will form yourself to what you must be as a religious and what God is asking of you as a member of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

That, dear Flore, is how I want to scold you; in the future you will not have more difficulty in opening yourself unreservedly to the one who experiences what it is to be really

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th September 1834

An excellent piano will reach you on Monday evening; but it must not be used by the pupils to practice on. The one you have will do for that purpose.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-2

Dear Sister

I have not had the time to answer your letter; but I have nonetheless taken care of your affairs. I have been very busy with you, before the Infant Jesus; and I have prepared the notebook containing the explanations of the Gospel and Epistles for each week. I am sending you that notebook, dear child. I think that everything in it is free from serious errors against the doctrine of the Church; however, not having revised it since I first wrote it, I was 18 years old, it would be possible for it to contain some inaccuracies. You will use it cautiously.

I urge you to train yourself to beautiful writing and in all that concerns your education in general, so as to make yourself more and more capable of fulfilling the designs of God on you as a member of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph.

Never get discouraged at the sight of your faults, and deficiencies; look at all that humbly, and have recourse to your divine Spouse with entire confidence. Yield to grace when it mercifully reproaches you for your faults; condemn yourself without making excuses and you will go far in the intimate affection of the divine Child who has been such a source of consolation to you these days.

Good-bye, my dear child; I am all yours in the one we both love.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

29th December 1834

You will note, my child, that the instructions are arranged in accordance with the Church year which begins in Advent. I do not answer for the spelling mistakes made by the copyist employed to write out some of the pages. I think you will be able to distinguish his writing from mine.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-3

Although I do not always answer your letters, my dear Sister, you must not conclude that I am not pleased with them. You would be very mistaken if you drew that conclusion from my silence. Your sentiments and style and the tone of polite and respectful humor are too much in harmony with good principles for me not to be able to like them. If I do not always answer, it is sometimes because I do not have the time, sometimes because I think a word put in a letter to your Rev. Mother is enough to give you to understand what I thought of your letter. Always be meek in imitation of your divine Spouse; be simple in all things and the talents he has bestowed on you will bear fruit for his glory. Let Jesus Christ be the continual objective of your efforts and all your undertakings. Never lose sight of him. I insist on that point, my dear child, because I know God is giving you his graces and even special facility for that. Let us clothe ourselves with the virtues our good God has merited for us.

Pray for me, receive my blessing and believe that I am invariably through the grace of God

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd June 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

7-4

It is not out of forgetfulness, my dear Sister, that your nice letter, without a date, has remained unanswered for a fortnight; it is for want of time, it is sincere friendship for you that has made me put off writing to you until I had the time to do so more leisurely. You are right in saying that it is not to be half a saint that the Lord called you from the world, when still young. I have for some time noticed a more generous outlook in you, and graces too great to believe you would be right in the sight of God if you limited yourself to an ordinary way. Yes, dear child, you are destined to be an instrument of mercy in the hands of Jesus Christ. You must work for the salvation of many in our poor society of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. So carefully polish that instrument so that it works in accordance with the Hand that will be guiding it. Purify your intentions more and more, and sanctify your affections, and train your mind in conformity with the desires of your Holy Rule and your Superiors.

With what joy did I not read these lines: "I want to love much, to burn much with love for Jesus... He is so lovable! Would it be possible to know him, belong to him so closely and be his Spouse, without sharing this ardor?" He, who made you write these things, will give you the grace to model yourself on them. I am asking him for that with all my heart, through the mediation of our heavenly Mother whose triumph we have been thinking about today. Love Jesus, dear child, and you will be successful in doing good, and Jesus will more and more give you the marks of that ardent charity which he has for you and of which you are experiencing the sweet effects.

Such are both my prayers and the most ardent desires of the heart of

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, August 15th 1836

Since you invoke my love for fairness and I cannot in conscience deny you justice, I have examined your case that is pending at first instance; and after due consideration with the proper authorities this is what has been decided:

Solomon awarded to the two mothers whose case was brought before him a half of the child they were quarreling about equally (by a judgment stemming from the same principle) you, Sister Flore will have the address of the letter in dispute since it bears your name in full. Then you and your opponent will each have a half of the letter, by that division, spoiling in any way the address, the ownership of which is not being contested. That is the judgment in the name of fairness and the sentence imposed on the parties concerned, with the order to the royal prosecutors, court bailiffs and other officials at the court, to carry out the sentence here endorsed.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-5

I thank you, dear Sister, for the good wishes that you have expressed to me and that I think are all the more sincere as they are written in prose; poetry alone having the privilege of lying with impunity. I admit however that I have too good an opinion of you to doubt your truthfulness, even when you adorn your words with the resources offered, for that purpose, by the language of the nurslings of Parnassus. Note, in passing, that the word 'expressement' (expressly) which you address in prose, means in French 'en propres termes' (in exact terms) and not purposely, by design, with the objective of, etc. Whatever these difficulties in grammar, I am no less grateful for what you have just written to me and especially for the prayers you offered to God with such great kindness, for the good of my poor soul. I promise you in my turn, I will pray for you especially; I readily think that you need grace to correct and redress what sin has done, and to adorn a heart that possesses the God of all perfection.

For the rest, my child, whatever your pride tells you, one is allowed to feel satisfaction at the contentment that, with the help of grace, one arouses in one's superiors. To God be the glory of all the good we are doing with his help; but that does not forbid us to want the consolation of being useful to our neighbor and your excessive delicacy must not take from me the right to say quite simply that I love my children in God, and you have in me, I dare to give you positive assurance of it,

A very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

30th July 1837

I recommend to you to take care with your writing. Talk about it to your Sister Alojse. Finally, I commend Colombe to you in the sense you have just written to me about.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-6

My very dear Sister

I like to think that you again called in Mr. Delbeke and that the Lord will give light to the doctors and good effects to the remedies they proscribed. On Sunday, I hope to see for myself that our wishes and efforts will be crowned with success. On Monday after at 11 am, Msgr. will administer Confirmation in your convent. Prepare your pupils well for the reception of this holy sacrament. I have written to Mme Clothilde to urge her to arrive at Alost by Saturday.

I am sending your Rev. Superior two instructions, the aim of which I shall explain to her. She will then send me back an outline of an instruction on the same subject. May she please not forget to do so.

Although I was busy with very serious things, when I received the mock-heroic play of Mme Euphrosyne, I could not help laughing heartily on reading it. That mixture of Christian zeal with pagan ideas of vengeance, that warlike attitude of the whole troop led by your cowardly director, turned into a general, and quite ready to wage war, of timid religious (word obliterated by paper fold) ...amazons full of chivalrous bravery, seemed to be very well (paper torn) and caused me a few pleasant moments. Admit, dear child, that Mme Euphrosyne is very witty, especially in her sleep. What will she not do some day when she is wide awake, since her dreams are already so witty? We will talk about it next week.

Meanwhile, I cherish the hope that I will find everything in such a good state at your place, that my heart will get the true consolation it needs.

I have also drawn up the special Rules for the Rev. Superior General, her Council and Councilors. Tell your Rev. Mother so. I give my blessing to all the community at Alost and especially to your dear invalid, her nurse and yourself, my dear child.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd December 1838

Today I commenced a new novena.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-7

My dear Sister

Be assured, the project you talked to me about has not been and is not in question. Your Rev. Mother will arrive at Alost as soon as Mme Gonzague has gone back to her convent at Brussels.

You may try to fast on the fast days of the Holy Church, and on Saturdays, you may be content with a light meal, if you find it is not harmful to your health. I urge you to take pains with your writing. Beware of taking me as a model. I write as I am able to do and not as I wish to. My nerves exercise a certain power that makes my hand smaller, and my hand is not as docile as yours, which, like the whole of you, is directed towards the law of obedience.

You asked me to have mercy on your griffin (Translator's note: griffon means griffin. She probably meant "griffonage" which means scrawl.) But, my dear Lady, before exercising my prerogative of mercy, I want to know who is to benefit by it. Now, after all my inquiries, I have been unable to procure any other information than the following: A griffin is a sort of vulture; it is also a fabulous animal, half eagle and half lion. On which of the two do you want me to bestow my favors? I admit that I like either of these (word illegible) and that in spite of my desire to accede to your recommendations, I am unable to make up my mind to pursue my friendship with concessions or acts of mercy that could well be disastrous to us.

No shameful treaties with the wicked. See how vultures and lions have inspired a poetic vein. I did not know I had that leaning towards poetry.

To finish my moral lesson on the sadness you again tell me a little about, I am sending back to you your dear Sister Euphrosyne. This Lady who is so experienced in this matter, and moreover has the talent of dividing, of subdividing, I was going to say to refining, will teach you how we can be sad without sadness and have sadness without being sad.

I am delighted, my dear child, to learn that you are celebrating with zeal, the lovely month of Mary and our good, our divine Mother is already making you feel she is deigning to accept our humble, but very sincere expressions of the sentiments we have vowed to her.

Pray also, my dear child, for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th of Mary's month, 1838

I think that tomorrow your beloved Mother will be in your midst.

7-8

You did well to write to me, my dear child; I was anxious, and when I am in that state news brings me relief. You must call in a doctor, and if Mlle De Brandt has no objections, call in the one Mr. Wilmaere prefers.

I find great consolation in the submission of the Rev. Mother and that of her children. Indeed, what better can we hope for than the fulfillment of the will of the Lord? Let us avoid what may displease God and do all in our power to draw down the effects of his mercy upon us. Let us then leave the decision about our affairs to the good Master we have the honor to serve.

If the little cough of Mme Marie-Charlotte is not better, get a plaster of Burgundy pitch applied between her shoulders. This remedy works wonders without being troublesome or expensive.

I hope all your dear Sisters are applying themselves cheerfully to their various duties, and thus working together to draw down the blessing of Heaven on themselves, their pupils, and the whole family of Mary and Joseph.

I am afraid Mme Euphrosyne dare not write to me because in the last arrangement I made, I pointed out to her the grounds for approaching me in given cases. Tell her I did not mean by that to take away her freedom to write to me, when she has good things to tell me, provided I am not obliged to reply every time. The letters of my children always bring me great satisfaction.

I give your Rev. Mother and you, my Child, my blessing, and I pray our divine Master to attach to it the effects he alone can produce with his holy grace.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th November 1838

7-9

(Only the following fragment of letter remain)

... may now remain longer than I told her, if she found it good to do so. You have some chronograms from Melle.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-10

My dear Child

Only one thing displeases me in that poor Mme Flore who arouses such a holy anger in you; it is that she mistrusts the goodness, the love of her divine Spouse. Oh! my child, to show mistrust is to wound Jesus Christ to the heart. Beware of nourishing that sentiment; it is insulting to your Spouse; it spoils the best dispositions. Humble yourself, but never out of vexation, never out of temper. Besides, she is not quick-tempered to the extent you say. "Quick-tempered as anything!" Now, anything is not quick-tempered; so she is not as much as your wicked pen wants to make out. That is how I avenge that poor child of the rather treacherous insinuations of her accuser.

All the same, I will pray the Lord to bring it about that meekness never leaves that dear Mme Flore, that humble devotedness does not depart from her, in any circumstance, and that confidence in the tender care of her divine Spouse does not experience the least cooling off.

I am all yours, dear Child, without restrictions in Jesus Christ who has established me as

Your Father in his name

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th February 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

7-11

My very dear Child,

Before leaving for western Flanders, I am addressing a few more recommendations to you. Be kind enough to pass on to Mme Marcelline the prescription for the remedy Mme Euphrosyne found so good. Our good Mme Louise will perhaps find it equally good. Follow up the postulant Deville in a friendly way so that she gets rid of that touchy look that has been disfiguring her for some time. Do not lose sight either of Mlle de Lessines, not in order to attract her against the designs of God, but to prevent her from being sent elsewhere against the designs of Providence. It seems to me that it would be a good thing for you to detach yourself prudently from the boarders, and to put Mme Théodosie and Mlle des Camps with them, so that if we find it good to destine you for something else, we do not put at risk the boarding school at the convent of St. Joseph. But let no one get to know of our plans in this respect, nor your measures to make yourself forgotten a little among the pupils.

I am more and more convinced that Mme Honorine will become a very sound subject. Try to get her accent and her whole outward appearance a little more presentable. You will talk about that to your Rev. Mother on her return. Now that I have carefully examined the accent of Mme

Euphrosyne, I cannot explain the prejudices that are kept up in regard to her. It seems to me that of all our Flemish Ladies, except however Mme Marie-Charlotte, this Lady has the best accent and the tone of voice most suitable for speaking French well. It is urgent to get the day pupils back to having more just sentiments towards our Ladies; you can see the enemy of good is meddling in this matter. Do not leave aside any means of winning back the friendship of these children; but do not lose sight of the fact that without silence and order, you will never manage to do so. Then you must make their teaching pleasant by the method used and by encouragements widely distributed.

Your Rev. Mother spoke to me about an article on confessors that she could not find. I like to think she has since found it; here is all I have on the subject. It is very hard for me to do these kinds of things again; consequently, I beg you to take care not to lose any line that has been drawn up, revised and adapted with so much trouble and hard work.

I had written the preceding when the letter you wrote yesterday was delivered to me. I have fixed the profession day for Mlle Celestine for next Thursday. Yes, dear Child, I had answered your Rev. Mother, and addressed my answer to Malines where I thought she had arrived in accordance with the letter she had written to me; as the good Lady changed her itinerary, it is quite simple that my letter nonetheless followed the road to Malines, without turning aside. But everything is all right; your Rev. Mother had news from me recently.

Take care not to tire Mlle (name effaced by the seal) too much at the beginning. Moderation in all things.

I give a blessing again to your invalid, yourself, dear Child, and all your Ladies at the convent of St. Joseph. I have retained very happy memories of it.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th April 1839

Take a little more care with your writing; it has a look of being done in a hurry that I do not approve of; hasten slowly. It is time for me to finish my chat, it is getting rather long, I know, but my heart has a big share in it and that excuses me.

I am not enclosing the extracts on confessors and confession; that is not what your Rev. Mother is asking for, by all appearance.

Praise be J.M.J

7-12

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me the greatest pleasure. I bless God for the fatherly care he is lavishing on you and I congratulate you on your faithfulness in corresponding to the blessings of your heavenly Spouse. Enjoy your happiness like a true religious and you will add to the happiness of your dear sisters, and to your pupils.

It seems to me that the short notice that has been planned would not be suitable for an Institute of Religious.

Tell your Superior that Melle Elizabeth Brunfaut is now offering herself as a lay sister. On the 13th of this month, she came to Ghent, and not finding me there, left me a letter in which she begs to be admitted as a sister.

Please write to Fr. Nisse, vicar of Dottignies, the answer you have to make to this fresh proposal, after conferring with your Superior about it. I do not know what it is right to decide.

You could write to the postulant from Poperinghe that I will do all that is possible in the event of the young lady responding to our hopes in the novitiate. You could write on my behalf, which is less subject to unpleasant consequences than if I meddle in it directly. The name of this postulant is: Therese Van den Berghe, at her father's house at Poperinghe.

If you approve, I will give in to the wish manifested to me by your pupil Loix. I will admit her to the postulancy when her semester is over. Urge her to write to me. Nothing is decided as yet as regards the (word effaced) the matter is not lost from sight.

Do not be scandalized by my writing. I take you to task about your; do as I say and not as I do. You know that I do not always write with the same ease.

Melle Pauline Spitaels came to see me. She talked to me as she did to you. Pray for her. I am doing so too. If she makes a retreat at your place, I will inform you of it.

I give you my blessing, my dear Child.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th November 1839

I have a pretty Virgin in wood with the Infant Jesus, and a little St. John the Baptist, to put on the mantelpiece of the visitor's (paper torn) in the convent at Mouscron. The group is under glass cover.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-13

You gave me great pleasure, my dear Child, by giving me the details contained in your letter of the 4th. I have been able to send a few lines to the parish priest at Reckem. That little act of disloyalty will have good results; that good friend appreciated it.

It seems to me that you can tell Melle Dumont, that I accede to her wish. Let her liberate herself more and more, and she will be formed.

Mme Stanislaus will deliver to you some answers about Jette. All the same, I would not subscribe to all the customs in order to do like the others. Let us have an appearance of our own, but let it also be in good form, in our own fashion.

I will deal with your business with the Jesuit Fathers, when I get the opportunity.

Mme Stanislaus is coming to make her second novitiate. I like to flatter myself with the hope that this will be the means of making this subject into what we have the right to expect of her. You understand me. This novitiate is to be made in the proper way as far as possible; however, I have granted Mme Marie Anne the power to give dispensations on certain points so as to procure some relief for you, if you see fit. For the rest do not give our dear sisters at Mouscron an unfavorable idea of that Lady.

I pray our good and merciful Jesus to bless you and attach you more and more to his divine heart. You often have special mementos at Holy Mass from

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

15th January 1840

L.S.J.M.J.

7-14

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I have learned from a good source that the arrangement made with regard to the Superior at Alost, according to which that Lady has to hear the pupils recite their lessons, is producing bad effects. I am rather annoyed about it, but I have been unable to understand the motive that prompted you to such an unaccustomed measure. I am not going into any details. It is enough for me to have pointed out to you the bad result; you will hasten to revoke that arrangement and to give other occupations in the classes, to the Superior of the house of Alost, than that of hearing the recitations of lessons.

I hope, my dear daughter, that you will give me details about all our classes before long. Meanwhile, accept the assurance of the sincere devotedness felt for you in our Lord by

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

Praise be J.M.J.

7-15

Madame Superior

I am very touched by the pious sentiments that animate you, you and all your dear pupils, and that all of you have just manifested to me in so simple and touching a way. I do not doubt but that the august Mother of God, who deigns to be our Mother also, will accept the prayers you have addressed to her with such good hearts, and we will experience, you and I, precious effects of that

religious confidence. I thank you for your letters, and to bear witness to my profound satisfaction, I will on Sunday offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for you and your community. I know nothing more powerful for convincing you of my affection and of rewarding you for all you are doing for me ... It is impossible for me to answer other letters.

Accept, Rev. Mother and all my dear daughters in Jesus Christ, this fresh mark of the sentiments of devotedness of your spiritual Father and receive my blessing for all of you.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th August 1841

We will see at another time what is fitting to do with your relics. Give Mme Adelaide, in particular, the assurance that we never forget her before God. Let her have confidence and not be occupied with herself.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-16

Madame Superior

I thank you for the good wishes you have set me for the New Year. Be assured that I have likewise been commending you to the Lord during the lovely solemnities we have just been celebrating. I have especially asked for you, the graces you need to govern wisely the family entrusted to you, and for your children, that humble submission, that blind obedience which is to be a source of temporal prosperity and spiritual riches. May Mary and Joseph obtain these favors for us through the merits of the divine Child whom they contemplated suffering and meriting for us, as soon as he came into the world!

I am very pleased to see that, generally speaking, you have reason to be content with your dear sisters. I think, however, that I have a few words to say to you about Mme Adelaide. Although that Lady is known to you, you are perhaps not fully aware that the main origin of her troubles comes from a spirit of pride. Now, you know that this spirit is subtle, hard to destroy and still often very much alive even when one thinks it has been dead for a long time. I have pointed out its existence many times to our former Superior. You will be able to talk to her about it, in order to save me repeating what I said here, and also to urge her on my behalf, to use her experience in unmasking it when occasion arises, and forestalling the consequences which are always more or less dangerous for Mme Adelaide. She is to draw the attention of her sister prudently to the temptations of that cunning spirit and speak to her frequently of the humility of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is a powerful remedy against pride, which is the cause of so many evils.

You will do well to write yourself to ask for a retreat. Address yourself to the Rev. Father Provincial; I take it upon myself to deliver your letter to him.

It is completely impossible, it seems to me, to allow adoration at your place for the public. I will talk about it to the Bishop of Bruges, who would not allow it, if he knew the place and the people. It seems obvious to me that His Lordship has been misled by the way the thing was put to him.

Receive my blessing, dear daughter, and always believe in my devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th January 1842

Present my greetings for the season to the chaplain and the parish priest.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-17

Madame Superior

The best means I can advise you, in this moment of difficulty, is to request the Parish Priest of Reckem on your own initiative, to come and see you, and to explain the whole affair to that gentleman who is touched by your expression of confidence. It is true that the commune has its rights as well as the individuals, and all the rights must be respected. However, one must not give in without being sure about the rights of other people. In all cases, if an expropriation is made for a public purpose, there is a good reason at the time for compensation.

I am ending here so as to send my letter to the post.

Your always devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated. Relates to same business as following letter dated 1842)

L.S.J.M.J.

7-18

Madame Superior

It will not be possible to bring forward the time of my visit to Mouscron. Besides I do not see there is such an urgent need for my presence to put an end to the difficulty you are afraid of relating to the alignment of the wall you are having built. I indicated the principles of right to you in my last letter; now you will assert your rights and respect those of the commune. You have moreover in the equity of the Burgomaster of Mouscron, a guarantee against unreasonable demands, if any arose. However, Madame, you will ask advice of enlightened persons and, if necessary, of men of law. You are also obliged to preserve the property of your convent, as has perhaps the Regency of Mouscron to preserve that of the commune. So I will rely on your prudence and on the cooperation of our friend Mr. Brage.

I am counting on coming to see you within a few weeks. Meanwhile, take the steps the circumstances require bravely, and give me clear, concise information about the result of those steps.

Your always very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th April 1842

Praise be J.M.J.

7-19

Madame Superior

I am very pleased, very touched and very edified by the good things you have sent me. I can clearly see in them two charming inclinations: a tender love for Mary and a sincere desire to see me happy. I would have to have a heart different from the one I have, not to feel keenly what such sentiments are worth. May God be blessed, very dear daughters, for adorning you with such precious gifts. You love the Mother of the Savior, your heavenly Spouse, and you are praying to her for the one who guides you in his name. Do we not have in that the finest guarantees of success and of temporal and spiritual happiness? Yes, in that there are elements of true prosperity, signs of predestination! May the Lord who is the author of all perfect good, be thanked for giving me such children, and may the divine Mary also receive our humble homage for admitting us into the number of her servants and intimate friends. As for us, let us try to make ourselves, I do not say worthy of her favors, that is impossible, but less and less unworthy of our high destinies and magnificent prerogatives.

I have just offered the august Sacrifice of the Mass for all my children, so that we may obtain all that is necessary for a perfect preparation for tomorrow's feast. I have specially asked for you, that Jesus will deign to send you his Holy Spirit who enlightens, purifies and sanctifies, and that he will be kind enough to make you instruments of his mercy for a great number of pupils who would come to you from France and Belgium.

Receive then, my dear daughter, for you and all your pious family at St. John the Baptist, my thanks for the prayers that you addressed for me; I endeavor to prepare myself to receive that for which you have obtained for me through Mary and I continue to give you proofs of this devotedness that the good God inspires in me for you.

Your very affectionate Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th August 1842

Praise be J.M.J.

7-20

Here, my dear child is the answer to what you asked me relative to the communication about the summary of your Rule. I am sending you the letter of the Madame Superior General itself. You will see how everything is going according to our wishes. As for the brilliant matter in

question, I will tell you only that if it succeeds you will say with me that it has some similarity to the peculiar event that we read about in the life of the saintly miracle worker whose feast we are celebrating today, and that consists of moving back a mountain that was hindering the building of a church. Keep that puzzle for yourself alone, and pray; and you will be informed about it a little later.

Do you think it necessary for me to write directly to your parish priest? If you do not, say from me what you find most appropriate and be convinced that you will only be expressing what is in my heart. I do not know your new parish priest personally. I would be delighted if an opportunity of making his acquaintance could be found. What luck if some business brought that gentleman to Ghent! I like to think he would honor me with a visit and I am sure we would start a lasting friendship.

Be certain, dear child, that I will commend you and yours zealously on the day of the renovation of your vows. Accept the assurance of that and give it to your dear sisters.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th November 1842

I have a novena of Prince Hohenloke from the 21st to the 29th of this month. You can profit by it; enclosed is a letter of thanks to the parish priest of Reckem.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-21

Madame Superior

You may urge the parish priest of Lauw to divulge to you the details he seems inclined to send me, about the project he spoke to you about. You may add your reflections to the explanations, and the matter would advance more quickly towards a solution. I really like to weigh up before God proposals of that kind you have just set before me. The means Providence uses are sometimes so admirable, that it is our duty to give them due consideration; always distrusting our own minds that are necessarily limited. I have just informed the Madame Superior General of the contents of your two letters.

I always like to repeat to you the assurance of my complete devotedness in Our Lord Jesus Christ, and to call myself, very dear daughter,

Your affectionate spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th February 1843

When you have the opportunity you may send me (end of line obliterated) ... you have reread them.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-22

You might indeed be right, my dear daughter. It is very possible that the parish priest of Loos is not seriously thinking of entrusting his establishments to you. Act with politeness, with circumspection; but say that you are not allowed to communicate your Rule to him, which would moreover be a useless thing to do, since you can give me in person a very clear idea on all points. In no case should we take on alone his school for orphans. That would be entirely opposed to the aim of our Institute.

I will commend this matter to our good God. I will also commend to him with zeal, our convent of St. John the Baptist and especially the Superior of it whose perfection it is to exercise such great influence on so many souls, entrusted to our care.

Pray also, my dear child, for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd February 1843

I send you and all your community, good wishes for Lent. May we, during this time of penance, expiate the faults we have to reproach ourselves with since the feast of Easter last year!

Praise be J.M.J.

7-23

Madame Superior

I very much like to see the end of the matter like the one you consulted me about; that avoids a waste of time that fanciful schemes give rise to; that averts communications that sometimes leave tardy regrets; that prevents one from neglecting what is certain and really exists, by running towards creatures of fantasy, tiring oneself for absolutely nothing.

Although I must agree that the motives you put forward in favor of the project for opening a door to the cloakroom of the religious seem sound, I wish to withhold my decision until the time that will allow me to examine things on the spot. The better weather that is approaching will provide me with the opportunity to take a few trips and it makes the change less urgent.

I am of the opinion also that the expense of completing the altar should be postponed. Our good God knows our wish to adorn his dwelling place, but he makes it our duty to think first of all about the means of fulfilling more urgent obligations.

Before taking any decision about the form and material for the pedestal of the statue to be put into the garden, one must have the statue; and before procuring the statue, it will be necessary to see the effect that will be produced by the system of planting adopted. These are fresh reasons for putting off this matter for a few months. In any case, it will be necessary to limit oneself to a plaster or terra-cotta statue; the expense of getting one in wood or in stone would be too great. You could, in the meantime, get information about the means of procuring what it will be appropriate for us to choose.

I will inform the Madame Superior General of your remarks about the novice from Neuville. You give me news of your situation that pleases me; we may believe that St. Joseph will come to our aid. Have confidence in that powerful patron, and count, dear child, on feeling more and more the effects of your filial piety towards the foster father of Jesus. I make it my sweet duty to pray for you. I am not unaware that your position has its unpleasantnesses and its dangers.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 11th of the month of St. Joseph 1843

L.S.J.M.J.

7-24

I am very sorry for keeping you waiting so long for a reply for Mme Adelaide, but the period of the holidays at the Josephites gave me a great many more jobs to do.

You have a reply from Malines in keeping with your proposals, at least that is what I am concluding from the silence of Mr. (name illegible). As for the bad joke in l'Echo, do not get upset about it; our good God often uses these very opponents to bring about results of advantage to his friends.

Let us be humbly submissive to what our good God allows to draw good out of evil when he is pleased to do so. Let us not put obstacles in the way of his designs of mercy by being impatient; let us rely on the infinite goodness of God and on the love of Mary. May the month of our august Mother be a time for generous efforts to honor the adorable creature whose perfection is a source of admiration for the Angels, whose goodness towards us has been shown to us many times and whose adopted children you have the signal honor to be.

Every day during this month, I am offering the Holy Sacrifice for all of you; I have no better way of proving to you that I am your devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 2nd of the month of Mary 1843

7-25

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I have just received a letter from Bruges informing me that the Countess of Mal? is unwell and that as soon as her condition allows it, that good Lady will go direct to Malines. So you will be deprived of the visit that was promised to you and on which the young Countess Marie, our pupil,

was setting such great importance. I am taking advantage of this circumstance to renew to you the assurance of my complete devotedness.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th September 1844

Praise be J.M.J.

7-26

Madame Superior

I am writing to express my gratitude to you for the good wishes you addressed to me in your own name and that of your dear sisters for the touching solemnities we are celebrating. Yes, I thank you for what you are asking the new born Jesus. May your prayers be answered! We would all experience an increase of graces that would make us bear ever increasingly perfect fruits of salvation.

I had allowed Mme Adélaïde to have some special dealings with her confessor. That Lady had desired it in order to explain matters that were troubling her conscience. A trustworthy cleric has made it known to me that Mme Adélaïde is busying herself much more with the affairs of others in this correspondence, than with her own. It seems that the kind of ambitious monomania from which she is suffering provides her with criticisms of the persons and things surrounding her. Now, I cannot without reason abdicate my right to direct your house and the Institute to which you belong. The criticisms and satires Mme Adélaïde is making must be addressed to me, and I do not find it necessary to tolerate their being otherwise. Please, I beg you, take measures in conformity with what I have just explained to you relating to these written communications.

Receive, my dear daughter, the assurance of my sincere devotedness and my blessing

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd of the year 1844

Praise be J.M.J.

7-27

Madame Superior

Please be good enough to provide my nephew with the information he wants. I rely sufficiently on your kindness and prudence to limit myself to these lines; my position and also yours require minute precautions to be taken to avoid every kind of unpleasantness that matters of this may give rise to.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th November 1844

Praise be J.M.J.

7-28

To Madame Superior and the Ladies of the Convent of St. John the Baptist

The approach of that very precious day on which the Church reminds us of the offering the august Mary made to God of her whole being, and on which, following the example of your divine Mother, you renew your holy vows, and ratify the sacred obligations you contracted at the happy moment of your religious profession, seems to me a favorable time for reminding you of the meaning of those promises you made, and the extent of the obligations you contracted towards your heavenly Spouse Jesus Christ, and that you are going to renew at the foot of the altar.

In her presentation, Mary provides you with the perfect model of the act you concluded at your profession, and are going to ratify before her eyes, in the presence of God the Savior. Now, Mary gives herself to the Lord with all the generosity and love of her immaculate heart. She gives herself without restriction: the thoughts of her mind, the actions of her will, her desires, her inclinations, body and time, all belong to God and will do so irrevocably. That, my dear daughters, is how you must have offered yourselves to Jesus Christ; that is how you are to understand the ratification you are going to make of the offering the Angels with their Queen presented to the Lord on your behalf. Thanks to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit bestowed on you, you renounced your Fathers, your Mothers, your relatives, your property and temporal hopes; you also renounced

yourselves. It is only through that twofold renunciation that you have merited the place you occupy in the heart of your divine Spouse. Renouncing what you had is the easiest part; renouncing what you are and go on renouncing it at every moment, that is what is required to complete the sacrifice and render you always pleasing to Jesus Christ. So it is a holocaust you are offering; the sacred fire must consume its victim completely.

Examine yourselves seriously. If you are still holding to any attachment; if you nourish preferences; if you hesitate about sacrifices, about renunciations; if the creature, the self-will compares itself to the Creator, to his divine will; convict yourselves. Judge yourselves severely. After humbling yourselves, raise yourselves up; go to Mary; you have special rights to her love. She will come to your aid; she will wipe out the stains that would make you less agreeable to her Son; she will adorn you with new gifts; she will offer you to Jesus Christ. Ah! how sweet will be the welcome you receive! So take care to prepare yourselves for it.

I undertake to commend you all very specially to the Lord these days during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and I give you my blessing with all my heart

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th November 1844

Praise be J.M.J.

7-29

Madame Superior

I should have to give you a great many answers this time, since you have written to me on several occasions, without getting a single letter from me. However I must again limit myself to telling you in general that you gave me great pleasure by continuing to keep me up to date on all your affairs, in spite of my persistence in keeping silent. However, what cannot remain without any remark is the strange behavior of Mme Hyacinthe: I admit that I had expected something very different from that Lady. Be kind enough to tell her so and to beg her on my behalf, to pull herself together seriously, lest God abandon her to the evil suggestions that unfaithfulness will end by rendering very dangerous. Mme Adelaide seems to me to be constantly turning in the same vicious circle. So I have nothing to say to her.

I like to think that our dear Mme Catherine is drawing down on herself and on us the merciful eyes of her divine spouse, by bravely carrying the crosses her bodily sufferings are producing. The spirit of humble submission I have recognized in Mme Catherine, and the generous devotion that has always distinguished her, are guarantees that this friend of Jesus Christ is purifying herself in the crucible of tribulations and her soul is bedecking itself with adornments precious in the sight of her divine spouse.

Please assure Mme Catherine that I will specially commend her to the Lord, particularly at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Tell all your dear Sisters that I was careful to present them to the Child Jesus during the lovely solemnities we have just been celebrating. Mary and Joseph will have obtained for us their children, the blessings of that divine Savior.

I will examine the proposal you are making to me in your last letter.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th January 1845

Praise be J.M.J.

7-30

Madame Superior

Our Sisters of St. Joseph at Bruges have need of a little help in the field of teaching; their method is faulty, and there is not a subject among them capable of drawing up a sound course for class mistresses. Being at Bruges, these last few days, I have taken it upon myself to write to you about this subject, and to urge you to go to the convent of our Sisters, rue d'Argent, in order to indicate to them the subject matter to be dealt with in each of the divisions of their classes for day pupils. First of all a way to divide up the pupils well, to draw up what will be taught in each division, to indicate the simple pieces of handwork suitable for these kinds of pupils, and to add a few

remarks about the methods of studying and teaching. That is what would be needed by these sisters.

Independently of the service you would render to that Institute, you would prove that the Ladies of Mary are at the standard called for on their part, by the purpose of their Institute which is exclusively devoted to education, and you would attract the attention of Mr. Scherpenel, the diocesan inspector, who is very attached to the Sisters of St. Joseph and does not know enough about the Ladies of Mary.

If then you could go to Bruges, on Saturday the 26th of this month, to spend Sunday there, and do what I have just said, you will let me know in good time. I will inform them of your arrival. Take as your companion a very prudent lay sister. You know it is necessary to avoid arousing any feelings of regret about the separation of the Institute of the said Sisters of St. Joseph from that of the Ladies. This remark is enough to give you to understand how you are to behave; the departure time by rail, is not arranged in such a way as to procure you the means of breaking your journey at Ghent; so you will do well to take the coach for Bruges at Courtrai, and for coming back on Monday, you will go directly by the same way from Bruges to Courtrai.

I have spoken to the Bishop of Bruges about Mme Adélaïde. It seems to me that His Lordship knows that person well. He also knows that the Mother House of your Institute is at Malines.

I am always, my dear daughter,

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th April 1845

L.S.J.M.J.

7-31

Madame Superior

It is not possible for me at the moment to fix the period of my visit to Mouscron; however, I count on putting it back from the usual time only by as much as I absolutely have to do. I am making it my duty each day to commend you to the Lord and, in your position as Superior, you have a special share in my prayers. The dryness in pious exercises may have its use; it humbles us. Oh! who does not need to be? It inspires us with pity for those who are experiencing the same difficulties, a disposition so useful to those whom God has established to direct souls in his ways, etc.

We have been very pleased with the dispositions of Mme Clothilde, her common sense, her calmness, her devotedness will make this subject very useful to our dear Institute. Cultivate this young plant carefully, you will be well rewarded for what you do for her.

I very much approve of the idea of inviting Mlle Sophie Braye to be the sponsor of your pupils who are to be confirmed.

Always count on my feelings of devotedness, my dear child, and constantly inspire all your sisters with them.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 31st of the month of our heavenly Mother, 1845

For about ten days we hoped that the parish priest of Reckem would have come to Ghent to go and see our house at Melle. It would be very pleasant for me to be informed of the day of his arrival; I would arrange my short trips accordingly.

Praise be J.M.J.

7-32

Madame Superior

While waiting to know your plans, here is my reply to your letter of the 2nd; I am delighted to learn that the religious spirit is being strengthened at your place, and that you are adapting yourselves more and more to the aim of your Institute. May our good God deign to continue to

bless you, entrusting pupils to you and giving you the enlightened zeal that calls for the spiritual and temporal happiness of those children.

Here is the result of my approach to St. Nicholas: the large number of petitions addressed to him by the young friends of this good saint, have so completely taken up all the time their patron had, that I did not get an audience. In spite of all my qualifications, I understand quite well that I did not occupy a place of favor in the palace of St. Nicholas. I had to wait my turn, and that turn was put back until after the solemnity of the 6th of this month. Unfortunately, the next day was a Sunday, and the saint faithfully observing the laws of the Church, does not allow business to be dealt with on that day which is exclusively consecrated to spiritual duties. After that Sunday we were celebrating the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Queen of Saints. So, it was only yesterday that I was admitted into the presence of the Patron of children. The fact that I am accustomed to palaces and the personages occupying them has made me shrewd enough to guess what one has to expect from the present arrangement for the distribution of favors. Now, I admit to you that I noticed from the very first, that St. Nicholas was not favorably disposed. I was even a little confused when I explained the purpose of my mission. What then has happened at Mouscron? I asked myself. On hearing that name, St Nicholas seems less satisfied than he usually is. Sir, he said to me in a tone that froze me, stop your praises: your Ladies at Mouscron have been disrespectful to my faithful companion. Turn the page of writing you hold in your hand and judge for yourself whether I am to grant you the nice things you are asking for ... What a blow for me, my Ladies! My legs nearly gave way under me. On the other page, I saw the story of the donkey in which you are all disrespectful to the kindly animal that always travels with St. Nicholas. However, as the saints are always compassionate, my embarrassment touched the Patron of childhood, and kindly taking the paper on which my speech was written, he read in a sweet voice the lines you handed to me and with which I had skillfully, I thought, supported the motives of my petition. I pardon the inappropriate joke of the Ladies at Mouscron; but tell them to be always sparing of criticism, to scrupulously refrain from making fun of strangers who do not speak as perfectly as they do; to beware above all of making comparisons likely to discourage the children who are less favored with natural gifts. On the contrary, to use more zeal in forming or reforming the subjects who offer less in natural or acquired resources, than others who are so fortunately endowed that they do not need to make any effort to win the affection of their mistresses nor to cause them to lose the rewards of their pains ... I end, Sir, by allowing you to grant the ladies at Mouscron permission, next Sunday, after the midday meal, to drown in a cup of coffee, the sorrow my reprimand causes them. With that nectar containing for them all the nice things listed in their rhymes, you will have obtained more than you think, and all that (word obliterated) clients want. You may add to it, instead of a (word obliterated) of sugar as their humility as leading them to fear and ask for a good lump of crystalline sugar that sweetens all it touches. After his speech, I was led away ceremoniously by a beatified Italian who was laughing up his sleeves, and some little pages in the service of the saint and that have charge of guarding the pupils of the Ladies of Mary. The latter, very pleased at having seen children entrusted to their care roughly recommended to the kindly solicitude of persons in charge of education, showed an interest in me that will always remain impressed on my mind and that I would like to pass on to you for the good of your pupils.

This is what happened. I refrain from any comments; you are, Ladies, too shrewd for any reflection of mine to be necessary. So I close and send you greetings.

Your delegate to St. Nicholas,

In the Year of Grace 1845

L.S.J.M.J.

7-33

Madame Superior

Here is a novena of the Prince of Hohenloke. It will complement the one we have begun. Add to your intentions, all my Institutes and the whole diocese of Ghent.

His Highness will pray for us and our intentions from the 26th of January to the 2nd of February. All of you do some exercises in honor of the Holy Name of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

(Not Dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

7-34

Madame Superior

Although I did not answer you at the last solemnities, I have nonetheless been busy with you and your house. I have been praying the Holy Spirit with all my heart, to grant you an upright spirit and a pure heart, wise and courageous zeal, that meekness and humility that render one dear to God and men, that zeal that inspires and animates the love of Jesus Christ and that produces fruits of salvation. The Blessed Virgin will have supported my requests, and I dare to hope that you and all your dear community have received fresh graces that will be faithfully used for the glory of the divine Master and the good of souls he deigns to entrust to your care.

The trial will not have harmed your establishment; the Lord, will I dare to hope, make good come out of what, humanly speaking, could have become disastrous. The parents will have had the opportunity to appreciate your care for their children.

I cannot yet fix the day of my arrival at your place. However, it is not very far off. Let us be patient for a while, and we will have the pleasure of seeing each other for a few days and chatting at our ease.

Meanwhile, I commend to you the octave of the most Holy Sacrament and the feast of the Sacred Heart. Draw from these springs of love and of divine mercy. Pray for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th June 1846

Praise be J.M.J.

7-35

Madame Superior

You must not worry about what the intriguing mind of (illegible) could give rise to. Your affairs are in order; and were they not, we would soon put them right when the need to do so has been proved to us. All that you could do would be, as you suggest, to revise the historical account and the papers relating to it. Mme Marine and Mme Catherine could help you. You will show the things to the parish priest only in the case in which you would discover a sort of need to do so and when you understand them well yourself. I repeat, we want what is right and consequently what have we to fear? So let our minds be at rest.

Please commend to Mme Clothilde and all your community, my aunt Deschepper, who died on Sunday evening at the age of 83 years and some months.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th August 1846

L.S.J.M.J.

7-36

I see with pleasure that you understand the need to combine prayers with human means in order to obtain pupils, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. So let us pray and try to remove all that can be an obstacle to confidence, before our good God as well as among the parents.

It is nevertheless necessary to train the mistresses and have methods that have been tried and standardized. For years I have been repeating the same thing. The failure of several of our subjects is becoming more and more noticed. The inadequacy of their physical strength to bear the burden with which some of our young subjects see themselves charged, makes people talk unfavorable, I suppose, about our Institute. So, it was with full conviction that I stated the indispensable need our Institute is experiencing of seeing the Mistress general act in conformity with the requirements of our Constitutions. I should thank the Lord with all my might if at last I saw people were complying with my remarks and earnest entreaties. Oh! why would they resist any longer?

I have understood your remarks and share your viewpoint. But what does it matter, let us storm heaven and we will win our case.

I dare not give an opinion on what you are asking as regards history in the English language, written by Mme Stephanie. A work of this kind presupposes extensive knowledge on the part of the author who dares to undertake it, and our Gentlemen at Melle have not dared, I think, to assume responsibility for the writing by approving it. All I have been able to understand is that, from the point of view of style, they do not like it; and from the point of view of history, they do not know enough to enable them to approve or reject the work of your sister. So, a competent authority would be needed to decide your question.

I would be pleased to provide you with comments on your geography, but our Gentlemen at Melle have so many occupations at the moment that I would not dare to ask them to examine your work. However, if the matter is not urgent, I could ask for opinions and also myself see what the examination of it would suggest to me.

Be convinced that I make it my duty to pray with you to our good God to give you pupils and the essential qualities to form them according to the designs of the Creator.

Receive my blessing, dear child, I give it to you with the confidence that the Lord will deign to make it beneficial to you.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th February, 1847

L.S.J.M.J.

7-37

Madame Superior

I have seen with joy, that you are putting your confidence in God, that you are not afraid, and that your whole community is joined with you to ward off the storm by faith and the means our position as children of Mary and Joseph provide us with. Very grave circumstances warn us that nothing is great, nothing is powerful; nothing is lasting here below, unless God gives his support, unless his hand is there to sustain it. Let us detach ourselves more and more from creatures in order to attach ourselves in reality to the Creator who alone is great, alone unchangeable, alone worthy of all our affection.

I hope that devotion to St. Joseph will grow in Belgium. The needs of the nation will contribute towards stimulating the zeal of our compatriots, and we will have the happiness of seeing our holy Patron receive homage more universal and more genuine than he had for a long time been receiving in a country that is more specially consecrated to him. Let us try to bring it about that our humble family shows by its zeal, it is worthy of the fine privilege with which it is honored of being, amid a nation of the servants of St. Joseph, still more specially devoted to honoring that august Patriarch and being the children of predilection

I like to persuade myself that the Madame Superior General is temporizing, in the affair of the novice for good reasons. I informed her some time ago of your feelings and mine about that poor person.

Kindly recommend all your dear children on my behalf, to take great care to commend us to St. Joseph, while commending themselves during the lovely month we are beginning. I will make it my duty to do that for them with zeal and confidence.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st March 1848

L.S.J.M.J.

7-38

Madame Superior

I have just come back from a visit to Malines where your dear sisters are all in good health. You can understand the joy with which I saw you are tranquil, putting all you are into the care of our august Patron. Your confidence will not be in vain. Persevere in this religious spirit, and God will prove to you that he likes your sentiments, and is directing you, and that nothing will harm those

whom this heavenly Father is protecting. I am praying for you with all possible zeal. Your sisters everywhere, are doing the same.

For the rest, I praise you for your prudence. Without frightening anyone, take a few measures to avoid any surprise.

Receive, Madame Superior, the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th of the month of St. Joseph 1848

I am expecting news of you every day, as long as things are not restored to their usual state at your frontier, seeing (illegible) as long as there is any interest in the events at your place.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-39

Madame Superior

The newspapers will keep us up to date about events, and in all probability, you no longer have anything to fear for the present at Mouscron. We think you are under no obligation to send your pupils away and make the parents anxious. It is very true that divine Providence is watching over you and that you have great reasons for relying on help from on high. All our dear sisters in other houses are also praying for you. You know I join them and you, with zeal, in asking for all you need. Oh! let us count on the good Father we have in Heaven and on the prayers of our Patrons. Let us offer to God all the disagreements and privations the circumstances are causing us in order to satisfy his justice and appease his wrath. Everyone is suffering, everyone is put to inconvenience, money is so scarce that people are having great difficulty in getting it. The Josephites are being asked for refunds, and up to now, I do not know how we will get together the sums needed to avoid disagreements. I hope our good God will come to our aid and we will have fresh proofs of his fatherly solicitude. I also hope the same for you and all the convents. Let us pray with confidence; let us show ourselves generous, and not allow our minds to be preoccupied with thoughts contrary to what we owe him who is trying us, and who is able to command the winds and storms in order to restore calm, when he is pleased to do so.

With pleasure I give my paternal blessing to you, my dear daughter and to all your dear sisters.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th April 1848

L.S.J.M.J.

7-40

Madame Superior

I have been keenly affected by the news you sent me. I can imagine the grief of the Burgomaster and his respectable family. I also understand the part your Ladies as well as your dear pupils have taken in this sad event. However, I was very edified by happy dispositions of the good Maria. I share your confidence, my dear daughter, that the dear child was not mistaken, her fine qualities will have given her entry into the abode of eternal happiness.

For fear of renewing the grief, of reopening the wound that time has not yet healed, I will refrain from writing to the family. When the moment comes, you will kindly act as the interpreter of my feelings. You know them and will express them in a suitable way.

I thank the good God for the blessings he is showering down on your house. Let us try to deserve to have the favors continued. May faith increase in us and in our pupils, and may charity be firmly established in our souls.

I flatter myself that before long we will learn that grace has triumphed over the impulses of nature. The Lord will come to our help, if we persevere in our pious efforts. So my dear daughter go on praying with confidence to our good Patrons. I give you my blessing with pleasure.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th July 1848

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Madame Superior

In reply to your first letter, I will only tell you this one thing: if Mme Sidonie is not reasonable after so many blessings from God and so much kindness towards her on our part, she is preparing very bitter sorrow for herself. I am making it my duty to commend her specially to the Lord.

I still could not agree to the expenditure of 800 frs for painting the chapel. In our great financial straits, etc. etc. I think it necessary to postpone the execution of this project.

It is obvious that you will be more true, more esteemed, without a pompous and even rather ridiculous lithograph than with that finery that, without being useful to you, might be harmful to Malines. People would doubt the sincerity of the Ladies of Malines, because of the exaggeration of those ... of the lithographer of those at Mouscron.

Finally, your letter that came today informs me of a thing that pains me. Poor N has not profited from so many graces from God and your indulgence! Act severely. No weakness when it is a question of the good of the souls entrusted to our care.

Here now is another matter: Mlle Victorine de Brandt has left the novitiate of the Carmelites at Alost. I think the reason is that God is not calling that young Lady there. I have urged her to go and spend some time at Mouscron with the Ladies of Mary, under the direction of Mme Flore who knew Mlle Victorine so well at Alost. My suggestion has been welcomed with joy, by the young Lady and by her aunt Colette. The Lord has designs on this excellent person, but he has not deigned to make them known yet. You will, I think, be the instrument the Lord will deign to use to make known his holy and adorable will to your former pupil. Go about this affair with prudence and charity. You will reap good fruits and give much satisfaction to your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

Perhaps already this week Mlle Victorine will arrive at your place; you will kindly make her feel I have recommended her to your good care. By this work you will have fresh rights to the prayers of Mlle Colette. You know her prayers have power over the heart of God. You are acquainted with the great charity of that chosen soul.

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 27th November 1848

Praise be J.M.J.

7-42

Madame Superior

I am pleased to announce the arrival of that good Victorine whom you loved so affectionately during her childhood. The same disposition that made that young person dear to you, will inspire in you will a keen interest in her; when you have the opportunity of finding it again, and a few hours will suffice, I think, to reveal the soul of Mlle Victorine to you. As for restoring calm to it, a little more time and a few precautions will be needed. You will try to make her forget the four months of struggle and all that affected her imagination. Then you will establish indifference about the choice of a state in life, and finally, you will pass on to the positive. That will require a few weeks. I will help you with my advice and prayers. You will try to give the girl an occupation and some distractions, and will banish from her mind any idea relating to sad and painful family events. You will, I dare hope, have the pleasure of seeing grace seconding your efforts, for your care is being bestowed on a soul pleasing to God the Savior and his very blessed Mother.

Receive, Madame Superior, the assurance of my always very deep devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 30th November 1848

L.S.J.M.J.

7-43

Madame Superior

The details you gave me about your community and, in particular, those about Mlle Victorine, pleased me. I hope that Mme Catherine will draw from her ailments all the good the Lord has stored in them for the use of our dear invalid and the whole Institute of which she is a member. Our other children, and at their head their superiors, have, it is my pleasant conviction, received on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, fresh graces which, when added to the favors the approaching touching solemnities are going to get for them, will be powerful in rendering easy the fulfillment of the duties of their state, and the progress you have to make in the way of perfection. Be very brave, all of you, be generous and you will experience the fact that my hope was founded. I have been praying with confidence for all my children and above all for their superiors during this time of preparation for the feast of Christmas. I hope that our good God will not despise the prayers of his minister who is your Father.

You give me great pleasure by taking a special care of Mlle Victorine. That girl reminds me of such edifying happenings; her aunt Mlle Colette has such well-established rights to my gratitude, that you are helping me to settle my debts when you render services to her niece. I do not have the time to write to Mlle Victorine; please convey my sentiments to her; you know what is appropriate to say to her to explain my sentiments to her and to restore her peace of heart.

With all my heart, I give you my blessing, my dear daughter.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd December 1848

Our Gentlemen at Melle were very pleased with your letter

L.S.J.M.J.

7-44

Madame Superior

I have the pleasure of informing you that your retreat can take place according to your wishes, on the 2nd of September. Rev. Fr. Sourant(?) is remarkably obliging us. We owe him sentiments of deep gratitude.

Mme Flori (illegible) will send you, with your other things, the six birds that I have left out of the twelve I thought I still had.

I enjoyed sweet consolation on seeing that happy dispositions that grace and your faithfulness have aroused in you, my dear daughter and your children in general. May the Lord be blessed for it! What better could be desired than to know that those who are entrusted to us, are sincerely seeking our good God.

Give my kind regards to Mlle Victorine; I have often been thinking of that person, and thank God for indicating the way that is to lead her to happiness. I think you will have the pleasure of seeing the rebirth of the fine qualities you recognized in that former pupil, and that seemed for some time to have been weakened or withdrawn and hidden. I am going to Alost and from there to Brussels. Mlle Colette will be very pleased about the favor God is granting her niece.

We will go on praying with confidence to the august Mary and St. Joseph to get the help our dear family needs. I cherish the hope that our affairs will end in such a way as to consolidate the good and amend what needs to be amended in the sight of the Lord. Let us attend to them, without getting agitated and in a spirit of faith and of religious confidence.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th July 1849

L.S.J.M.J.

7-45

Madame Superior

The sentiments that have presided over the writing of the letter you dear pupils addressed to me are too good for me not to do all I possibly can to bring it about that the clothing of Mlle Victorine takes place at the convent of St. John the Baptist. I have already made sure that the rules on this matter are not opposed to granting the request of your children; the Madame Superior General would willingly accede to your wishes, and consequently I am happy to enter into your

designs and grant what your pupils request in terms so pious and worthy of the education they are receiving from the Ladies of Mary.

You will therefore, Madame Superior, be kind enough to fix the day, in consultation with the parish priest, on which the clothing will take place, and to inform Mlle Victorine of that decision as well as the other persons who are interested in the happiness of your happy postulant. You will be good enough above all to make known to your dear good pupils that it is with real satisfaction that I am giving them this proof of my affection and sincere devotedness.

Receive, Madame Superior, and for all you holy community, and all your pupils, the blessing given from the depth of his heart by

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd July 1849

You will look into whether it is appropriate to ask the parish priest to do the ceremony, or whether it is better to seek the ministry of your chaplain.

I beg you to tell Mme Léonardine that her letter satisfies me in all respects, and that she is not even to think of the matter she wrote to me about, which moreover is of very slight importance.

Please, remember the souls of my nephew Arsène Van Crombrugghe, brother of your sister Mme Félicite, and his wife, carried off by cholera on the 19th of this month. Their eldest son, aged 5 or 6 years, followed them to the grave the next day; and the apprentice of the chemist on the following day. We have had great reason for consolation, in the Christian dispositions that the dear departed brought to bear on their preparations for their last sacrifice. The epidemic has lost much of its intensity.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-46

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I like to persuade myself that you have taken seriously the stress I laid on obtaining that our Mistress generals of convents, and at their head, the Mistress general of the Institute, are not officials merely in name. Your Constitutions are so explicit on this subject, that I find it hard to explain the state of affairs in this respect in the Institute. However, the result of this forgetting of practical duties laid down by your Rules is that, in the midst of the movement noticeable around us, several of our mistresses and some of our Institutions have remained stationary in many respects. I am happy to see that my remonstrances have ended by being listened to.

A Mr. Peters of Liege, the former Director of the boarding school at Beauregard, has just sent me a copy of a few elementary texts he has composed that have been the subject of very flattering praise for the author. You will kindly examine these works at leisure and let me know what you think of them. I will get these books sent to you.

A master at Melle has looked at the pages of the little historical summary of Mme Stephanie. This is what he writes to me: the spelling mistakes are corrected. The arrangement leaves much to be desired. He refrains from pronouncing a judgment on the historical and moral value of the work. But he indicates a work to replace that of our Mme Stephanie. It is: "History of England" by a Lady, sold at Detmans, 22 Pater Noster Road, London.

I want Mme Stephanie to be caused no unpleasantness about this work. That Lady has shown a desire to be of use to her pupils, and that is praiseworthy.

Count on my support, my dear daughter, for all your office may require from you. I will specially commend you to our good God, during the holy season we have just entered upon. Give my compliments to your Madame Superior General, please.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th December 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

7-47

Madame Superior

The short letter I had wrongly addressed to Mme Clementine, was intended to Mme Marcelline; it was the result of a conversation I had with the Lady.

I am far from disapproving the facility you have allowed for expressing feelings of gratitude to Mme Olympiade. But there are limits to power; that is where the duty begins of protection the superior owes to his inferior.

I have carefully examined the question of premises to be acquired for the community of the Holy Angels. Those they are occupying at present may slip away from them. A little sooner, or a little later, they will probably slip away from them. Now, what would one do if that possibility came about? Would you find, at the right moment, premises offering the required conditions? You could perhaps acquire those premises now. You will do well to make sure of them without delay, if you are convinced that they combine the qualities required by our Institutions and by the laws of the Church. This conviction is unfortunately impossible when the things are examined without objectivity. The religious are mixed up with the pupils, I was almost going to say with the strangers who frequent the house. The lack of air has very often aroused anxieties in the doctors about the health of the religious and the pupils, to such an extent, that nearly every year alarming symptoms have appeared and have led the doctors to express the wish that subjects in more or less large numbers should go to Coloma.

What will we say about the premises of the Josephites: 1) That they combine conditions appropriate for separating the Religious from the pupils and strangers; 2) appropriate for separating the boarders from the day pupils; 3) all that the requirements for hygiene for the Ladies and pupils demand; 4) as for the situation, the current extension of the town on the side of the station, will not cease to make it more and more excellent for an institution of the Ladies of Mary. The most rational way for fixing the value of these premises, is the one you suggested to me: an expert nominated by you, a second from the present owners, and a third, in case of need, to be nominated by the two experts themselves.

That is what in all honesty I dare set before you, Madame, and I beg you to weigh it up well.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th October 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

7-48

Madame Superior General

I sent your letter for the Rev. Father Superior to Grammont. You may count on my fidelity and sincere devotedness as my duty and feelings of religious affection require. You have never perhaps known about the sacrifices and efforts I have seen myself forced to make, during long years, to avoid or hold in check, the effects of blind jealousy. Now that our good God has restored us to our normal situation, I do hope we will carry on with confidence and security in the ways of our mutual obligations.

So let it be said and heard once and for all. As long as evidence does not prove the contrary, let us believe in the existence of these sentiments and in that mutual confidence that is indispensable for doing the work God has entrusted to our care.

To understand my opinion regarding the behavior of the Superior at Alost, in relation with the supposition about letters addressed by Mme Olympiade, it is necessary to tell you that Mme Pharaïlde and Mlle Elizabeth had written to their former superior and that the latter, having asked for a letter signed by all the religious at the convent of St. Joseph, replied to that collective letter and also, in particular, to those two who had written privately in their own names. Mme Olympiade replied to the letter from the community, and that letter was read out publicly. I think that Mme Pharaïlde and the novice thought that answer was for them as well as for the others, and were not expecting individual answers. As the individual answers contained some reprehensible passages, the Superiors thought that prudence did not allow the two letters to be shown at the moment. I shared that opinion, and I must admit that I persist in it, and cannot allow you to carry out your intention of writing to Mme Olympiade about them. That would be opening up a dangerous topic. A discussion would follow and wounds that are scarcely healed would reopen to the great detriment of charity.

Your sincerely devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd November 1858

Has Mme Clothilde received the things I sent her? I would be pleased to get news of her.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-49

Madame Superior General

It appears that you are waiting for my visitations in order to arrange yours. I urge you to yield to the wish expressed in our convents, that you go to see and bless your children without putting it off too long. Next week in fact, you could go to the house at Brussels, then to those of Alost and Mouscron. If you prefer to make two journeys, you could break your journey at Ghent, and we will consult each other on many points before you go to Mouscron.

I am continuing to maintain my position of paternal neutrality and peaceful supervision in the matter of the premises of the Josephites. It would be a good thing to find out prudently from the owner of the property occupied by our Ladies at Brussels, whether he is disposed to continue the long lease with us, at the expiration of the present lease, and on the same conditions. We can at the same time examine whether we could reasonably count on the enlargement of the property by acquiring land and buildings in the immediate vicinity of one or other of the three sides. The premises, such as they are, are not large enough to become our property.

Please read the enclosed letter and talk about it only with Mme Helene.

I have made a list of the things we will have to deal with, when we meet. Please make one also. That is the way to do much business in a short time.

May the memory of what the Saints have done be a powerful spur for urging us forward along the way that leads us to the abode of unadulterated happiness, enjoyed by those brave and faithful servants.

Yesterday, in our convent at Melle, one of our Josephites, Mr. Ghislain, died. His death was very edifying. It was that of a pious, fervent religious. He died of a chest complaint.

I ask you to recommend him to the prayers of your community and also to remember him before our good God.

I am always very affectionately

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th October 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

7-50

Madame Superior General

You are right in considering the visitation of your convents to be one of the most important functions of your office. I thank our good God for making you understand that point. For my part, I have this morning already given you a paternal blessing in spirit, and begun a course of prayers that I will go on with during the whole of the time you give to the visitations.

I am adopting your plan of beginning with Malines and Brussels, as you suggest to me. I ask you that you modify the plan and only make the one visit to Alost in the following week. You would first of all come to Ghent on Monday the 15th or the following day, if you cannot get away on the Monday. We should examine the plans of your architect before you go to Alost. I am permitting myself to urge you to take Mme Clothilde as your companion on this visit. You would give such real pleasure to her mamma, Mme Van Wymelbeke, who would have herself brought to my house to embrace her dear Clothilde. From Alost, I am of the opinion that you should go back to Malines on Friday or Saturday the 20th of this month. You would call at the Mother House the following week. On Monday the 29th, you would go direct to Mouscron accompanied by Mme Hélène. There are peremptory reasons in favor of this plan of getting your Vicar to accompany you. It is preferable for me to set them before you in person during your stay with me, prior to going to St. Joseph's.

I hope you will approve of the plan, as I have modified it, and will let me know before the 15th. You will, my very dear daughter, oblige,

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd November 1858

Please say to all your dear children in the convents that you actually visit, the things that are most capable of inspiring in them a true confidence in God, and obtain for them an enlightened zeal for working for the good of the souls confided to them, when the time of trial has passed.

L.S.J.M.J

7-51.

Madame Superior General

The work you submitted to me has my full approval. I have not changed one iota of it. I am sending it back to you herewith.

I have read and re-read with sentiments of sweet consolation the generous instruction you set out with religious simplicity, without ever failing in what is required by the dignity with which you are invested. You have drawn from the true source of charity, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, what you prescribe for your dear sisters. You will be understood, good Mother. I know your children well enough, to give you the assurance that your instruction will find an echo in their hearts; and the circular will be welcomed with a pious sympathy.

May God be blessed for inspiring you with these wise measures! May the perfume of religious perfection they contain spread far and wide, for the honor of your Institute and the glory of Jesus the Spouse of Virgins!

Such are the prayers addressed to the Lord on this subject, through the mediation of Mary and Joseph by

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th February 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

7-52

In reply to your letter of the end of last month, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, I willingly unite with you in giving thanks to the author of all good for the favors he has deigned to bestow on you, and especially for calling you to the religious life, giving you talents suitable for forming disciples of our good Savior Jesus Christ, inspiring you with zeal for the salvation of souls, and above all making you understand the holy mysteries of the love of the Sacred Heart of the Son of God.

Most certainly, very dear child, Jesus must have the first place in your love: he is your way, your light, your life; he is your Savior; he is the Spouse of your soul! Mary, his most holy Mother, comes next. The generous son of God deigned to confide us to Mary and to allow us to look upon her as our Mother. Our confidence, our affection for Mary must not diminish that which we bear our adorable Savior, but help us to increase it in our hearts.

St. Joseph, the worthy Spouse of Mary, that foster Father of the divine Child, that zealous servant of God, whom a special arrangement of Providence has given us as a special Patron together with the Mother of Jesus, also has rights to our most filial devotion.

Your holy guardian Angel, your holy Patrons in Baptism and in religion, as well as the holy Angels of your pupils and their Patrons, are all interested like you, in the success of the works with which you are charged, the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, must have their place in your devotions, as they have in the hierarchical order established by God.

I note with true consolation, that you understand the spirit, the means, the aim of your Institute. May the Lord deign, in his goodness, to develop these precious dispositions of which he is the author. I earnestly ask his infinite mercy for that.

For your consolation, I will also tell you that you are known to me, and that since your childhood, I have been able to follow the movements of grace, the development of your faculties of mind and heart. I have been able, without any danger to neglect you, apparently for reasons you have had the grace to appreciate.

May our good God be blessed for the mercies he has shown us. Let us try to respond to his designs, let us confidently use the means that his generosity deigns to confide to us and count on his paternal providence.

You will, take great care, Reverend Mother, of the health of all your children. Remember what I have said in previous years about the fast. As a general rule, do not allow the class mistresses to fast. In case of doubt, you will ask for a dispensation. I am of the opinion that you should not fast, but I permit you to use the discipline twice a week during Lent, if no reason for refraining from doing so intervenes, and counsels you to modify that concession.

Receive, my very dear Child, the blessing of

Your affectionately devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th of the month of St. Joseph 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

7-53

Madame Superior General

By reminding me of edifying memories and setting before my eyes in all simplicity, pictures of harmony that the grace of the Lord can alone produce, your letter made a lively and salutary impression on me. Be a thousand times blessed, O my God! You are the author of all this good. To you alone be the glory! Such were the sentiments that came bursting from my heart! I experienced sweet consolation in Jesus Christ. And now also to express what I am feeling, I will say like you: May these sentiments inspired by grace return to their source and have a good outcome: the glory of God.

To crown so many good things worthily and to grant to all your dear children a favor that responds to their pious desires, you will do well to allow them to go to Communion at the closing of the month of St. Joseph.

I approve of the arrangements you have made about the movement of a few subjects. When communications about projects of this kind remain unanswered by me, you may conclude that I have no objections to make to these projects.

I will willingly do what you suggest to me in favor of the sister of your novice Antoinette. It is not possible for me at this moment to undertake engagements for the profession of your three novices. Will Mme Clothilde kindly remind me of this matter a little later.

A lay postulant whom I like very much is presenting herself. She is a farm girl whose parents are alive and who will later have more than you ask for as a dowry; she is endowed with a physique that is very suitable in every respect; she is highly commendable as regards mind and heart. Your postulant Rosalie Egh (illegible) knows her. Please instruct that postulant to give you the information you desire. As for me, I urge you to accept this young person. I find she has excellent qualities. She will come to my house and get your reply a fortnight today.

Please give my kind regards to your dear councilors, very dear Child; I give them as well as your my paternal blessing.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th of the month of St. Joseph 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

7-54

Madame Superior General

In principle, I want all our establishments to be supported by a school for the poor. The children of that class draw down the blessings of the Lord on us and the other pupils. So I want you, without doing anything imprudent, to be able to acquire premises suitable for use as a free class at the convent of the Holy Angels. I say without doing anything imprudent: it is certain that the circumstances are far from reassuring; it is necessary to make sure that you will pay only for the value of the house; you must ascertain whether the cost of acquiring the property will not be high; whether at the time for payment, we will not have to fear losing 20% in order to realize the bonds, etc., etc. Kindly weigh up these considerations, and pray. Address yourself to St. Joseph to get light that will allow you to act with complete awareness. I will comment the matter with all the consequences also to our Holy Patron.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th of the month of St. Joseph 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

7-55

Madame Superior

Yesterday I examined on the spot the plan for the chapel to be built at Schaerbeek. I no longer have any objections to it. I give it my support. The inadequacy of the premises is only too obvious.

Your packet of papers was delivered to me on Monday by my niece. I will deal with the papers when my eyes allow me to do so.

I am sending back to you the receipt for six Belgian shares together with the coupons. Everything is in order.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of Mary's month 1859

I have urged Mme Clementine to give up the homeopathic doctor without being curt about it, and not employ him anymore for anybody. I thought I noticed conduct very like quackery, and I had also found it elsewhere than in the case of our Ladies. I cannot enter into the details.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-56

Madame Superior General

Your brothers in Jesus Christ gave an enthusiastic welcome to your proposal about the address and the gift. The matter is underway and the Rev. Father Superior General, accompanied by one of his religious, will have the pleasure of offering it to his Ex. the Nuncio.

It will perhaps be prudent not to allow your document to have any signatures from the pupils. Some parents might not be pleased. The headmistress of each convent might perhaps sign for herself and the pupils, giving the number of them.

My ailments are diminishing. I hope to be able to officiate at the cathedral on the feast of St. Joseph.

The Sisters of St. Joseph are delighted with your proposal. They are happy to conform with it.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th March 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

7-57

Madame Superior General

Here is a fair copy of the address of our dear sisters. It will be sent to the convent of the Ladies at Brussels, where the Rev. Father Superior General of the Josephites will go and get it when he goes to His Ex. the Nuncio; unless you prefer another way of getting it to the Nuncio with your address. I have told our sisters that if they do not have 1000 frs in paper money, we will send that sum to Brussels; I say we, and I mean you and I. These sisters gladly offer this gift to the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Always entirely yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

I think that the address of the sisters will be at Brussels on Sunday.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-58

Madame Superior General

If you are pleased, you my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and Mme Marcelline, with your short stay at my place, I can tell you in all truth that I was happy to talk to you and to have had the opportunity of settling a few matters that were not unimportant.

Animated by your example and appeal, the Josephites immediately set to work, and their address and gift have been in the hands of His Ex. the Nuncio for a week. There were most cordially received. Our sisters of St. Joseph sent their address and a thousand frs last Saturday or Sunday to your Ladies at Brussels. I hope you took care to send your dispatch and that of our sisters immediately after receiving the latter. If that is so, I think that the whole is already on the way to the addressee, from what His Ex. said to our Gentlemen the Josephites.

I wish you a happy conclusion of the month of our Holy Patron. We certainly have many reasons to give thanks to the Lord and our dear and august Protectors Joseph and his Holy Spouse our Mother. Let us be faithful to this sweet duty of gratitude.

You know the sentiments of

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th March 1860

L.S.J.M.J

7-58

Madame Superior General

I am very late writing to you! Three of your letters are unanswered and yet all of them are certainly very well worth answering. The month of our Patron especially required me to share with you on so many accounts the sentiments aroused in me by the many favors we received during that month. Various reasons forced me to put off until this moment, giving you news of myself and talking to you about the goodness of God towards us. The month of St. Joseph that has just ended has been marked by events that will leave traces in the Institute. I have been more than once deeply touched by the sentiments of sincere piety that my spiritual children, their pupils, and even persons who have hardly any connection with me other than business ones, have manifested in honor of the foster Father of our divine Savior. These proofs of that very generous charity of which I myself have been the object have made an impression on me that will never be effaced from my heart. How should I express the totally religious joy that we experienced from the act of which the Vicar of Jesus Christ was the object on your part, and that of the Josephites and the Sisters of St. Joseph. May God be a thousand times blessed for so many blessings! It is the Lord who is their source; it is to him that we owe them. Thanks be eternally given to him for them!

Tomorrow, you will have the pleasure of a visit from His Eminence, and your house will gather precious fruits from that step on the part of the venerable Prelate. It is another favor to add to those our good God is so generously granting us. It is not necessary for me to remind you of the duties of gratitude, your heart tells you enough about that, and you are happy to acquit yourselves of that sacred debt.

My health is restored; my eye is better, and I dare to hope that I will have the pleasure of going to pay my respects to his Eminence, in the good weather. Meanwhile be so kind as to convey my sentiments to the Archbishop and his worthy Vicar, Fr. Lauwers.

You will take care, Madame Superior, to inform your dear sisters of all that may be useful to them in this letter.

You know how devoted I am to you in Our Lord Jesus Christ. Remind your dear children of that, who are also mine in our mutual Father and Master, our good Jesus.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, Easter Day, 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

7-60

Madame Superior General

So here we are in the lovely month of Mary! Let us piously rejoice at the sight of the testimonies of veneration and love addressed from everywhere to the Mother of God. Let us also

count with confidence on the new blessings the Church Militant will gather from the homage that rises towards the Queen of Heaven and earth.

I have united my prayers with yours, my very dear daughter, to draw down light on you so that you and your Council come to know the intentions of divine Providence in the matter of the premises for the Holy Angels. I do not see any serious reason against the acquisition. Nevertheless, I would be pleased to know your resources. What shares your count on using, what sums you can borrow and at what rates, and what are the terms you will find.

The good news about health always does me great good, and you give me pleasure by informing me that you are taking the measures experience had taught you with the aim of strengthening the rather weak subjects. I will however make an admission to you: it is that it seems to me I was exaggerating a little the sadness the deaths of young subjects scarcely prepared for the fight caused me. I did not sufficiently see in them the designs of the good God we have in Heaven. There is no doubt but that more than one of our children, admitted though weak in health, have owed their salvation to the holy state we obtained for them. Furthermore, is it not also true that several of them, after making their convents fragrant with their innocence and leaving their sisters the sweet lessons of their examples, have paid with interest for the services rendered to them? However, Reverend and very dear Mother, let us go on taking care of the children God deigns to confide to us. Bodies and souls are worthy of our solicitude. Let us love them in Jesus Christ, and we will have the consolation of seeing them advance along the way to heaven, leading their pupils there, according to their individual abilities.

I am always entirely yours in Our Lord,

C. G. Van Crombrugghe
Your spiritual Father

Ghent, 5th of Mary's month 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

7-61

Madame Superior General

I am converted. I did not know Mr. Labis. Confide to him your Rules and Constitutions, but as an exception and to him alone, the delicacy of his sentiments being known to you.

There are however some points I thought I had to modify. If a copy is being made, let them make the modifications I have indicated. The abridged version will perhaps do; it is, moreover, is it not the abridged version that is approved? I rely on your prudence. My reply to Mr. Labis is to that effect.

Are you not afraid that giving a Lady the charge of making a copy is loading her with a task that is too tiring?

I think I learned that it sometimes happens that at the Ladies of Mary, the pupils send letters to their parents, even through the mediation of mistresses or superiors, and these letters bear traces of reprehensible negligences.

I give you my blessing, very dear daughter, and I am always most cordially devoted to you in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th June 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

7-62

Madame Superior General

I wish to express the satisfaction I felt on confiding my god-daughter to you, and seeing the charity which you, very reverend Lady, and your dear sisters, welcomed her. My beloved niece will become worthy of your care and the affection of her future sisters. I dare to guarantee that.

Her departure gave rise to tears and keenly felt regrets. That is conceivable. But they ended by approving of the step we have taken. Clara is the only one who showed herself small-minded. She gave the most obvious proof that she needs to go to Coloma to be formed before thinking of being of any use in her father's house. Instead of busying herself with her brothers and sisters, and

consoling them, she left the house, thinking only of herself and of seeking amusements without any concern for the others.

The daddy is reasonable and a submissive Christian. I will take Clara to Coloma on Sunday. Please inform Maria. I like to think that the postulant will behave in the way required by the presence of her father. Please tell her that I am praying with all my heart for her to our good Master and Savior Jesus Christ from whom she is receiving so many marks of affection.

I repeat with pleasure, Madame Superior, what I said about the approval I have given to the measures you have taken and the projects you have in mind. I bless you all cordially.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th September 1860 (Postage seal)

L.S.J.M.J.

7-63

Madame Superior General

I thank you for the details you have just given me. Your letter enables me to enter into your expeditions in the most agreeable way. It is a little model of amiable terseness. You reminded me a short while ago of the celebrated expressions of Caesar: Veni, vidi, vici. At the moment you tell me how you came, what you saw, and how you conquered. I can see the hand of the Lord in what you did at Mouscron. Your authority will have acquired new strength. Inferiors will gather precious fruits from it; be sure of that.

I thank our good God for the triumph his grace has obtained in Mlle Elise and congratulate that young person. Each day I commend our four postulants to the Lord through the mediation of the most Blessed Virgin Mary.

Yes, you may use the privilege you spoke to me about. It will be useful to write down this point and others, so as to retain the practice of them and avoid the effects of laxity or fickleness of character.

I commended you with zeal during the week preceding the feast on which you renewed the holy commitments that bind you and all your dear sisters to your divine Spouse. You know my feelings well enough, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, to believe that I often, very often, occupy myself with my spiritual children when I am in the presence of our good God. It is my duty, but a sweet one that is consoling to fulfill. You understand that perfectly, I know. Experience has taught us that we must constantly help each other by prayer, and that at certain periods we must do so with a redoubling of fervor. After ten, twenty and more years sometimes in the service of the Lord, one realizes that we are still children of Adam, and have not become sinless. The enemy persists in stirring up secret relations in our hearts; he knows the way that can introduce him into them. We must always be on our guard and beseech God himself to watch over us and ours; even to fight with us.

Receive, my child in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your ever devoted Father in God

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th November 1860

The Josephites and the Sisters of St. Joseph have obtained a reply to their address in the form of a brief from the Holy Father. Would you have been forgotten?

L.S.J.M.J.

7-64

Madame Superior General

The reports you have just made to me have been a subject of consolation for me, and I have given thanks to the Lord, the author of the good of which we have the happiness of being the instruments. So you can rejoice with me likewise, that is in accordance with the principles.

I have prayed to St. John whose feast we are celebrating today, to ask the good Jesus, whose beloved disciple he is in a special way, for the two virtues that made him worthy of that preference, charity and chastity, for myself and for my spiritual children. These virtues are so necessary for us to enable us to fulfill the designs of God on us, and to render to childhood and

youth the services we are called upon to render to them. The sweet peace and the enlightened zeal will be given to us at the same time. They are the usual companions of the two virtues I have just mentioned.

I thank you, my dear daughter, and I thank your good Ladies and Sisters for the wishes you offer me for the new year. I am also touched by your care to recommend me to take precautions, in view of the harshness of the season. You remind me that one day, a long time ago already, feelings of compassion were expressed for the young Lady novices of the Ladies of Mary, whose hands had been seen chapped and bleeding from chilblains that those young Ladies obtained while making the beds during the severe frosts. The Rev. Mother of the Novices could perhaps look into the matter.

Receive for yourself, Rev. Lady Superior General, and your dear Sisters, novices and postulants, the blessing given to you with confidence in Jesus Christ by him who knows him to be

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th December 1860

Please allow my dear god-daughter, her sister and my cousin Victorine to find here a few words of seasonal greeting. You will be my interpreter, please.

I have just received a letter from Mme Maria and another from Mme Julie. I beg you once more, be my interpreter to these two dear children. I will pray especially for them, but they must dispense me of writing to them for the moment. My good sister Lidvina asks me to offer her seasonal greetings to the Superior General, Mme Clothilde, my nieces and Mme Julie. She says she will comply with your recommendations.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-65

Madame Superior General

You guessed my intention regarding the parcel ("l'envoi" could also mean the envoy: translator's note) I was asking for on behalf of our Sisters at Ostend. I can say as much for the business at Mouscron. This way of acting on the part of a former Superior reminded me of ideas that have often seemed to be of the kind to be transmitted to you, and to provide you with material for making recommendations to the Superiors. It is of major importance to get the Ladies called upon to govern, to understand how happy they are to be in a position to make the yoke of their inferiors lighter by treating them with sweetness, charity and Christian and religious politeness; and also to show them what a misfortune it would be if, far from lightening the burden of duty, they were also to add to it as well the weight of their own imperfections: changeability of mood, defects of character, prejudices due to education, private tastes, natural inclinations.

May the divine Spouse preserve our children from the trials the dangers which you feel. May the Mothers of our convents, guided by grace, make the Superiority they have over their inferiors felt only through their care to foresee needs, relieve pains and accustom their sisters to occupy themselves only with religious restraint.

I very much approve of the threefold project your heart is cherishing in favor of the family the Lord has confided to your maternal solicitude. If it pleases God, I will contribute towards hastening its execution as far as possible. At the moment, I recommend your projects in my prayers and at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. A house suitable for St. Joseph, a house in a foreign country, the approval by the Holy See of your Institute, of your Constitutions and of your Rules, certainly! Those are three things worthy of your faith, of your confidence and your active charity.

Allow me to recall to your attention once more the measures of prudence in regard to practices of penance and Lenten prescriptions about fasting and abstinence. There are many subjects with weak constitutions. One must be temperate about allowing those in this category to make attempts. Mme Kostka could confirm my assertion. Age and a wise diet will give them strength that will be employed in the service of our good Master Jesus Christ. Let us patiently await the effects of these two powerful remedies. The Lord will approve of our precautions.

Receive, for yourself, Madame Superior, and for all your dear Sisters, the blessing of

Your most devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th February, 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-66

Madame Superior General

The receiving of a Brief that the august Pontiff, our most Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, has just addressed to you, is very certainly an event worthy of being celebrated with exercises of piety and expressions of holy joy. In the midst of the anguish with which the heart of the common Father of the faithful is distressed, your good wishes and very modest offering have been noticed! What do I say? They have touched the great soul of the most generous and most venerable mortal found on earth! He deigned to tell you that he begs Almighty God, with the most ardent of his prayers, to keep you all in his peace, and to lavish upon you the abundance of his heavenly gifts! As a pledge of these blessings, the most Holy Father send you, as well as your pupils, the apostolic blessing.

I am of your opinion, Madame Superior, it is to your good Patron St. Joseph, that you owe the signal honor as well as the prayers and the blessings that your Institute as well as each of its members and each of your pupils have just received.

When I have the pleasure of seeing you, I will explain to you the form to be given to the portfolio destined to preserve the precious original which is worthy of having a distinguished place in the archives of your Institute.

When sending a copy of this important document, forbid its being made public, and even spoken of in the newspapers.

Let us go on imploring the help of St. Joseph. Still other favors will be granted before the end of this month that is consecrated to our good Patron.

May the Lord deign to go on giving you his blessings, Madame Superior, and may your pupils become children devoted to our Holy Mother the Church.

I am always in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th of St. Joseph's month 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-67

Madame Superior General

In reply to your letter of yesterday, I will tell you that several years ago, I decided that it is before admission to first vows, that our sisters are to be examined by the Bishop or his delegate. I will tell you the reasons for this when we see each other, and look into other points.

Please tell Louise that I am very pleased with her letter, and that I thank her for it and at the moment I have to be very careful with my eye. You will be my interpreter as you were for Gabrielle.

I do not know whether you understood which of your Ladies I was alluding to yesterday, when I was talking about a traveling companion for your visitations. It is a question of a Lady we talked about for filling an important post during the holidays. I cannot remember her name. I told you we should talk about it but that will not be. We will very probably not see each other before you go on your journey.

Receive the expression of my sentiments of true devotedness, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd April 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-68

Madame Superior General

I thank our good God for the satisfaction he has deigned to grant you by allowing you to give me good news of our convent at Alost.

Your itinerary and plans do not offer anything I cannot agree to. As for the traveling companion to Mouscron, I persist in thinking it is not appropriate to choose a Superior for that

purpose. It will be more useful for you to give me a day on your way to Mouscron rather than on your return. I myself will go to Malines, after that return. The matters to be dealt with you alone, require at least a day. I have many notes and so have you. You will take care to provide yourself with them and I myself will add more to what I already have.

I am very pleased to know that those who were unwell are better. Allow me to repeat that it is very necessary that the correspondence of the pupils is carefully looked over, and that no negligently written or badly constructed letter is to be sent to the post. The sending of letters by roundabout ways must be forbidden and this prohibition enforced.

In my turn, I offer you, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and all our children, my very best wishes on the occasion of the great solemnity tomorrow. May Our Lord Jesus Christ deign to send us the Holy Spirit, who will make your duties known to you, and grant you the strength to fulfill them faithfully, and fill your hearts with those generous and at the same time sweet sentiments that grace alone can give and of which your vocation has continual need. That is what I cordially wish you.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th of Mary's month 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-69

Madame Superior General

You know, from long experience, what sentiments are in my heart at the departure of boarders whose varied behavior and quality have merited and obtained for them the esteem and affection of their Superiors. So, you can understand what is in the heart of your Father, for the two boarders who left you nearly a fortnight ago. It is Jesus who is the true center of our mutual affection. It is towards Jesus that the resolute sentiments of our souls converge, is that no so, dear friends of God? We would never allow it to be otherwise.

I am intending to go to Mouscron on Thursday. Commend this visit to our holy Patrons, please.

As I find it impossible to answer all the letters I received for my patronal feast day, I beg you to bet he interpreter of my sentiments to my dear nieces Louise, Gabrielle and Julienne. You know my feelings towards these good children; no one could interpret or explain them better than you.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, our Holy Guardian Angels and St. Joseph deign to watch over us and our children, so that the school year may end in the midst of blessings from on high, and good new pupils may come to put themselves under your direction for the good of souls and the glory of God, at the resumption of classes.

Such are the good wishes coming from the depths of the heart of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th July 1861

I intend to write to you on my return from Mouscron. I will add a brief letter for Mme Kostka and one for Victorine my niece and also for Mademoiselle Victorine, in whose debt I have been for a long time.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-70

Madame Superior General

You will have understood that it is always my wish that you prepare yourself by the reading and study of the Constitutions and Rules for conferences to be had on these subjects with me at Ghent. At Malines, the time the religious claim will always prevent these preparatory conferences. I have just received a letter from Mme Marine. I see from it that this Lady is against the meeting of the Chapter for very good reasons, if they are in conformity with the prescriptions of the Constitutions on the members who have the right to attend the Chapter. According to Mme Marine, there would be only 3 members who are not councilors, who would be at the Chapter. I cannot verify it, not having a copy of your Constitutions. These reasons would have me nominate

another vicar next September, and still more, of these is the means to divide the offices as much as possible. That would make the Chapter possible next year.

When you have examined the Constitutions, your notes and mine and are ready to discuss the matters with me, you will be kind enough to inform me and let me know when you can come to Ghent. I will then inform you of the day I can receive you. Meanwhile, we will pray our good God to help us and to indicate your traveling companion to you.

It seems to me that Clara is getting rid of her childish vanity a little. I pray God to give her an active faith, enlightened charity and Christian humility.

I am always, my dear and very Reverend Mother, in our good Master Jesus Christ

Your devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th July 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-71

Madame Superior

Now you are the end of your fatigue at the conclusion of your school year. I congratulate you! You are not going to have a complete rest but to pass on to other occupations, the variety of which will result in obtaining for you the effect of a salutary rest for mind and body.

I have a few questions to put to you. What prescriptions did you stipulate two years ago concerning the second novitiate that you allowed to be made? I would be pleased to have all you wrote, prescribed, asked for, imposed or permitted in that matter. What was the result of your experiment?

What are the conditions you ask for in subjects for them to be suitable for the office of Superior? What are those required to be inscribed on the list which is being made at present of the subjects here in question? (In the margin) These two requests are for the Sisters of St. Joseph

Have you prescribed that in each convent, they must have a notebook into which all circulars must be copied?

Is there a general program in existence including all that is to be seen; in each class and division of class, annually, quarterly?

Will it not be a good thing to revise the notebooks dealing with customs? Are you prudent enough about the kind of dictionary the pupils use? I think we can only allow the small dictionaries we are sure of, like pocket dictionaries, etc.

Are you seriously thinking of giving the Superior of the convent an office? Such an office is considered indispensable. I am also of that opinion.

I am not asking for a reply to all these questions immediately. That would be thoughtless.

Try, my dear Lady, to give all possible rest to body and mind to yourself first of all, then also to your dear sisters.

Pardon me my bad writing. I have been writing in too much of a hurry; also my eye had added to my difficulty ... to the fact that I cannot write well. Please forgive me. I am always, in spite of my defects and faults

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ our good Master

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th August 1861

I do not know if my nieces are at Ghent.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-72

Madame Superior General

Unforeseen hindrances have intervened to put an obstacle in the way of my plan to come and attend a few meetings of your Chapter. I might be able to come to Malines on Friday. However, in view of the uncertainty, I think it my duty to call to the attention of all the Superiors to the great need for stimulating the studies of the Ladies throughout the Institute. To convince you of this urgent need, I beg you to read, at one of your meetings, the article on that subject given in the

Journal de Bruxelles, No. 259, on the 16th of this month. The consequences will strike your minds and urge you to make yourselves capable of withstanding the struggle impiety is preparing for you.

The preceding was written yesterday. Today, I am in a position to tell you that I will not be coming to Malines this week. On Monday, perhaps, I will be able to make that trip.

I still insist very strongly on the subject of the note I sent on Sunday.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th September 1861

Please tell the Ladies of the Chapter that I am commending their work to the Lord, through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-73

Madame Superior General

I have just learned of the precious end in the eyes of faith of our pious child, Madame Felicie. God be praised! Now there is one more member of our religious family gathered round the heavenly Father, the divine Spouse, our Mother Mary and our Holy Patrons!

A thought struck me vividly during the divine office this morning. It seems to me it would please St. Joseph if I too offered a stone to him at Alost; I will give twelve thousand francs. If that can hasten the execution of our pious project, it will be a great consolation for me. Am I not obliged to our dear deceased one for this good suggestion? It is perhaps already an effect of the prayers she has offered for her spiritual Father on presenting herself before her good and tender Spouse, Jesus Christ.

I returned from Coloma, that abode so dear to the Queen of Angels, edified and full of hope that the Lord will find these instruments suitable for doing his work, making known, loved and glorified, for centuries, that Master for whom everything exists.

It seems to me I have done a thing pleasing to God, by holding firmly in my opinion about Mme Flavie. Believe me, she is a little treasure of humility, fairness and devotion to her duty. In this Lady, there are also recommendations for higher studies. It was wrong to use so many means, in the employment at copying as the most ordinary subject would do.

I have just seen my four nieces, your pupils; they are returning joyfully to their convent at Coloma.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th September 1861

I think it is useless to mention to you that the offering of which I spoke above, must not be known to my family.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-74

Madame Superior General

I have just come back from my last trip for this year. I have to thank the Lord very much for the blessings he is deigning to shower down on our establishments, and on the efforts of my children in Jesus Christ.

Accept especially, my very dear daughter, my thanks for the prayers you have offered for me, and those you have obtained for me with a zeal that I cannot praise sufficiently, because I know its source and praiseworthy aim. Mme. Marine has, I think, informed you of my visit and that of Mr. Prevot. I rely on your zeal and that of your architect Ladies, for the execution of our plans. As God has removed the obstacles, let us go forward.

I have indeed drawn to the attention of Mme Clémentine, the language and style, written and spoken, in the whole of our Institute. I have pointed out to her instances of carelessness, inaccurate expressions, words and parasite phrases frequently used by our Ladies. I am struck by hearing everyone repeat: you know ad nauseam and without rhyme or reason.

I was surprised to find nothing on this subject in your circular that was sent out following the Chapter. I am on the contrary very satisfied to see in it nothing about the question of

tablecloths and changes in the use of the words Ladies and Sisters, etc. I think I have insisted too little on upholding my opinion in my talk with you. I am sorry about that, being very far from yielding without going deeply into the matter. We must get information, as I told you, and only take a decision when we have full knowledge of the matter.

My health is good. I try to use it in the service of our good Master Jesus Christ, and the children he is deigning to confide to me. Take care, my dear daughter, to look after your health which needs a little rest after the fatigues of the holidays.

Receive the blessing of

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th October 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

7-75

Madame Superior General

It will be necessary to deal with certain points in the Constitutions and the means to be taken to direct the business in Rome. So be kind enough to take a few days off from your convent occupations and come and take counsel with me. I will be at your orders from the 26th to the 29th of this month. I think that, in order not to lose any time, you will have to arrive by the train that leaves at 7 hours in the morning and, if possible on the 26th. I would be obliged if you would let me know of your arrival two days beforehand. We will not make your stay known.

It is no use preparing the ceremonial.

Receive, my dear daughter, my blessing and believe in the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th November 1861

It will perhaps be useful to summon Mme Marine, while you are with me. There will also be some measures to be decided on for Alost.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-76

Madame Superior General

I have just remarked again that it would be unreasonable to require everybody to be of the same opinion about everything, and that there be differences of opinions for respectable reasons. I added that Mme St. was committing an act of indelicacy; then she did not share the opinions of the Superiors, by allowing herself that common and disrespectful expression: that is behaving with prejudice. Is it not in reality, declaring clearly that one does not act, or that one does not judge with or after reflection? Is it not even going so far as to deliver a type of certificate of incapacity to people towards whom she is obliged to nourish sentiments of religious esteem? It will be good to insist on this matter on every occasion.

These thoughts naturally remind me of your circular in which you explain the sentiments with which the Superiors of the Convents are to receive the subjects you send to them. I urge you, Madame, to recall these principles often and to require them to be conformed to in practice religiously.

I pray our good God always to be your counsel, your strength, your all; and you, certainly, in every circumstance, his very submissive Child to his holy will. You know my great and affectionate devotedness.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

7-77

Madame Superior General

A little unexpected event having upset my plan for a journey, I have not left the town all the week. So it will not be possible for me to let you know in advance which day I could receive you. It

will be better for us to put off our interview until the following week; I will come to Malines, please God, on the 19th or 20th.

I thank you for the care you have had to inform me of your visit, and to have chosen to relieve you and represent you in my presence, a subject so capable of expressing your sentiments in a cordial and religious style. I congratulate on these various advantages, your dear traveling companion, Mme Léonardine. But to God alone be all the glory.

In an audience I had the honor of getting with His Ex. the Nuncio, I was happy to learn that our Ladies of the convent of the Holy Angels are to have a visit from the eminent Prelate on the 8th and the Ladies of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, on the 15th; and that he would celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in their chapels, and distribute Holy Communion to the mistresses and their pupils on the respective dates.

Please offer to Mme Olympiade and to all our dear children at the convent of St. John the Baptist, my good wishes for the month of Mary. I give you, Madame Superior, and all the community, my blessing.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th of Mary's month 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

7-78

Madame Superior General

You have no need to make excuses for arriving unannounced. You must have seen that you caused me no embarrassment, that you were very welcome after explaining your reasons to me and that I was very pleased to have seen and heard you after the visitation you had just made.

You do well, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, to submit generously to the unpleasant events that may predict that first interview. However I see these things in a less painful way. We will try to avert the storms. Humble and confident prayer to our Holy Patrons, Mary especially and her blessed Spouse, our good St. Joseph. So let us hope for a future less laden with clouds; let us live as friends of the best of protectors, Jesus Christ, who loves us all so tenderly, and whose heart will shower into ours a few sparks of that divine fire that is capable of melting the hardest ice.

I approve of your plan for visits.

It is impossible for me, I think, to allow your extraordinary confessor to be from such or such an Order. It is the bishop who chooses and gives these confessors to Religious. It seems to me that one can manifest a wish, but nothing more.

Receive my blessing, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ and the assurance that I will pray for your pupils, your dear sisters and for you especially.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th November 1862

7-79

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

My niece Victorine has just delivered to me your letter of yesterday. I hasten to inform you that I have just received from Rome the function of Promoter of the association for communions for the needs of the Holy Father and the Church. All the members of this pious association gain a plenary indulgence on the day in each month when they receive communion for the purposes of the association. All of you, and all the members of my religious Institutes, your names and theirs being already enrolled in Rome, gain a plenary indulgence each month. That indulgence is applicable to the souls in purgatory.

Here is a short note about the association. You will send it back to me on the first available occasion. I do not have time to get it printed. The other documents that have been sent are in Latin and Italian.

You tell me, my dear daughter, that you have a lay sister who is going gently to heaven, and you do not let me know who that sister is. I confess that my heart which is that of a father for all my

children, is wounded by that reticence. Be so kind as to tell me which sister you wrote those words about.

Your rather displeased Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1863

L.S.J.M.J.
(Letter dictated)

7-80

Madame Superior General

I like to think that the indispositions of your lay sisters are over and that they will all be restored to health by the end of the week. Be so kind as to tell them I am asking that of our good God, so that they can resume their usual occupations with their customary zeal.

Madame Hélène has informed me of the remarks she has submitted to you about the means you had indicated to her for obtaining funds, etc. I have not answered her because I could not see much use in doing so.

I am sending you my reply to Madame Constance: please read it and forward it to that Lady when you write to her.

I have not received anything from Alost. I think the V.Z business is still in status quo. Be content with recommending it to our good St. Joseph.

My niece Clara has come back from Malines delighted with the kindness of the Ladies of Mary, the happiness of her sisters and the attentions full of delicacy of her cousin Terese.

(In the Founder's hand)

I think that in the month of Mary I will bring the affairs of Flore to a close. Meanwhile I beg you to inform me of the amount that has been spent on her behalf while she is at Coloma. I want to spare her parents the expense. That is what I had resolved from the beginning. I am also of the opinion that she should go into the higher class before ending her preparatory studies and be left uncertain about the Institute for which I am destining her. It is a powerful way of perfecting her detachment and devotion to the adorable will of God. The subject, it seems to me, can bear these trials and become strong in service and virtue.

I give you my blessing, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and commend you very specially to our divine Master. You know the devotedness of

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th April 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

7-81

Madame Superior General

While awaiting the visit of Mr. Scheldam, that you announced to me, I will say a few words to you about the Mouscron project. That project worries me; it makes me anxious. In it you were alone, against three of four, if we count Mme Emérence. It was hard to resist so many influences. However, my conscience obliges me to tell you positively, that as long as Mme Hélène has not found on good terms, the funds needed to build the projected premises, I will not permit a plan to be finally adopted, nor any work commenced relating to the convent to be built. We still have the use of the present premises. The same advantage does not exist at Alost, where the urgency is more manifest if we want to have a convent of our order in that town.

To forestall every occasion that might be in opposition to any decision taken by you, I ask you to remember, and even to make known to your councilors, the condition sine qua non, of my support of the project of St. John the Baptist. I have already set that condition before you in my letter of last Sunday.

I am uniting with you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ in asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen us in the midst of the dangers threatening us from so many sides at the same time. I also give you my blessing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th of Mary's month 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

7-82

Madame Superior General

Knowing your devotion to the Sacred Heart of our good Savior Jesus Christ, I think you would be grateful to me for making known to you a publication, about which a pious educated man has told me much good.

Mme Marine writes to me that Mr. Vandersmisson will not sell his premises. She adds reasons that are very appropriate for consoling us. This is what she writes to me in the letter. Is it not surprising that we were left in ignorance of these things? Some time ago we very nearly acquired that property which would not have suited us. This is a lesson.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th January 1863

How is Flore? I go on recommending her to your kindness. On what matter did she receive a letter from Mme Olympiade?

I think Mme Marie Louise is triumphing over her very dangerous enemy. Thanks be to God.

(on the reverse side, information about the publication spoken of in the letter: "The Messenger of the Sacred Heart")

L.S.J.M.J.

7-83

Madame Superior

Please be content with informing all your Superiors that each communion they receive, on the appointed day, every month, according to the intentions of the Association, they gain and also all their sisters who are enrolled, a plenary indulgence applicable to the souls in Purgatory.

I still persist in the fear that you have not eliminated sufficiently from the text of your Constitutions and Rules, the expressions that are capable of giving to the term Rules, a meaning different from the one we are attributing to it. In our minds, our Rules mean: our exercises, our customs, our practices, and the way to carry them out, fulfill them and observe them. We are not making any illusion to the term Rule of St. Benedict, for example, or of St. Francis, or St. Augustine.

I remember Sister Albertine perfectly. Tell her I am commending her especially to our good God every day, above all at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Since I am writing to you, I will remind you about the project for a recreation room for the pupils. I hope you will let me see the plan before finally accepting it.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th January 1863 Vigil of the Feast of St. Francis de Sales

L.S.J.M.J.

7-84

Madame Superior General

On going over the papers I brought from your place, I felt real pleasure at seeing in your hands the project of a society, (word "societe" could also mean a partnership. Translator's note) the existence of which I did not know, and which will be comparable to the one Mr. Bailleu the lawyer, is working out. On the other hand, I was rather pained not to find any of the proxies which however I need to assure myself whether these documents can be used in the name of the respective owners, when the society is founded.

Please, let me have one of these documents at once, if they are all of the same form. I must examine whether any other formula is to be required of the interested parties. I am sure I can tell you that the trip of yesterday did not tire me too much.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st July 1863

It would be good, when the opportunity arises, to ask Mouscron for the exact figure of the total of the property and personal taxes for the 4 years, 1860 to 1863 inclusive.

L.S.J.M.J.

7-85

Madame Superior General

As I must put an end to the business of Flore, I am asking her to write to me on Sunday. It is likely that our business of Alost will summon you to Ghent next week. We will conclude by word of mouth what is relative to the Institute to which that young person is to be destined.

Accept, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, my sincere thanks for the prayers you have offered to our good God for me. I have also prayed very specially for the persons who have had the charity to implore the help of the Lord for your spiritual Father. That is to tell you that you and your dear sisters have had a great share in what I asked for today, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in all my exercises of piety.

The state of my health is entirely satisfactory. I thank our good God for it and the good souls who contributed to this new favor.

I have been getting information from Mouscron. You will be pleased to hear it. We will at last be getting out of a painful and complicated situation.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, with my blessing, the assurance of my sincere and affectionate devotedness.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th July 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

7-86

(Letter dictated)

Madame Superior General

As our lawyers have not answered as soon as we were hoping, the questions we had submitted to them, we will perhaps find ourselves obliged to put off until the holidays the interview we had agreed on last month. I presume that you also, Madame, will be inevitably detained for a few weeks at your post at Coloma.

I would find it useful to know approximately the day on which you will be free; I would like to know also when your retreats are taking place.

I am sending you the letter of Madame Clementine; it seems to me that her remarks are sound and deserve all our attention. I would be very pleased to see the plan that the architect Mr. Croquison has made for our Ladies at Mouscron. I will have the time to deal with it in the course of this month.

(Written in the Founder's hand)

The letter of Flore is all I was expecting of that child. On due reflection, I think it is with us that she will do most good. Be so kind as to tell me your opinion, Madame. I do not want to force anything. I will inform her of the decision only when you have written me a note on this subject. If you allow me to offer her to you, let me know on what terms you will admit her.

Mr. Théophile will be asking you whether he may have something at your place on the day of the opening of the Congress. I think you will not refuse him this mark of attention. He will return to Melle on the same day. If it were possible for you to give me your answer before Sunday, all could be decided within four days.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th August 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

7-87

(Dictated letter)

Madame Superior General

On Tuesday I went to visit the building works that are being done in the convent at Alost. I hasten to tell you I felt very keen satisfaction on the detailed inspection of the work, the materials,

and the overall plans and those of each place in particular. It is with real pleasure that I repeat to you that our architect is fulfilling our expectations in every respect. The Superior General of the Josephites accompanied me on that visit and he recognized that the esteem I have for Mr. Soudan is well founded. This Superior has extensive knowledge of the value of building materials, and he proved to me that our architect is very well versed in this very important part as regards the expense and strength of the buildings.

Another point also caused me true satisfaction; it was seeing the polite, simple, religious tone with which the Superior treats all the workmen. The latter, in their turn, show the Madame Superior feelings of the greatest respect.

(In the Founder's hand)

The Rev. Fr. Dufour has just given me a very consoling report on the retreat he gave to your pupils. The dispositions of the children edified him, and the tone, the behavior, the order; like all that can be desired in a house dedicated to education, have obtained the approval of Father. I thank our good God for the blessings he is deigning to shower down in such profusion on your efforts and those of your dear sisters. May the effects of grace make themselves felt during the solemnities we are going to celebrate. The school year that is beginning would stand out among the year's richest in consolation for the mistresses. Fiat! Fiat!

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd October 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

7-88

(The following letter is addressed to Madame Clementine)

Rev. and dear Mother Superior

Responding last week to Mme Helene, who was expressing a keen desire to see commenced the work of construction of the Convent, I told her simply and in no roundabout way, that I understand as well as anyone the need to put Mouscron on the level of what the Institute demands of each of its houses. I added that my conviction was shared by the Madame Superior General and her council and that when the time ordained by Providence had come, we would hasten to give the authorization for making the necessary preparations; that, however, according to my conscientious conviction, we will not be allowed to go as far as that as long as the obstacles have not been removed.

You know, Madame Superior, these diverse obstacles. If you have learned everything is smoothed out, be so kind as to inform me as soon as possible. I ask for nothing better than to be in agreement with you and your Council, and to allow the work to be put in hand immediately.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th November 1863

I will be very pleased to receive the documents you are kind enough to offer me for the Sisters of St. Joseph.

(end is dictated)

The subject that our Mistresses have treated, a few compositions by the Ladies and my letter. Be so kind, my dear Mother Clémentine, as to send me these documents when you can. I will get my letter copied.

(Dictated Letter)

7-89

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

The compositions you sent me, gave me great pleasure. I congratulate you on the happy idea you have of occupying your beloved daughters in Jesus Christ with a topic so useful in all respects.

You may tell the authors of the documents you sent me that I am very satisfied with their work and cherish the hope that they will draw very useful lessons for their own conduct.
(In the Founder's hand)

Write as usual. I alone open what is addressed to me, and I alone read the letters. Any imprudence would do much harm. It is a good thing for that to be known.

All yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

2nd December 1863

(Letter Dictated)

7-90

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I think you will like the information I am in a position to give you, as well as the measures I will propose to you to take as a consequence.

First of all be really convinced that I am infinitely far from giving any credence to the absurd, slanderous intentions that were published at the time of the communal elections, and that my aim in writing to you is solely to urge you to examine whether the malice of the enemies of your holy state, would not uncover anything either in the customs of your Institute, or in the arrangements of the various premises of your buildings or your gardens, that may be capable of providing material for wicket interpretations.

Good people have applauded the measure taken a few years ago to close off the ground floor corridor with a door opposite the entrance. I regret that the measures to safeguard the properties were not continued upstairs. I can tell you that on this point you were criticized by the mamas and by the clergy. Your gardens also offer subjects for criticism, the soundness of which I am not in a position to verify.

I have learned, and I believe in the reality of the fact, that the enemies of Religion have at present, around the convents and the dwellings of people influential in what they call the Catholic Party, spies charged with providing all the information appropriate for making known what goes on in the cloisters, in the schools and in the Christian families. I limit myself to pointing out to you this zeal of the spirit of evil. You will draw from it the practical consequences that the love of good will not fail to suggest to you.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th December 1863

(Dictated except for signature and date)

7-91

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

As the information on which I had based the decision about acquiring the little farm, etc., is not correct, my decision is of no value. I therefore withdraw it and rely on you and your Council for the whole of this affair, etc.

Accept, Madame Superior, the assurance of my fatherly devotedness.

C. C. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th February 1864

(Letter Dictated)

7-92

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I am very touched by the good things you tell me in your letter of yesterday and by the good you wish me for the feast of our beloved Patron, which we are celebrating on this day. I hasten to express to you the satisfaction I feel at the sight of your charity and filial piety. Be convinced, my dear daughter, that I have tried today to fulfill my duties towards you and all my

spiritual children. I dare to hope that St. Joseph will go on giving us the proofs of his fatherly affection which he has deigned to lavish upon us for more than half a century.

My health has not made all the progress I had hope it would at the beginning of this month. For a few days, I have been deprived of the happiness of offering the Holy Sacrifice, and I will probably still be (deprived) until the solemnity of Easter. For the last two days however, I have been feeling noticeably better.

Ghent, Feast of St. Joseph 1864

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive my blessing, Madame Superior General, for you and all our dear children in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

L.S.J.M.J.

7-93

Madame Superior General

I am very touched by the kindness of his Em. We could never acquit ourselves of the debt of gratitude we have contracted if we did not have prayer, that very powerful means of making up for all we lack.

(Dictated)

These lines, Madame Superior, are not written today. They already date from some time ago. I wanted to pour out my heart and communicate to you some of the sentiments I feel for our great benefactor. My eyes, no more than my hand, did not allow me to continue my letter. So I am addressing you in an unfamiliar hand, to charge you with being to his Eminence, the interpreter of the sentiments you have known me to have for more than a quarter of a century, towards the eminent Prelate who has deigned to admit us into his diocese. No one better than you is capable of satisfying this sacred debt. You will be happy, I am sure, to take advantage of the presence of his Eminence the Cardinal, in order to fulfill my commission on the first communion day of your happy children.

Now a word about myself. The improvement I was feeling at the beginning of the month of our Holy Patron was not sustained. I have again been deprived of offering the Holy Sacrifice for eight days, but the improvement which is at present manifesting itself, makes me hope I will be able to say the Holy Mass on Sunday, Easter day.

Do not forget, I beg you, to offer my good wishes for the solemnity, to Monsignor Lauwers, and Mr. Molder, as well as your dear sisters.

(In the Founder's hand)

I am praying St. Joseph to obtain for Mlle Flore in a high degree, faith, hope and charity, with humility and meekness. I am also commending your other postulant.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th March 1864

(Letter Dictated)

7-94

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

His Eminence has honored me with a visit. You understand better than I can say it, all the happiness I experienced at this testimony of esteem and friendship on the part of this holy Prelate.

Mr. Soudan is working actively at the task you have entrusted to him. I think that before the end of 15 days, he will go to Malines.

Madame Superior, permit me to repeat the recommendation that I made to you regarding silence about the communication I have just made to you.

Ghent, 12th April 1864

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Dictated Letter)

7-95

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I have had a visit from the parish priest of Reckem. This old friend has been searching for many years for a family suitable for assuring the existence of his convent. As I was not well enough at the time of his visit, to deal with that matter, I offered to pass onto our Mr. Florent, the papers I am enclosing here. The proposition, being accepted, Mr. Florent sent me his opinion on these various writings. Thinking that the reading of these writings may be useful to you, I am addressing them to you, recommending you however to send them on to Fr. Barge as soon as possible. It was on the 14th of this month that he brought me this matter and it was on the 16th that Mr. Florent gave me his comments. Although Father told me he was not requiring the reply at once, it is advisable not to make him wait too long for it.

In reply to your letter of the 19th, I approve of your plan for the visits you propose to make. I hope that on your return from Mouscron, you will give me the pleasure of talking with me at Ghent for a few hours.

Mr. Soudan is intending to go to Malines on Saturday the 30th of this month, by the train that leaves here at 7 hours in the morning.

Be so kind as to take charge of answering, in my name, the letter of Mme Raphaëlle. I see with great satisfaction that our good God is blessing her efforts, as well as those of her dear sisters, and I hope that the month of Mary will bring fresh favors to an Institute dedicated to so good a heart as is the heart of the Mother of Jesus Christ.

I applaud the pious plan to celebrate the half-jubilee of the founding of the free school of that house, and to grant a few treats to that effect to the free pupils. Be so kind, Madame Superior, as to give Mme Honorine, the offering I am sending her for this charitable fete, and to thank her for the warm appeals she has addressed to me.

I beg you also to tell Mme Kostka that her letter pleased me very much and that I hope, when making her particular examination on the fault I wrote to her about, she will succeed in correcting herself in a short time to my great satisfaction and that of her good Superiors. I am making it a duty to help that dear god-daughter with my prayers.

You will indeed find in your maternal heart, a few words of encouragement for all our other children of our house of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Please tell them so on my behalf.

Mme Emilienne informed me of the death of her pious Sister Rosalie. The opinion I retained of the solid virtue of that person does not leave me any doubt about the great reward she is already enjoying in Heaven. Our Mme Emilienne is intending to follow her holy sister very closely.

I do not speak to you fairly often about my health, because its state frequently varies. Today I think I am better than I was two days ago.

Receive, Madame Superior, my good wishes for the month of Mary; I add my blessing for you and all your children in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, ? April 1864

(Dictated Letter)

7-96

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I willingly join you in making a novena to the Heart of Jesus for the intention you set before me.

With great satisfaction I see that our efforts at Alost are responding to your dearest wishes.

Here are a few remarks about your observations concerning the chapel in the plan for the house at Mouscron.

A chapel for a convent of young ladies must have a floor whether it is on the ground floor or upstairs. If the chapel is on the ground floor, you will lose all the upper floor, or the space between the ground floor and the upper one and the cost of the chapel remains very nearly the same as if you had a chapel only. This modification is therefore unacceptable.

The suggestion about making a type of chapel against the wall of the convent, on the casino side, would answer all the difficulties and be a very great help to the day school and the free classes in many circumstances.

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive, Madame Superior General, my blessing for you, for your reverend companions and for all the house of St. Joseph.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th of the month of Mary 1864

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-97

Madame Superior General

Please accept my humble and sincere thanks for the magnificent bouquets you sent me in your name and that of your dear sisters on my patronal feast. It is obviously the richest present I ever received. I hope to make good use of it for the glory of God and the good of the souls the heavenly Father deigns to entrust to my care.

Tell all your beloved sisters how touched I am by their pious generosity.

I took advantage of the presence of Mme Stanislaus at my place to call Mme Marine back last Saturday.

It is time to take measures to put things straight at Alost, and to make the changes in proprietorship that prudence requires. Be so good as to let me know which subjects you propose for replacing those who must be (replaced), for the peaceful preservation of the property. During the holidays, I will charge Mr. Florent with dealing with this affair.

I see that you are going to have many things to do and much fatigue at Malines for several weeks. I pray our good God to give all of you the strength necessary to bear in him and with him the burden that is awaiting you. I know too well your maternal solicitude to have to make you any recommendations on that subject.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd August 1864

(Dictated)

P.S. I have been sharing out my pictures. Before long you will receive a portfolio containing those I have destined for the Mother House of the Ladies of Mary. They are all religious subjects.

(Dictated Letter)

7-98

Madame Superior General

I have just seen in the historical and literary journal of Liege a circular from His Em. the Cardinal, to the Superiors of religious communities teaching in his archdiocese. This document is of great importance. I draw your attention and that of the Rev. Mistress General to it. I remember you mentioned it to me, but that had completely slipped my memory. Please let know what you think about the document which is dated the 15th of May last.

I am briefly answering here two criticisms that have to do with the enclosed letter.

1. The 1/2 brick is indispensable according the architect. The reasons he alleges seem peremptory to me.

2. The architect never buys the materials for the work he is directing. The contractor was claiming he would provide the cut stone at 80 fr per cubic meter. The architect called in a quarry master from the neighborhood of Tournai; the latter agreed in the presence of the architect to provide the contractor with all the cut stone at 50 fr per cubic meter. So there is a saving for the Ladies of 30 fr per cubic meter.

Ghent, 5th August 1864

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-99

Madame Superior General

Last Saturday, in the morning, piously and full of spiritual consolation, there died at the Convent of Blanckenberghe, the good and always so edifying Sister Julie our first Mother General.

You will, I am very sure, fulfill the obligations that gratitude requires of your duties towards that venerable former Superior.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th September 1864

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-100

Madame Superior General

I have sent your copy of the Brief you received from Rome to Mme Emerence, according to your wishes.

I am sorry I did not take advantage of that occasion to make known to that dear Superior that it is to Mlle Rosalie Verhouvstraete who was a novice of yours, that she is indebted for the two Dutch boarders, she has just received. It would be good for the daddy of these two girls to know I recommended his two children to the Superior of the Ladies of Mary at Schaerbeek. I will thank the good Mlle Rosalie in the name of Mme Emérence, for her beautiful devotedness.

We will, I hope, find means of pleasing the young ladies of the sodality at Alost, without doing harm to our boarding school. I admit we must act prudently.

I think like your, Madame Superior, that it would be appropriate for you to write to the Bishop of Bruges, to recommend your children and the whole Institute of the Ladies of Mary at Mouscron, to his kindness. His Lordship honored me with a visit and I took advantage of it to beg him to grant me the favor of continuing to direct the establishments I have founded in the diocese of Bruges. The good Prelate was not only content with subscribing to my request, he was kind enough to ask me to continue the good he believes I have done in his diocese.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th October 1864

You will be kind enough to remember that the 14th is the anniversary of my baptism.

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-101

Madame Superior General

The good state of health which reigns in your Institute, in general, is a favor for which we must give thanks to the Lord. As for dear Mme Justine, I think she must prepare herself to make the sacrifice, however painful it may be.

The reasons you set out in favor of the transformation of the lace making school, seem sound to me and I agree to it. I also subscribe with all my heart to the wishes you manifest to arouse all to nourish in our hearts a tender, lively love for the Lord Jesus Christ and to invoke his august name with great confidence, in the midst of the great needs of the Church and our own needs.

In my last letter, I spoke to you about the chaplain at Mouscron. I also said a word about certain debts I have with you, the amount of which I have forgotten. Please let me know when you have the opportunity, whether that letter reached you. On Sunday, my niece Louise will have the pleasure of coming to see you. On that occasion, Mme Clothilde will receive a little book I am telling her about in the enclosed letter.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd January 1865

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-102

Madame Superior General

I am sending you the list of some relics the authentications of which are missing and another some authentications for which we no longer have the relics. Please get information from your convents (the one at Alost excepted) to assure us as to whether there exists any of these authentications without relics or vice versa.

Here is a curious letter which does not, I imagine, require an answer from you. I have answered that I will inform you of the remarks the letter contains; but that the text was perhaps not long enough to give great importance to the assertions made by the author of the letter.

It will be a good thing to get all our policies with insurance societies examined in order to make the changes that the interests of each house requires, each time a policy reaches its deadline.
20th March

Your letter that I received yesterday furnished me with more than one subject of consolation. I give thanks for them to our good God, I thank St. Joseph and I congratulate you on the favors the Lord is showering on you and all your Institute. It is a source of inexpressible happiness to see that in all the convents piety towards St. Joseph is so alive and so truly general.

Last Friday, I had news from Mouscron, so I am informed that God is asking you for a fresh sacrifice. May his adorable will be accomplished.

I have no objections to make to sending Mme Angélique to Mouscron. But she must know she is going there without any power and only with the duty of doing the will of the superiors. Mme Olympiade (name added in the Founder's hand) has the longing to want to get involved in the direction of the building work. It will be necessary not to take her on in any way.

When the ceremonial is finished, I will be pleased to examine it. However, I will wait for that object and for sending Mme Angélique until you go on your journey to Mouscron, as you proposed to me.

(In the Founder's hand) I am in good health.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th March 1865

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-103

Madame Superior General

I thank you for the details you have just sent me and pray our good God to go on giving his blessing to the houses you have just visited.

It seems to me that you could be content with the approval of your ceremonial by His Em. the Cardinal your archbishop.

We are all very pleased with my niece Louise. I am counting on urging her uncle the Jesuit to introduce his niece in the course of the next month. My nieces of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart were delighted to see Clara and Louise. Mme Melanie wrote to me a very nice letter on the subject.

Mme Emérence has expressed her deep satisfaction as regards the convent at Alost. That gives me great pleasure. Please, Madame, give my kind regards to all our dear children at the convent of St. Joseph. I give them as well as you my most cordial blessing.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th May 1865

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-104

Madame Superior General

I am sending you the enclosed, instead of answering it. About ten months ago I wrote a long reasoned answer to an earlier similar letter. I could not do as much a second time without repeating myself. Please, sometime, get the author of the letter to understand that I have informed you and that I feel inclined to enter into her views, up to the time of carrying out the project, I find good dispositions which I think, I can see at present.

I am very grateful to you for the charitable sentiments you express to me about dispositions of my niece Louise. That good girl will, I hope, respond to the designs of our good God. I have just received your last letter the good news you give me edifies me and gives me great pleasure. I hope that health will be maintained and that everywhere wise precautionary measures will be taken.

The letter of the novice, in whom you know I have a special interest, satisfies me in every respect. Our good God will give her the light and all the graces she needs to turn to good account the blessings his mercy is so visibly lavishing upon her. I very willingly give her my blessing as well as the whole novitiate, as she asks me to do. Please tell her so.

For yourself, Madame Superior General, receive also the assurance that I always bless you very cordially. I am always very touched by the testimonies of the charitable sentiments His Eminence bears towards us. The zeal with which Msgr. Lauwers renders you the services that depend on him, touches me agreeably.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th June 1865

(Letter Dictated)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-105

Madame Superior General

I like to think that you have returned safe and sound to your residence; and that you are pleased with your visit to Alost.

A girl of twenty years of age, enjoying good health, well-built, born and reared in the country, where she has received a Christian education, knowing how to read and write in Flemish and having always distinguished herself by her good conduct, has for a long time been feeling a keen desire to become a religious for very praiseworthy reasons. I am approaching you to ask you whether you can accept her as a lay postulant. Everything leads me to believe she will render good service, and by admitting her, you will do an act of charity very pleasing to God. Her resources are limited to some hundred francs, some linen and some clothes. I would be very pleased to get your reply for Sunday morning.

I give you my blessing, Madame, and beg you to believe in my sincere devotedness.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th July 1865

(Dictated Letter)
L.S.J.M.J.

7-106

Madame Superior General

The person about whom we have had the honor of writing to you, my niece Clara and me, without either of us knowing what the other was doing, is in fact the same person. I could have increased the number of good qualities with which I think she is endowed. She is a sweet character, obliging and polite; she is a very good lace maker, earning a franc a day in her village school. Notwithstanding her fine qualities, I have just put off her entry into religion for some time yet. She is only 19 years old; her mother is a widow and needs the help of her daughter.

I am therefore writing to thank you for the generosity with which you welcomed the request made in favor of this young person. If in a few years she persists in her desire to embrace the religious state, she can apply again.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th July 1865

(Dictated)

I have read with keen interest the two articles the kind author of the historical summaries has given on the Institute of the Ladies of Mary. I have followed with real consolation, the hand of that good Providence, which in the midst of circumstances that are often difficult guides the works undertaken on behalf of God and his Church, towards the goal assigned to them. Except for a few rather laudatory expressions about me that I know I do not deserve, I am very pleased with these articles. Please convey my sentiments of gratitude to the Rev. author.

C. G. V.C.

(Dictated Letter)

7-107

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I do not know how to express the sentiments of gratitude my heart felt at the sight of the precious spiritual bouquets you filial piety and that of your beloved sisters offered me for my patronal feast day. Accept my very sincere thanks for these touching proofs of the gratitude you retain for what I have had the happiness of doing for you for nearly half a century. If my age no longer allows me to come and express by word of mouth how ardent my desires are to see you advance along the way to which divine goodness has admitted you, I am daring to tell you that absence no more cools the ardor of the prayers that my heart does not cease offering for you to the Lord our God.

Accept, Madame Superior, as well as all your beloved sisters, this naive exposition of the dispositions towards you as your Father in Jesus Christ.

(Signature in his hand)

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th August 1865

(Dictated)

P.S. You have been informed of the painful trial to which our Sisters of St. Joseph are exposed by the loss of their excellent Mother Superior General. It is needless to recommend the beloved superior and all her numerous family to your prayers.

(Dictated Letter)

7-108

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

The time when you will be deciding on admission to the second novitiate must be close at hand, if I am not mistaken. I am therefore approaching you to remind you of the letter I sent you, a few months ago, in which one of your child begs the favor of going to Malines to make her second novitiate. She has arrived at the time that gives the right to this favor. After due reflection, I think I have to support this request. Madame Hélène is entirely of my opinion.

I will be pleased to learn of the condition of your invalids at Brussels. We will go on praying for them.

I am more and more inclined not to make any fresh moves in the matter of the approval of your Rules by Rome. I am not alone in my opinion.

Accept, Madame Superior General, my good wishes for the feast of the Assumption of our august Mother Mary.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th August 1865

(Dictated Letter)

7-109

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

I think it is my duty to commend you, especially during your visitations, to St. Therese, to St. Joseph and to the august Mother of Jesus Christ. I know that this part of the functions of the superiors general is fatiguing, but consideration of the good of souls and the grace of Jesus Christ lightens the burden.

I approve the arrangements you have made and should be happy to see you on your return.

Receive, Madame Superior, my blessing for yourself, your companion, and all your children in St. John the Baptist convent.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th October 1865

(Dictated Letter)

7-110

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

Fearing that my letter may have led you to believe that your visit to Ghent may cause us embarrassment, I am sending you these few lines to tell you I am counting on the pleasure of seeing you on Saturday in the morning, and that your visit will please me very much.

Accept, I beg you, the assurance of my very sincere devotedness and give my regards to all your children at St. John the Baptist.

(In the Founder's hand)

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th October 1865

7-111

Madame Superior General

I think the moment is now well chosen for ridding myself of the notes I passed on to Mme Clementine. Please tell her to send them back to me from Alost, by Mr. Soudan the architect.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st October 1865

(Dictated Letter)

7-112

L.S.J.M.J.

Madame Superior General

The news I received from Alost and Brussels was unanimous in expressing the satisfaction your visits have brought to our children in Jesus Christ. So I conclude that you profit by the grace our good Lord has bestowed on you, in placing you at the head of your religious family.

I am also very pleased to see you, and also to see the mistress general with you. One thing however pained me a little; it was the state of your health which seems weakened. So I again recommend you to moderate your occupations and allow your body the relief it needs.

I am repeating to you the remarks about your novice mistress. I think that official is overburdened and that you must look into the matter without great delay.

Receive, Madame Superior, my blessing and the very sincere assurance of my cordial devotedness.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th November 1865

(Dictated Letter)

7-113

J.M.J.

Reverend Superior General

I thank you for the congratulations you addressed to me in your name and that of your beloved sisters, on the occasion of the dignity that my Bishop has been kind enough to confer on me. For a long time I was under the firm impression that my 74 years, to which a few other reasons perhaps even more peremptory have to be added, had for ever exempted me from any new office whatsoever.

His Lordship my Bishop judged otherwise. As an obedient son, I have submitted in spite of my repugnance and the good reasons I thought I had to fear. I know the sentiments of my children in Jesus Christ well enough to be convinced that the help of their prayers contribute powerfully towards lightening the weight of the high dignity with which I am surprised to see myself invested. (In the Founder's hand)

I hope the trial about which you wrote to me, and about which I have had an explanation in the letter of the chaplain, that was in the newspapers, will not have any untoward sequel. The Queen of the Angels watches over you.

I am always very cordially

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent (Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME RAPHAELLE BECQ
Superior at Malines; Superior General 1885-1900
Born June 12, 1831; Professed Sept. 14, 1855; Died March 30, 1900
(4 Letters dated 1854 to 1865)

8-1

L.S.J.M.J.

Mademoiselle

You set about making the request you have just addressed to me in such a way, that even if the thing had been possible in itself, you would have made it impossible for me to procure, since you had not made the obligatory 8 day retreat to prepare yourself for it. Do not prepare yourself with less zeal for the feast of the 8th, my dear daughter; the Blessed Virgin will be no less touched.

Tell Mme Superior that on Friday I count on having the pleasure of wishing her the lovely feast by word of mouth, about two o'clock in the afternoon.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th December 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

8-2

Since you received my letter, an indisposition has put me back into the state I had been in for a few months. That is the cause of the delay I have been obliged to make in answering you, and of my having to have recourse to an unfamiliar hand in order to write to you. Be convinced, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that you have a special share in my prayers during the month of our good Patron. All your beloved sisters must be convinced that I am devoted to all of you in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Dictated)

Madame Superior

I am very satisfied with the sentiments that animate you and that you have expressed with a simplicity that touched me. Our good God will reward what you are doing, in a spirit of obedience and of devotion, to the obligations that you have not imposed on yourselves, but that have come to you from the Master we have in Heaven.

I am entitled to conclude that your efforts and the docility of your beloved sisters will bear excellent fruit, and the Lord will find capable and docile instruments in your house. I thank divine

Providence for providing you with the means of more suitably adorning your altar and in particular the tabernacle in which the Blessed Sacrament reposes.

Be very convinced, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and let all your beloved sisters be equally sure that I make it a duty of mine to commend you to our good Patron St. Joseph, especially during this whole month that we are consecrate to honoring him.

Continue to rely on the grace of your state for fulfilling the numerous duties for which you do not feel you have the necessary dispositions, if you look at things in too human a way.

I grant you with great pleasure what you are asking for on the occasion of the 46th anniversary of the beginning of our Institute.

I am happy to see that you are not forgetting the charitable Mlle Colette; we have indeed, very great obligations to that courageous friend of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here are my responses to your questions of the 19th of February:

1. As you are far from being rich and as making generous gifts with the money of others is not advisable, do not too easily contribute to works foreign to the country and to those with a profane objective.
2. In the negative.
3. Do not be easy about allowing confidences that neither concern your pupils, nor the interests of your house.
4. In case of doubt, consult the doctor.
5. Keep strictly to doing each thing at its time; do not make it too easy for certain subjects who like to talk too much about themselves to come and consult you. It would be abusing your time and taking advantage of your kindness without being useful to anyone;
(In the Founder's hand) That could present dangers.

Receive the blessing very cordially given to you by

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd of the month of St. Joseph 1863

(The questions posed to the answers above are annexed below)

1. When requests for help for works foreign to the diocese or country are presented, do you consider it good for us to contribute to them? The same for scientific works?
2. Do you approve of our seeking places for foreigners (English for example) who apply to us?
3. How is one to behave towards foreigners who relate their household or family troubles to you ...if what they say becomes a subject of temptation? I have been tormented for 15 days after a similar conversation.
4. If a religious thinks she is fit enough to fast, is she to try in spite of appearances to the contrary?
It is a Sister
5. If for her interior life a religious asks for the time I was thinking of giving to the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, must I give it to her and leave the exercise, or may I make it up later after the evening prayer? The matter occurring at the end of the day.

L.S.J.M.J.

8-3

(Dictated Letter)

Madame Superior

I see with real pleasure that your visit with me has been agreeable and useful. Your letter which you sent me, with Mme Superior General, added again to my satisfaction. I thank the good God for obtaining for me the sweet satisfaction of having been useful to you and to all your dear community. Please be the interpreter of the sentiments of gratitude which animate me, to all your very dear sisters, for their letters of the last holidays.

(In the Founder's hand) I give you, my dear daughter, and your whole community, my paternal blessing.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th November 1864

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated Letter)

8-4

Madame Superior

I read with consolation your very cordial letter and those of your very dear sisters, so full of pious sentiments and touching gratitude. May the Lord favorably listen to the wishes which you addressed to him in my favor, and those which I form with all my heart for all of you.

Nourish with care the sentiments which you have experienced on the occasion of the solemnity that has just been celebrated in your town, in honor of the venerable Berchmans. This is a new and abundant source of spiritual blessings.

(In the Founder's hand)

I give you, very dear children, my blessing.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th August 1865

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME ALOYSE BRUYCHER

Superior of the Convent of the Holy Angels, Brussels

Born Jan. 10, 1815; Professed Aug. 29, 1832; Died Feb. 21, 1838

(12 Letters Dated 1832 to 1838)

L.S.J.M.J.

9-1

Since I have forgotten to answer you so many times, I shall seize an opportunity that is most appropriately being offered in order to compensate the past privations. We are in a period when the Church sets before us the passages from the life of our loving Savior that are very capable of binding us to that divine model. Look at the Infant Jesus lying on the straw stretching out his little arms and crying in his need! It is towards you that he is stretching his hands in supplication, my dear daughter; it is to make you feel sorry for the fate of so many unhappy children. You will not be indifferent, I am very sure. You will manage to make yourself useful to the children, and in that way you will wipe away the tears of Jesus. Yes, my Child, I cherish this consoling thought that you will work successfully for the salvation of people of your sex. May God grant you his grace!

I am sincerely

Your devoted spiritual Father

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th January 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

9-2

My dear Child Aloyse

The more we go forward the more I marvel at the way our good God is leading you. Yes, my Child, the Lord is good and merciful! Yes, you must love him very much, since he is kind enough to admit you to that prerogative. It is by the way of love that God wants to lead you to perfection. Oh sweet way! Oh wonderful privilege! Ah, my dear Child, hasten therefore along that way; be not afraid. Let your heart belong to God and you will become what the Lord is expecting of you.

Then, form yourself more and more in the sciences so that you can render greater services to your neighbor, in our little family of Mary and Joseph. Do not neglect any means of becoming a capable mistress. I recommend that to you specially.

I count on seeing you soon; you will then make all the observations you think useful. Meanwhile, I give you a fatherly blessing, and beg you to be assured that I am very sincerely your most devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th April 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

9-3

My dear Sister Aloyse

I am pleased to take advantage of an opportunity that is being appropriately offered in order to have a chat with you for a moment. I do not like to treat you as an infant and I do not want to keep you in swaddling clothes, but all the same, I want you to give me a few details about your health, very simply and without evasions. Then, always with the same simplicity, my good Child, give me details about your studies, your progress, and above all, on the heart in which Jesus Christ lives. Do not be afraid of being wordy. I am asking for full details, even if you do not finish your letter in one session. You will send it to me when an opportunity arises.

I recommend to the good God, your soul and your body and I give you my blessing with all my heart; I am also sincerely

Your most devoted spiritual Father.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th November 1833

9-4

Dear Sister

You must receive a fresh proof of what I told you in the little note I sent you by my nephew. I am earnestly praying our good God to bless my young Sister Aloÿse so that she may one day be an excellent instrument of his mercy in the Institute of the Ladies of Mary. Respond to the designs of your divine Spouse, my Child, by always abandoning yourself meekly into his hands and maintaining in yourself a sweet cheerfulness that helps your neighbor and that spreads a spiritual balm over all that is done for others. ...

(The remainder of the page is cut off)

October 1833

Praise be J.M.J.

9-5

My dear Sister

Although I did not answer your letter immediately, you will not have concluded that it did not arouse any interest in me; you know that everything concerning you interests me very keenly. It is very true, my Child, all that has anything to do with you could not fail to matter to me. If I do not always answer at once, you must attribute that to my lack of time or to some other reason that would excuse me if you knew it.

Was the feast of St. Louis Gonzague a time of renewal of fervor or an increase in generosity towards your divine Spouse? And how are your studies and your health getting on? A short answer to all these questions would please me very much. If my nephew cannot take charge of your answer, get it ready for the first opportunity that is offered.

I am always in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd June 1834

Praise be J.M.J.

9-6

Your brief letter, my dear Child, reminded me of my promises and I hasten to fulfill them. First of all, your dear Sister Seraphine will find something to choose in the least mediocre models I could find at Ghent. She will see that she can borrow what suits her, without being obliged to copy the whole model bigger than the paving stones are that are in use here.

I do not know the Conversation Manual; I must have misunderstood. If however, I discover a good book of this kind, I will be pleased to send it to Sister Bathilde; I am always very happy to contribute to the perfection of my dear Children and thus to participate in the good they do to the Church of our divine Jesus.

You will also see some fine examples of handwriting here; you will take care to apply yourself to fine handwriting. These examples are expensive. They are only for the use of the Sisters and not for the children.

I have noticed a few mistakes in your letter. "You remind me what I am doing, etc." must be "remind me of what". You could have put "remind me of something. You also leave out the punctuation, which spoils the best piece of writing. Whatever the mistakes maybe, your letters always please me very much; they come to me from a docile heart, from a Spouse of my divine Jesus, and I know she is striving to please her Spouse.

Receive then, with my thanks for reminding me of my promises, the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

16th November 1834

Praise be J.M.J.

9-7

I will write, my dear Sister, to the person whose letter you sent me. I remember perfectly well the good accounts that the good Théodosie gave me of her in the past.

I thank the Lord for the gifts he is lavishing on you with so much generosity. It is right for me to thank him; in some ways it is on myself, it is on my Child, that he is showering his blessings. So may his holy name be ever blessed! Do you not agree, my dear Sister Aloÿse?

Your writing is becoming firmer; I can see that practice helps you. But if you write the notebook in the same ink as you and the other Sisters write me their letters, I will be very sorry for the trouble you will be giving yourselves. I have written to Sister Adelaide to ask her whether the recipe she spoke to me about for making ink is a good one, and whether the ink is made at the convent.

Be prudent during Lent, you are not old enough, and have not yet the strength to fast. The intention of the Church is not to destroy us, but that we be converted and live. Let us more and more purify our hearts and serve God with great generosity; that is right for all ages and all temperaments. Do not forget in your prayers, my very dear Child, the one who is sincerely and for ever your devoted Father.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

21st February 1835

Praise be J.M.J.

9-8

Here, my dear sister, is a new trial to which your very devoted Father and your very worthy Mother General think themselves obliged to submit your obedience and your zeal for the interests of your divine Spouse, at the convent of St. Joseph. You know we love you tenderly; but it is not with a weak and natural love; it is with the love of Jesus Christ. Now, that love prompts us to lay upon you a new cross that you will carry with courage, with generosity in union with your crucified Spouse. We are giving you the charge of Sister Assistant. Receive with submission this burden, and following the example of our heavenly Mother, give your consent full of faith, saying from the bottom of your heart: Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

Respond to the expectations of your Superiors, and carry this cross cheerfully, without turning back onto yourself, and with complete abandonment of yourself, without reserve.

We promise you the help of our prayers and our advice, from the bottom of our hearts, being happy if we can contribute to procuring the glory of our loving master and Lord Jesus Christ.

Count in particular on the unlimited devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th January 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

9-9

Dear Sister

I am hastening to make up for my mistake. Here is the article revised and ready for copying; however, please read it beforehand, with the Rev. Mother.

How happy I am, dear Child, to learn that our good God is pursuing you with his blessings and also continuing his goodness to our Rev. Mother. I thank him for that with all my heart.

It will be necessary to send the Holy Rule back to me again, with your new remarks, before finally copying it out. It is a thing of great importance.

Examine in the presence of God the note that is included; and pass it on to the Rev. Mother, with the request to examine it, but without communicating your reflections to one another. We will deal with it another time, by word of mouth, and with both of you together.

I did not forget you at Hal, you may tell Rev. Mother and the Sisters. No, I never forget you before our good God, our divine Mother or our powerful Father and Patron St. Joseph.

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus make all the members of our two Institutes of brothers and sisters feel the effects of his ineffable love. Those are the wishes of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th of Mary's month 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

9-10

My dear Sister Aloÿse

I have been following you with my prayers and blessings, on the journey that the adorable will of God will make your undertake. I say it with simplicity, I have recommended with a very special confidence our whole Institute to the Holy Angels; I was inviting these heavenly Spirits to bring us pupils, so as to have the ineffable happiness of making the Lord our God known and loved by creatures called to that remarkable honor here below. I sometimes longed to do a type of violence to these Spirits who are destined for the service of friends, and give them a sort of order from their Queen, our august Patroness, and our divine Master Jesus Christ himself. I hope these Angels of peace and mercy were not offended by my importunity and I like to think we shall get our convents, Mistresses and pupils. It seems to me I hear you say with all your heart: Amen. Amen. Amen. If that is the way I behaved on behalf of the Institute, you can imagine that the convent specially dedicated to the Holy Angels, had a special share in my prayers and efforts.

I read, with the interest that you know I have in all that my Children do for our mutual Father, the details the Rev. Mother of Alost and dear Lady Aloÿse gave me about your first trips to the city of Brussels. The Prince of the heavenly army, St. Michael, the Patron of that capital, has no doubt sent some of his angels to you, and that is how to explain to myself the success that has followed your efforts. Persevere, dear Child, with the same courage; show the angels and men that you are happy to be able to work in the vineyard of the Lord and that fatigue does not discourage you. Let the happiness with which the love of your divine Spouse fills your souls be read in your serene faces even in the midst of privations and difficulties. I think I am not mistaken when I judge that you love Jesus both on Tabor and on Calvary; everywhere he loves you and you want to repay his love generously in all places.

I am amazed, dear Aloÿse, at the effect of your power; if you were not there to bear witness to the marvels of your art of ...begging, it would be hard to believe it. Judge with your sisters, whether your skill extends its power as far as Ghent. As for me, I like to admit I have found it pleasant to feel myself overcome both by the charms of your new art, and by a still greater power, I mean that charity the grace of the Lord has put into my heart for you and your dear Sisters. You will find in this basket more than you asked me for. I am glad about that; that is a right your devoted Father in Jesus Christ has.

A piece of news that I shall hear with very special joy, is that which will announce to me that you have a chapel in which the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered, and your treasure par excellence, the Holy of Holies, the Savior of the world, the tender Spouse of your souls is reserved. May he deign to grant you that ineffable honor without delay.

My kind regards to (name crossed out) and to Sister Eulalie, without forgetting Sister Christine. May you offer our good God hearts so pure that all their desires are constantly granted. That is another prayer I offer for you.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th October 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

9-11

You see, my very dear Child, that our good God is taking care of you and does not lose sight of you. That excellent Father; that tender Friend, that loving Spouse wishes to try you; but that is one of the surest signs he is watching over you. So, depend on him entirely; he loves you and he is almighty. Think of Jesus as a fugitive with his Holy Mother and St. Joseph in Egypt. Admire and imitate his humble submission; admire and adore at the same time the gentle treatment of the Providence of his heavenly Father, which leaves his divine Son in that foreign land until the death of Herod. Await with confidence the moments of God; they will come, count on that, but in peace and humble submission.

Do not lose sight of the opportunities that are offered; knock on the doors of your benefactors. Arouse the attention of the parish priests whose names you gave me; even allow yourself wise importunity! Your divine Spouse will send his Angels to serve you according to the designs of his mercy.

I authorize you to do what you consider appropriate with your girl; but act prudently. Rev. Mother Olympiade will call at your place on her return from Malines. You will take counsel together about that and the other difficulties.

It seems to me that more than ever Sister Gonzague must at last recognize the illusion with which the devil has been deluding her for so long. I cherish the hope that she is going to open her eyes and perceive the precipice on the brink of which she is so imprudently walking.

Express to your good and charitable Mlle Thimpont, the sentiments of gratitude I feel and am not in a position to show her in person. I am commending her to our good Patrons and divine Jesus; we are celebrating the feast of his august Name tomorrow. You realize you will not be forgotten, neither you nor your children nor your benefactors.

Next week I intend to deliver to Monsieur Dellafaille, at the Ministry of the Interior, the aims and needs of the establishments of the Ladies of Mary at Brussels.

What do you think of a plan that I am considering and that would consist of sending the Novice Eulalie to spend the last six weeks of her novitiate at Mouscron, and of sending to you in her place, Sister Stéphanie? The latter could perhaps learn English. Talk to our Rev. Mother Olympiade about it.

Our Sisters of St. Joseph, led by Mother Elise, left last Monday to begin a house at Ostend. The cold did not frighten that little colony. May the fire of divine love given them the strength necessary to overcome all the hardships of their undertaking. Sister Augustine is remaining at Bruges; her health is not better; I have just received a letter from her which gives me much pleasure.

Good-bye, my dear Child; be brave; be generous; Jesus is our friend! Let us walk in his footsteps; the odor of his divine sweetness will cheer us and lead us to the summit of the holy mountain where heaven will reveal itself to our eyes.

Receive for yourself and all your house the blessing of

Your most devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 13th January 1838

I forgot to write to our Rev. Mother at Malines that I learned at Nomm...bosch that the Archbishop has written to the Bishop of Namur that as the Ladies of Mary have been established at Malines, he may not allow the Sisters of N. D. to make a foundation there, as they had applied to him for permission to do through the Bishop of Namur. You could perhaps send this letter to Rev. Mother Olympiade.

Praise be J.M.J.

9-12

My dear Sister

I had the joy of seeing here in good health our very Rev. Mother and our Rev. Superior of Alost. We examined certain points some of which have been decided and others will be examined

later. I am sending you a note that you will examine at leisure. You will also find under this cover a letter to your dear Novices and another one to Sr. Gonzague. Please deliver them.

But, my dear Child, are you unwell? Take care to follow the wishes of the Holy Rule and of your Superiors, and take the precautions that prudence requires. I am relying on your docility and on the friendship of Mlle Thimpont has for you and on the charity of your good sisters. I beg our good God to give you all the spiritual and temporal help you need. The Holy Angels, the Queen of Angels, St. Joseph and our other holy Patrons, will also come to your aid. Set your mind at rest and do not tire it: avoid the cold and stay in bed as much as that can be useful to you. I commend also to the Lord and your friends, the matter of the house that you wrote to me about.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your most devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th January 1838

My nephew Henri is making you a present of a very beautiful monstrance. Commend this dear nephew to the Holy Angels and to the Queen of Angels whose convent will receive the same gift. It is on the occasion of his marriage that my nephew is making these two offerings to our good God.

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME GONZAGUE

Left the Institute (*)

(13 Letters dated 1838 to 1839)

Praise be J.M.J.

10-1

Your letter, my dear Sister, excites an air of uprightness which charms me, to which I was no longer used and which you must maintain with me. Let us forget the past; Eh! that past is not longer ours, and it must not be an obstacle in the way of your happiness or the good you will do with the help of grace of the Savior. Think of your benefactress often; it is to her that you owe your return to your duty. Yes, it is through her that the God of all mercy has granted what for you is so great a favor that we could neither express nor understand it. That is the result of humble confidence in God and intense love for your divine Spouse. I will one day send you a few sentences extracted from the resolutions of our dear deceased one, or her letters or other writings.

Take care to achieve good order in the classes, among the novices and among the pupils. Try to get them to be cheerful without exaggeration, and generous in everything.

I am all yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th February 1838

May you spend with the greatest zeal possible, the month of March in honor of our Holy Patron. Imagine that it is a novitiate and that you will find in it all you need to recommence a fully religious life again.

I approve that which the Reverend Mother of Alost arranged; but I ask you to be very economical and to put off all expenses that are not urgent; we are much impeded because of the lack of funds and the needs of all our new houses.

Give my regards to all your dear sisters. I give them, as I do to you my blessing and I wish you, from the depths of my heart, the consolations of the Holy Spirit.

(*) The names of Sisters who left the Institute, including family names and profession dates, etc. were deleted from the Congregation's catalog of Sisters.

Praise be J.M.J.

10-2

My dear Sister

I have just received your letter and the precious relics you sent me. I cannot express what I feel at the sight of these treasures. I would like to have a generous heart, a heart like that of our saintly Sister Aloÿse, to testify to God feelings of a lively gratitude and a love tender, true and pure,

in view of the graces that we have received. Help me, my Child; join with me and let us praise the Lord who is so freely granting us the gifts of his infinite mercy.

It seems to me that the Rev. Mother at Alost wishes you to have the consolation of being a witness of the lovely ceremony that will take place on Monday at the convent of St. Joseph. So come if it is possible; bring Mlle Valentyns and the other persons you mentioned to the Rev. Mother. It has to do, I think, with some of your pupils. Act prudently and try to be there, either tomorrow evening or on Monday before nine o'clock.

I do not have the time to answer the two nice letters from your dear Sisters Léocadie and Stephanie. I pray our good God to bless those happy Children of Mary and Joseph and to grant them the grace to imitate with a very large heart, the virtues of their saintly Sister Aloÿse.

I am very sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th of St. Joseph's month 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

10-3

My dear Sister

It seems to me that it would be in your power to give me some useful information about the first years in religion of our very dear Sister Aloÿse. Start making investigations; your sisters, your own memories will provide you with notes that I will be very pleased to receive and that will be used for the good of souls. You will even be able to tell me what you could not always reveal to everyone. So, I shall await with pious eagerness even the least details about that dear Child, that was the consolation of your Father in Jesus Christ and the perfect model of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. Far from weakening with time, my affection for Madame Aloÿse has done nothing but grow since we no longer see her with our bodily eyes. Let us imitate this beautiful example, my Child, and we shall respond more and more to the designs God has on our Institute.

You know how devoted I am to you in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd April 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

10-4

My dear Lady

I will be sending you the note (word in French could mean: the bill) that you have just sent to me from the parents of our dear deceased. You will know later if you have some steps to take on the subject.

I thank God for the truly extraordinary favors that he has given you. Be always gratefully humble. I have not forgotten you in my prayers on the feast day of our Holy Patron.

Take reasonable care of your health and that of your dear Sisters. Our dear Madame Aloÿse greatly helps us: the convent of the Holy Angels have a special part in her prayers, without doubt.

When you write to me, always tell me a word about your pupils; that is pleasing and it keeps me up-to-date on the principal affairs of your convent.

I will do everything possible to help your dear novice Léocadie to prepare herself well for her profession. She must be cheerful and very generous, occupy herself with Jesus Christ and the happiness that her tender Spouse prepares for her with so much kindness, but very joyously.

All of you must take as much bodily exercise as possible. This point is essential and I recommend it specially.

Receive, dear child, my blessing and believe me always

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Do not permit Lady Euphémie occupations that are too sedentary and take care that she...

Praise be J.M.J.

10-5

My dear Sister

I thank you for the good wishes you have addressed to me. Count on my efforts to be of use to you these days.

Here is my response: if the Rev. Mother at Alost can render you the service you are asking for, I give my consent. But do not invite any important personages to your distribution; your pupils are too inexperienced, etc. etc. It seems to me you could accept half-boarders, but in that case they must be treated properly and in conformity with good customs. Ask a Jesuit Father to render you the service you are deprived of by the illness of your confessor.

Here is my letter to you. Here is one for your dear Sisters. I am pleased with their letters; I shall pray much for them to our good and generous Mother and I am counting on their prayers.

1. Mme Eulalie has only to follow the way of the grace that is making itself sufficiently heard in her soul. She is, that dear Child, on the good way.
2. Mme Euphémie is making progress. I praise God for it and congratulate her. She must be humble and generous.
3. Mme Léocadie has only to go on with joy and confidence preparing herself for the great day of her profession. She will be able to attend the retreat at Alost.
4. Mlle Stéphanie may hope to see the great day draw near; but it is on condition that she advances twice as fast on the way of humble and meek imitation of our angel Aloyse and makes great progress in writing.

All your Ladies and novices have great need to practice their writing. Let each one have her exercise book so that I can judge their daily progress.

Read privately to each one what concerns her. I do not have the time to write to them at this moment.

May the triumph of Mary cause us to rejoice and strengthen us! May it obtain for us the graces necessary for triumphing over our miseries!

Receive the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

14th August 1838

You are aware that the object of the journey of our Rev. Mother of Alost must be absolutely necessary to justify a request as indelicate as the one you would make to her on the eve of the holidays. I wanted to give you that little lesson before ending my letter.

L.S.J.M.J.

10-6

My dear Sister

I too felt great satisfaction at seeing all of you so filled with the desire to faithfully accomplish what your divine Spouse asks. Respond constantly to the prompting of grace and your perfection will be the result of your generous efforts.

An observation has come into my mind; it is that you all speak and laugh a little too loudly. That is a coarseness of tone that you must try to correct, for it will be noticed more quickly at Brussels than elsewhere.

I will not make the change you suggest to me. We will see later what is of most use.

The young Lady from Ath will do well to present herself at my place, if she is passing through Ghent.

Let us pray, my dear Children. Prayer is very powerful and the preservation of our Rev. Mother at Alost seems to me a great need for our Institute. I do not have the time to write at great length, but you know that at all times I am sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th October 1838

As my letter is for all of you, you will read it to the community.

My very dear Sister

I am delighted that I was so successful in obliging my children at the convent of the Holy Angels. I hope your pupils will obtain great benefit from that increase in staff, and the mistresses will find in it an extra means of getting instruction and being trained as teachers. The signs of that holy affection you have for each other are proofs to me that you are thriving in the school of your tender friend, your meek Spouse Jesus Christ; yet I suppose that these external signs conform to the expressions approved by politeness.

Mlle Hyacinthe does not inspire me with all possible confidence; and consequently, I prefer strangers to find in her a novice rather than an imperfect religious. So, I have canceled sending the cloak. I even admit that I regret the step you took in that respect. You acted rather thoughtlessly; and you have not reflected enough either on the matter of acquiring the piano. It is for doing better what the good of the pupils require, and not for doing anything new that Mlle Hyacinthe has come to your place. The frequent departure of pupils obviously proves there is some defect or lack, an absence of a certain perfection that would end by giving a harmful reputation to the convent of the Ladies of Mary at Brussels. Later, and when we see the evil I am indicating here totally corrected, we shall think about the piano and the music lessons. Mlle Hyacinthe will apply herself with zeal to writing: she will have an exercise book in which each page she writes will be dated so that I and the Rev. Madame Superior of Alost may judge her progress. Then, in the classes, she will render such services as you consider most capable of bringing about the progress of the pupils and attaching the latter to their Ladies and to the convent. I recommend you, my dear Sister, to supervise these things very carefully and immediately. You will be the first to draw sweet satisfaction from seeing the orderliness, and as a consequence, the contentment of the pupils and the Parents who confides them to us.

The anniversary of the departure to heaven of our beloved Madame Aloÿse is approaching; on Thursday it will be a year since that angel left us. Let that day be a day of pious rejoicing in your convent. Clothe yourselves with the virtues of that amiable sister, all of you make resolutions to walk in her footsteps; recall to mind her meekness, her faith, her generosity, her tender devotion to the interests of your religious family.

Here are some pictures for you to distribute as you judge fit. Do not give them out indiscriminately, but distribute them so well that they will achieve the objective I am aiming at of making your Institute known and loved. Give the most precious or the most ordinary ones out according to the status of the people concerned, and the nature of the interest they have in us, or are in a position to communicate to others. The young ladies you think capable of appreciating the happiness of the religious life and above all those of the Ladies of Mary must have a share in your generosity. You see our dear Angel is still employed in obtaining for us the means of doing good: pupils and postulants will be the fruit of these little presents, independently of the salutary thoughts they will arouse in us, and in the minds of others. I am relying more and more on the power that this fine soul has with Mary and Jesus Christ.

I always have much pleasure in calling myself,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th February 1839

It is perhaps unnecessary to tell you that you not distribute all the pictures at this moment. You must keep some for suitable circumstances and for where they can be more immediately useful.

10-8

My dear Sister

You know your good wishes are precious to me and you have not been forgotten in my prayers these days in particular. Let us try to give our hearts unreservedly to Jesus Christ, so that he may make them pure and generous in his service.

I would indeed find it very pleasant to obtain for you the relief, that the lack of order or authority of your dear sisters makes you feel the need. But there is no possibility of my doing so. So you must, my Child, make up for the lack of experience of the others and increase your efforts to avoid the dangers with which your house might be threatened.

As for the sorry affair of the sodality, it caused me real pain. But it is over; and it only remains for us to beg Mary to remain attached to us, whatever may have been the cause of the departure of her children. Act with extreme prudence so that no one may have occasion to go on rendering you a disservice. I will pray with all my heart for you and for your dear Sisters as well as for your pupils. The time I am writing to you does not allow me to do so at greater length, you understand.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Effaced) 1839

10-9

(It seems the beginning of the letter is missing) ...

I had thought that your Rev. Mother would be coming to see you next week, and that is why I did not answer your last two letters. It seems to me that it be very difficult and perhaps impossible to establish a boarding school in Brussels. Let us put our interests, my Child, into the hands of Mary and Joseph. Let us not be anxious; if we are doing well, our efforts will be blessed and we will have the advantage of doing good at the same time as the Sisters of N.D. Let us go forward with courage and with wisdom, the good Shepherd Jesus Christ will not refuse us the signs that will make us useful to his flock.

Your Rev. Mother who will be arriving in Brussels one of these days, will take counsel with you in order to see by what means you can get Holy Mass and the other help you need. I will pray our common Master to continue giving you his favors and to make you grow in his love.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th April 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

10-10

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Please send to Msgr. the Vicar for the Rich Clares, the letter enclosed here. I am taking advantage of this opportunity to remind you of my great desire for you to prepare with zeal to celebrate the triumph of our heavenly Mother Mary. Meekness and loving simplicity are the virtues that please that humble dove, who after God, brings happiness to the saints and angels in Heaven. I recommend increased attention to preparing your pupils for the holidays so that their good behavior will cause their parents and all well-meaning people to praise you.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th August 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

10-11

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

This time I should need to apologize to you. It is really too bad to put off answering you. However, travels, new business added to what you know, and then forgetfulness that also comes and mingles with my good reasons from time to time, those are what sometimes cause a delay that upsets me, I think, as much as it does to the people who are expecting news from me. The word forgetfulness, which slipped from my pen, must not lead you to believe however that I might be unconcerned; it is quite the opposite; it is rather that there is excess in the keenness of my solicitude.

I very willingly subscribe to the proposal you have made to me about Mlle Bonte. Let that pupil who has inspired me with real interest, examine before God what she has to do, and she will find me as kindly disposed to be of use to her as she can wish. I am not surprised about what you told me about her; it is not a new thing for us, as you know.

I will have the pleasure of seeing you within a fortnight or even earlier, if the weather turns bad.

Receive, dear Child, the assurance of my devotedness.
Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th October 1839

You already know, I think, that Mme Louise has gone to receive the crown that her zeal has merited for her. She died on the 2nd of this month.

Praise be J.M.J.

10-12

You and your dear Ladies of the convent of the Holy Angels have not been forgotten in my prayers these days, my dear daughters in Jesus Christ. The business of Mlle Bonte will have caused you some pain; and indeed without our giving any reason for such behavior, one must be surprised at seeing so much care forgotten in so few days. This changeability surprises me greatly and I am afraid Mlle Bonte will be sorry later for what she has just done.

I like to think that all your Ladies are gradually recovering. I recommend them to be rather prudent without however any of the pettiness which moreover I think them very far from having. The good order I have noticed among your pupils has pleased me very much. It is a step towards that state in which you will be able to direct your house and for which competition gives you double need.

Receive my blessing and believe me always

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th November 1839

You will be very prudent about the English girl and will not delay in giving me news of her. Do not introduce her to all the exercises of your convent.

Praise be J.M.J.

10-13

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letter gave me a pleasant surprise; it is a proof that you have fortunately recovered your health. I thank our good God for that and urge you to be prudent, to make use of this fresh blessing in accordance with the designs of Providence. Prepare yourself with zeal for the great solemnities we are approaching and learn to love Jesus Christ in view of the wonders that his love works. Be generous, be humble, be up-right; be what the divine Child preaches to us in so touching a way. Rouse your dear Sisters and pupils to enter with you into the sentiments that the Holy Church requires of her children on the lovely feasts she is going to celebrate. That is what seems to be the best way of making up for faults committed and raising the tone of the mistresses and pupils, the convent and the classes.

I have not forgotten what I promised to do relative to the first communion of your children and even what you want. However, if it is a question of asking permission to withdraw children from their parish for the first communion, that which appears to have been resolved for the city of Malines, dispenses me from taking any steps, I should do nothing.

I would be pleased if, the first time you write to me, you would tell me a little about each of your religious, the classes and the number of pupils. I would also like to know the state of your finances; I admit I was surprised to learn that it is not brilliant. As the housekeeping part does not seem to be that in which you have the most experience, I urge you to take counsel with Mme (name effaced) on that subject which is very important in my eyes. Tell me also what is the result of the endeavor of the young English girl.

You will remember, my dear Lady, that I decided that the letters for the New Year may not be written to me. I do not have the time at that period to give them the attention these marks of esteem and affection deserve.

Your writing is so beautiful that I had to look at the signature to know who was sending me a letter so well written. If all your Ladies have made the same degree of progress in calligraphy, your house leaves little to be desired in this respect.

The return of Mlle Syl(illegible) to her duties caused me real pleasure. I do not stop giving thanks to the Lord for it. As to what I can do for that person, I could not yet say. I will pray God that I will do only what his divine Majesty is pleased for me to do.

Tell our dear Sisters, and be convinced yourself, that I will pray for all of you during the blessed days we are coming to, and although they do not (effaced) on this occasion, I am indeed relying on their not forgetting me before Jesus and his Holy Mother.

Always count, dear Child, on the true devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th December 1839

LETTERS ADDRESS TO MADAME BATHILDE DELHAYE

(Sister of Madame Flore Delhaye)

Born Aug. 13, 1813; Professed April 11, 1833; Died July 26, 1839

(22 Letters dated 1832 to 1839)

11-1

Mademoiselle

Your letter inspired me with sentiments of charity so intense that I feel real satisfaction in writing to you. I am led to believe that our good God is destining you to be an instrument of his mercy in the holy family of the Children of Mary and Joseph; and that he is preparing special graces for you in our midst. I seem to have understood the state of your mind and the sentiments of your heart so well; and I cherish the hope that you are called to serve the Church in a high degree of perfection. The favors God has already bestowed on you, and what he is destining for you in the course of time, must give you the complete conviction that your soul is specially dear to Our Lord Jesus Christ, and that you cannot neglect any of the means he is obtaining for you to make it more and more pleasing in his divine eyes.

So, I willingly unite my prayers with yours to obtain that you will become docile to the voice of the Lord and that you triumph over all the difficulties that might present themselves to you in order to turn you away from the holy undertaking you are contemplating.

If you grant me your confidence, I will make it a duty of mine to help you and direct your steps in the new career to which God has led you as if by the hand; open your heart to me with that childlike simplicity that God rewards with the most outstanding graces and that puts the spiritual director in a position to follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Receive, Mademoiselle, with my blessing, the assurance of my sincere wish to be of use to you in the undertaking that is occupying your mind for the greater glory of the Lord and the perfection of your soul.

Your very humble servant

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st January 1832

11-2

Mademoiselle

According to what you write to me, I understand that our good God is still leaving you in a type of uncertainty and abandoned so to speak to cold human reason. You see the happiness of the regular life; you know the miseries of the world. There are what your reason already guided by faith uncovers and shows to you, the former as good and advantageous, and the world is represented to you in its true light and not as the passions would want to make you believe it to be. But this speculative knowledge is doing nothing for your happiness; one thing is lacking, it is the grace of Jesus Christ which must added to the teachings of reason. It is not enough to know, one must love and desire. Humble yourself, my dear young Lady, before the Savior Jesus and ask him to make up for your powerlessness by sending you a ray of that light from on high which, besides clarity, produces warmth. Grace works on the mind by enlightening it, and on the heart by warming it. Then you will not be content with seeing, you will go further and say: I must love what is perfect or what leads to it. I must fear what is bad and avoid it. So from reasoning to reasoning you will come to the conclusion: one must do good and avoid evil. From speculative as it was, your knowledge will become practical. That is what is necessary. Jesus indeed says, it is not the one who says Lord,

Lord, that will be saved, but it will be the one who has done the will of the Lord; that one will be saved. That is to say that knowledge of religion will not save us, if our behavior is not in conformity with what it teaches us. Now, to do the will of God is the first duty of man. To seek to know that will is an obligation that follows from the other one. But how, you are going to say to me, how could I know the will of God? Through prayer, through meditation, through that interior voice that makes itself heard from time to time, through the advice of a director or a confessor. I am sorry that time does not allow me to come to Belleghem; it seems to me that a few talks would be enough to settle your choice. I do not say to commit you to embracing the religious state; I do not have the power to grant that favor: Jesus Christ chooses his Spouses. Men do not impose any on him.

I will pray for you and be of use to you wherever I can be. Believe, dear Mademoiselle, in the affection you are assured of in Jesus Christ by one who has the happiness of counting a large number of the Spouses of Jesus among the Children he directs as their spiritual Father and who for that reason has acquired experience in this matter. He will not abuse your confidence; you can give it entirely to him.

(Not Dated - 1832?)

L.S.J.M.J.

11-3

You did not fail in your duty, my dear Child, by not sending me the details I was hoping for. The matter is not urgent, and I should be very sorry if your duties as a class teacher, or your health were to suffer through my request. So do not be upset any more on that score.

I recommend to you again to be zealous in your instruction, in that of your pupils and, for as much as you can contribute to it, the instruction of your young sisters.

I also recommend you to take care of you health and, as you need sight to fulfill the duties of your holy state, take care of your eyes and beware of writing to me again without the help of an artificial light, when the sun is at the antipodes.

I have just written to the Rev. Mother of your convent that our dear Flore is accepted and that I want her to attend the classes like the boarders so that she may in a short time be capable of being useful as a teacher. I have just received a letter from that dear Child. She is deciding in favor of the holy religious state. (Corner torn off) ... to inform her that I agree to her entry and that you are charged with answering the letter she wrote to me.

I cannot end, my dear Bathilde, without saying to you a few words about the love of our good God. Often think of that divine love so as to inflame your heart more and more and purify it with that heavenly fire. Love Jesus who loved you more than his own life. Ask therefore that your heart be enlarged so that it can love more every day.

I bear you a keen and lasting interest in our Savior Jesus Christ.

C. Van Crombrugghe

13th October 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

11-4

I have been very pleased to learn that our Flore is at last in the midst of my dear Daughters. Take care of that young plant; the enemy of her salvation will not fail to make efforts to prevent that soul from attaining the sublimity of her vocation. Without being anxious or at all afraid, watch over her a little; I give you that task. You have experienced how clever the devil is and how much we have to take precautions so as not to lose the great grace that God is preparing for those he chooses as his Spouses.

Do not let the care given to the pupils make you neglect anything in order to advance in the perfection required of you by the one who is calling you to become a religious and a member of a congregation in which knowledge is needed in order to render many services to the Church.

Arouse in yourself that love for that thrice holy God, and let your heart unceasingly give expression to those loving sentiments that make it so pleasing to your divine Spouse. May the feasts we are approaching find your soul disposed to welcome the heavenly dew that will descend upon it. You will experience, my dear Child, how good and generous he is who is calling you to his nuptials at which you yourself will be the Bride.

Tell Flore that I have for her a feeling that leaves no doubt that she as well as you, will be one day forever, my spiritual daughter. I already love her in that capacity and count on her fidelity to grace to bring it about, in her own time, that my hope is realized.

Good-bye, my Child, count on the sincerity of the sentiments of your spiritual Father.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th December 1832

Praise be J.M.J.

11-5

I am taking advantage of an opportunity that is very appropriately offered, my dear Child, to repeat to you the recommendation I made you by word of mouth, not to do anything imprudent during this holy time of penance. You have a lot of work; if you were to add to it mortifications that your zeal for justice would perhaps suggest to you, you would fundamentally harm your health. You are young, not too strong, and then continually occupied with teaching. That must be enough, my Child; God does not ask you for more at the moment. Purify your heart well and adorn your mind for the service of the one who is awaiting you and will make you happy in time and in eternity. That, my dear Bathilde, is what he thinks he must say to you whose sentiments could no longer be unknown to you and who will not cease proving to you that he wants to be your true spiritual Father.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th February 1833

Tell Mlle Flore from me that I have every reason to be assured of her vocation and, if I do not speak to her of it any more, it is because things that are clear do not require great explanations.

Praise be J.M.J.

11-6

My very dear Sister

As the position of Sister Adélaïde is imposing on me the greatest reserve, I dare not ask her for news of the pupils of your convent. So, my good Child, you will take care to bring me up-to-date about the state of the pupils of your house, then of those of the second boarding school, as far as you can do so prudently and without Sister Adélaïde realizing it. Tell me also whether you think the mistresses and the classes are divided up well. In short, simply and independently, give me your opinion on all these matters. That will not get interference. You will remember that it is your Father you are addressing and that he wishes to ask for clarification from whomsoever it seems good to him.

In the details I am asking you for, you will not forget to give me some about a certain Child who is very dear to me, who is called Bathilde and whom you must know better than anyone. Does she still love her divine Spouse? Does she run after the perfumes that he spreads abroad and that are only to the taste of souls that are seeking humility and meekness? Ah! my dear Child, how happy you are in your state if you knew how to appreciate your happiness! So, be grateful, be cheerful, be what God wants you to be.

I am praying your divine master to make you understand more and more how lovable he is and how much he alone deserves all our love. You are not in doubt about the sincerity of

Your devoted spiritual Father in Jesus Christ,

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

12th March 1833

You will give your reply to your Mother who will send it to me, or you will enclose it in a letter from my niece. Give my kind regards to that dear Maria. Is she advancing in virtue and knowledge? What do you think of Mlle Thérèse from Antwerp?

L.S.J.M.J.

11-7

Dear Sister

I am pleased to note that you are training yourself in the style of letter-writing and that you are making satisfactory progress in that respect. As for your writing, I think that certain strokes are rather too big, and too many letters look like capitals. With regard to drawing or English, I hardly

see any possibility of arranging for you to learn them. Continue to apply yourself to the French language, style, arithmetic, geography and history, as much as your occupations allow you to do.

I have no desire to scold you. I will urge you rather to go on gently and humbly under the direction of the divine Master who dwells in your heart. Yes, my dear Bathilde, Jesus Christ resides in your heart; it is the place he has chosen for showering his tender love. So go frequently in spirit to visit that Spouse, your heart accompanies you everywhere; also Jesus Christ is everywhere accessible to you. There you will find light, strength and all that you need for bringing up your children in the love of God. Good-bye, my dear Sister, I do not forget you before the Lord, because I am sincerely

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th January 1834

I was edified by the very Christian sentiments of your good brother; learn to adore the will of the most high in all your ways; then you will always be submissive and content and cheerful.

Praise be J.M.J.

11-8

To spare the weak resources of the Convent, I am writing you only a few lines, my dear Child, but you will never measure the affection of a heart which is very devoted to you by the brevity of my letters. That is understood, isn't it?

You gave me great pleasure by simply disclosing your soul to me. I had seen you rather sad and that had upset me. So, watch carefully over yourself, so that sadness never intervenes to disturb a heart which Jesus has chosen as his dwelling place. Let us be weary, even ill, but never sad!

I admit that it would be good to give some ideas of the nature of those spoken of by the author you have copied; all the same, one would be very mistaken if one were to take it into one's head to give the girls all that your author wishes them to have; one would make them affected, half-scholars, evil women. Let us not forget the duties religion prescribes for us in regard to our dear pupils; let us take all possible pains to cast into their minds useful things and into their hearts virtuous sentiments; but let us be wise in moderation for fear of giving rise to confusion in the very place where we are called upon to put in order.

Let us go on gently, both for ourselves, my dear Child, and for the others. Let us limit our desires and we shall be in a position to form ourselves and to form the others whom our good God will deign to confide to our care.

Drop all anxiety and do in peace what your divine Spouse is asking. That is what is said to you by

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th June 1834

Praise be J.M.J.

11-9 (#1)

Dear Sister

The improvement you are happy to find in yourself is a good omen, and it caused me real joy. You will not stop on such a good road, and you will do yourself a pleasure by restraining yourself for the love of Jesus Christ. It is not proper, in fact, my dear Child, to upset a heart in which your divine Spouse lives; serenity must never leave a soul in which God is pleased to dwell. So you cannot in any case let yourself be melancholy.

For the rest, learn your duties and get used to them imperceptibly. Try to acquire the knowledge you need, progressively and in the order of divine Providence. It is not by getting upset, or by being overzealous that one advances; it is on the contrary through good order, the good method and peace of mind, and above all humble and confident prayer, that you will become what the Institute expects you to be.

Our dear Sister Flore is getting on well in all respects, and I, my Child, am yours very devotedly in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

22nd September 1834

(Note: The Number 11-9 duplicated)

L.S.J.M.J.

11-9 (#2)

I imagine, my dear Sister, that you have been making efforts to overcome that sensitivity that has caused me so much pain. It was time; that passion was going to do great harm to your character, mind, body and soul. I must even admit that you have already been adversely affected. So, make haste, my Child, to rid yourself of a private enemy so formidable for you. I like to convince myself that we shall not have to speak of it any more in the future.

I do not see the need for giving up the piano and singing; it only seemed to me that your were not to apply yourself too much to them, because it will not be necessary for you to give piano lessons, whereas it is very necessary for you to excel in the sciences, since you have to teach them, by reason of your position and duty.

For the rest, my dear Child, apply yourself above all to pleasing your divine Spouse, and as a result there is no further need to doubt that you will form yourself in every respect to what the Holy Rule requires of you. The heart of Sister Bathilde must be a temple in which Jesus Christ finds his delight. So, remove from it everything that could displease him and strive to put into it what you know is pleasing to him.

Good-bye, my Child, God knows to what extent you are dear to me in spite of your faults, because you are seriously working at overcoming them.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

16th November 1834

L.S.J.M.J.

11-10

Dear Sister Bathilde

We think we have noticed a lack of sincerity in Maria. Her illness has seemed to us to be a game which is scarcely of her age. I recommend that you not let her write in English any longer. It is a lack of confidence in her mistresses, and she misuses that little means.

I hope that in your case, my dear Sister, reason will have the upper hand of that bodily sensitivity. I am asking the good God for that, because I know the dangers of these kinds of troubles. Your heart must belong to Jesus Christ alone.

Yours very devotedly
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated -1835)

L.S.J.M.J.

11-11

Dear Sister Bathilde

I am delighted to know you are well on the way to correcting your character. I shall help you with my prayers; but do not pardon yourself for anything that comes from the bad principle.

Yes, my Child, I have sent on your letters in the past to Sister Flore. That Sister, thank God, is getting on very well in every respect.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Date cut off -1835)

Praise be J.M.J.

11-12

I am very much obliged to you, my dear Child, for the good wishes your heart is offering for your spiritual Father. Accept my thanks for them and the assurance that I too will pray specially for you in the course of the New Year.

You may be very sure that I only put to Maria the usual questions and which could not have any deplorable consequences for anyone. But it has been noticed that Maria who is full of vanity, very thoughtless and superficial, has also acquired the detestable habit of resorting to lying. Let Sister Adélaïde read this. As for the errands she says she had done, with the very Rev. Mother, I beg you to look into the matter.

For the rest, my dear Child, take advantage of the stay of your very Rev. and very good Mother, to advance a little in perfection. Now that your physical illness the sensitiveness is cured, direct all your efforts towards what you know is pleasing to your divine Spouse. I wish you no longer, under any pretext whatsoever, to allow your heart which belongs to Jesus, to be disturbed or too affected. Watch over this matter. It is of the greatest importance to you. You know, my dear Sister, that I know my children and that you will always have in me,

A very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

5th of the year 1836

Take good care not to believe me too occupied with important things, to dare writing to me; I do not know anything more important than to be useful to my children.

Praise be J.M.J.

11-13

Yes, my dear Sister, your good wishes pleased me very much, and it is with a full heart that I have said amen, amen, at the end of the outpouring of prayers your love for your Father and all our dear family, led you to make. May we, my Child, keep and bring to fruition the graces our good God has given us during the days of mercy we have just spent. Prudence, meekness, the humble realization of our wretchedness and that true and active charity will make us do great things in the souls confided to our care. Hoping that Mary will help you to make good use of these heavenly favors, I feel full of confidence both for myself and for my dear children, whose interests and temporal and spiritual needs I do not for a moment forget. Be cheerful, be generous and put your affairs in the hands of our good and powerful Mother.

Address yourself to your mistress general, my dear Sister, to find out what your instruction requires. I shall content myself with making one remark to you, it is that you may neither study nor read during recreation times, without express permission. You would be storing up straw for purgatory instead of pearls for heaven. Avoid that mishap.

I am yours devotedly in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

30th of Mary's Month 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

11-14

I am taking advantage of the first leisure moment I have, my dear Sister, to converse with you. The opening of your heart that you made to me is all the more pleasing to me since I have for a long time been wanting this opportunity of rendering you a few services that my true desire to see you happy was urging me to refuse you no longer. Your excessive sensitiveness is not incurable. It so little suits your age, your sublime profession, and the good qualities the Lord has accorded you, that it is corrected without any effort, provided you do not refuse the help of a very determined will. Well then; shun all internal and external coaxing; avoid every thought or feeling coming from your ingrained melancholy; bravely fight against the naughty me that often finds itself first in your plans, whereas your divine Spouse must always have the first place. Make an effort, dear Child, and you will soon be convinced that justice alone makes us happy. What use could it be to a man to know everything, if he is not calm, and if he has an anxious heart and mind? Live cheerfully, according to your Holy Rule, study for God and never for some motive beneath you, and I predict to you that in a very short time, you will have peace of heart which is the source of corporal and spiritual well-being.

It is true that the very Rev. Mother has just informed me of what you meant to tell me in a passage in your letter that referred to her. But, my child, that good Mother does not remember the

faults of her children in Jesus Christ only to commend you more earnestly to the Lord. So be at rest on that point and love your Superiors for God and in God.

Finally, I give you the assurance that we should like to see ourselves capable of obtaining for you the virtues of your divine Spouse, meekness and humility, at the cost even of great sacrifices. You know how sincere I am and how truly I am

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd October 1836

Give me some details about your studies. But show me by the use of time that you are not studying or reading during recreation or outside the time directed to these exercises.

Praise be J.M.J.

11-15

My dear Sister

As bodily health is indispensable for fulfilling the duties of a religious called upon to give instruction, I recommend you to be moderate in everything and to see the good pleasure of your divine Spouse in your occupations. We would only have acquired the wind, if we have acquired knowledge against the designs of the Lord. What use is it to be knowledgeable, if one does not carry out the holy will of God? So, my child, leave all study for the moment that obedience does not impose on you or at least does not permit you to do. You are young enough to educate yourself but you are not too young to strengthen your temperament and character. That, dear Child, is what a Father believes he has to say to you, who loves you and loves your perfection as he loves the advantages of your Institute, that is to say, in God and according to his holy will. I have been praying and I will pray with confidence to obtain for you health of body, heart and mind. Be generous, work in harmony with

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

23rd October 1836

There are some very good things in what you sent me. May God be blessed for them.

Praise be J.M.J.

11-16

My dear Sister

If you like to offer me good wishes for my happiness, I can assure you that I too feel a sweet pleasure in occupying myself with being useful to you. It seems to me I am doing something very pleasing to our good God, when I commend to him your progress in the way of perfection, or see to the means of enabling you to fulfill the duties of your sublime vocation. The dispositions that grace has put in your soul, and the talents you have received, are as many titles to the efforts of my zeal to enable you to bear fruits our Institute has the right to expect of you.

The reflections that the premature death of your Sister Eulalie has suggested to you, will be useful to you, if you banish from them every sad thought, every gloomy notion. Do everything through obedience and devotedness to Jesus Christ, and it will all be of benefit to you at the hour of death.

I find good things in your essays; but I need more spare time than I have at the moment to give you a considered opinion, or to make a judgment on them that can guide you in your studies. Meanwhile, my dear Child, do not work too hard; take advantage of the stay of your very Rev. Mother and be cheerful and always in the presence of Jesus, your divine Spouse.

You know that I am sincerely

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

30th January 1837

L.S.J.M.J.

11-17

I received at Bruges, the letter you sent me, my dear Sister. I am delighted with your wish to belong solely to your divine Spouse and to make yourself more and more useful to the humble family of Mary and Joseph, of which you have the honor of being a member. It is God who gives good sentiments, so it is to him that I address my thanks. As for you, my Child, carefully cultivate these gifts from heaven and be more generous in reality.

The fanciful project you write to me about must not occupy your mind any more. It is impractical.

As for the watches you write to me about, they would not fit in with the simplicity, with the poverty of the daughters of Mary and Joseph. All that could be permitted would be to have a clock or watch in the classroom for class use, and so it would have to be fixed on the wall, or either fixed on the small machine or watch holder.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

25th September 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

11-18

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

The sentiments you express to me are very pleasing to me, and I thank you for them with all my heart. I know that your usual way of testifying to me your filial piety consisting in commendations to your divine Spouse, is most advantageous to me, but I must admit that a little letter from time to time gives me great pleasure. So obtain that satisfaction for me sometimes, when your occupations allow you to do so; you may count on my gratitude.

It is with joy that I see you are understanding more and more what is required of you by the sublime state to which divine goodness has raised you; be courageous, my Child, and generous and you will appreciate better from day to day, how the yoke of the Lord is light and that Jesus Christ rewards what one does for him.

Keep on reading the treatise on cheerfulness; you will find in it the remedies for all your failings; you will imperceptibly overcome the difficulties nature opposes to the designs of grace.

On my side, I am continuing to pray for you. I understand the need we all have for help from on high to make us worthy of accomplishing with success the ministry of mercy we are charged with.

Receive my blessing and believe in the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th December 1838

Lost/missing

11-19

L.S.J.M.J.

11-20

My dear Sister

I hope your health is completely restored and that you have received abundant graces during these days of happiness. Be convinced that I do not fail to pray specially for you.

Give me news, when your Rev. Mother writes to me. Just tell me how everything is going. If Sr. Adelaide has already begun to take part of your class, if all is getting better and better in the classes, and if the pupils are profiting by your care, etc.

Good-bye, my dear Child, time does not allow me to converse with you any longer. I am no less sincerely

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

23rd of Mary's month (1838)

Praise be J.M.J.

11-21

Let us speak no longer, my Child, of your childish acts, nor of what I thought I had to say to you. Since you are making efforts to be what you have to be, you will soon be what you want to be for the glory of God.

Prepare yourself for the feast of Christmas with simplicity, confidence, cheerfulness and zeal. God, who becomes man to save us, that is the great subject of our meditations.

Talk to the pupils about the great blessing of Redemption. Talk to them of the love of God which reduces him to being a child in order to save us.

Teach them to always recite the Angelus with respect and devotion, so as to honor the incarnation of the Word in order to redeem man who was lost.

I will commend you, as well as your children to the Lord Jesus, at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

All yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated- probably Dec. 1838)

11-22

It is with so sweet and consoling a sentiment that I am thinking of your happiness, my very dear Sister Bathilde, that I could not find the right expression for it. So you are now the Spouse of that divine Savior, of that Jesus who died for us! Oh, my dear Child, what ineffable happiness and how your heart must be burning with love! I also feel intense joy at the mere memory of that sign of the predilection of God for you, and the happy disposition in which I find you for responding to the designs of the Lord. Never let go of the calm your heavenly Spouse gives you and that we have a right to find in you. If you are attentive to the voice of Jesus, you will work successfully in his vineyard, you will pass on to others the peace he has merited for you and you yourself will advance daily the work of your own perfection. So, enjoy the sweet things of heaven in faith and hope, until you possess them in reality and unadulterated in the eternal kingdom. Pray for the one you know is sincerely devoted to you in Jesus our Savior.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME LOUISE BUSSCHAERT (*)

Born Aug. 10, 1806; Professed July 29, 1835; Died Oct. 2, 1839

(8 Letters dated 1834 to 1838: Nos. 12-1 to 12-8)

Note: There are 14 letters addressed to a 'Sister Louise'. It is most likely that they are addressed to two different Sisters. Letters 12-1 to 12-8 to Sister Louise Busschaert. She was professed in 1835 and Died in 1839.

Letters 8-9 to 8-14 are most likely written to Sister Louise Descamps. She was professed in 1842 and died in 1876. The dates of professions and deaths seem to indicate two different recipients.

Praise be J.M.J.

12-1

Mademoiselle

I was very pleased with the sentiments I found expressed in your letter. It is only the light of grace that can give the knowledge and happy dispositions I see in your soul. I begin by thanking God for his goodness to you and then I urge you to be very faithful to holy grace. You may no longer be preoccupied with your past life, and you must avoid all thoughts that would lead to sadness; the compassion that the memory of the passion of the Lord gives you, is not that sadness that I forbid you to have; so follow the attraction of God and you will learn to love him with all your heart. When you love our good God like that, you will do all he asks of you perfectly and become a true Spouse of Jesus Christ.

I am pleased to see that you are applying yourself to study so as to become useful to the Institute of the Sisters of Mary.

Receive, Mademoiselle, my blessing, and believe me sincerely

Your devoted servant in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th June 1834

Our good Brother Benoit is getting on well, apart from those fears, he is an excellent novice and, if he overcomes his scruples, he will render service to the Holy Church of Jesus Christ.

I would very much like your cousin Yzerbyt to come and see me without anyone at her convent knowing it. Would you not do well to write to her sister the Beguine?

Praise be J.M.J.

12-2

My dear Sister

I feel real pleasure in informing you that I approve of the choice, that the Rev. Sisters voters of the Convent of St. John the Baptist have made in favor of you. So you will be admitted to vows, very dear Child. May our good God be blessed! It is he who is granting you that favor; it is even he who is making you desire it. How good he is! What will you render to him for so many favors? Ah! you are going to prepare better and better for him that heart he has chosen, you are going to give him generously all that you have and are without any reservations. Prepare yourself for this act, the most important in your life; prepare yourself with calm and with a generous courage full of confidence in Mary.

I cannot fix the date yet when I shall have the happiness of uniting you to Jesus Christ; it will be in July, towards the end of the month. So you will have plenty of time to make your preparations. Announce this good news to our Brother Benoit. He is not yet rid of his doubts. Perhaps our good God will bless your words and he will finally put an end to his everlasting indecisions.

I shall take care to commend you to our good God at Holy Mass; moreover, do not worry and do not neglect to pray for

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

13th June 1835

L.S.J.M.J.

12-3

The interest I have in the novices, my dear daughter, makes me often think of you. I am praying our good God to grant you the graces you need to carry out worthily the important function with which you seem in fact to be charged. I am to-day specially asking St. Bonaventure, that excellent appreciator of the religious life, to pray for my spiritual Children and above all for the Superiors charged with guiding their brothers and sisters and forming the novices. Join with me in order to make my prayers efficacious.

You will want to give me a short note about each of the novices drawn from what you yourself have noticed. You may add to it the observations your Superior and others have suggested to you. Tell the novices also to write to me, but they may not ask to be helped by anyone and no one may help them, nor even see their letters that I charge you with sending to me.

Receive, my daughter, the blessing of

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Date cut off. ...1836

Praise be J.M.J.

12-4

No, my Child, I was not surprised when I did not receive any formula for the act of consecration to our good Mother; I knew the reason and I knew it was not laziness that was the reason; thanks to divine goodness, you are unacquainted with that vice. I also knew it was not for lack of love for that heavenly Mother; I know both your heart and the tender sentiments it has for Mary. Yes, you are the child of Mary and you want to be so as faithfully as our weak nature allows. For my part, I thank our Mother for obtaining the cure of a Child who generously makes use of health for the glory of God and the advantage of the family of the daughters of Mary and Joseph. Take a little care of yourself so as to assist the merciful designs of Jesus whose goodness you are experiencing.

Receive the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

10th November 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

12-5

Dear Sister Louise

I had already learned that our good God had been putting you to the test; but I was clearly counting on the fact that you would not have gone back on the sentiments of submission that animate you. I give thanks to the Lord for the goodness he is showing you. Accept with confidence what your beloved offers you; these gifts are only results of his love for you. Lovingly kiss the hand that offers them to you.

I have had the braid sent as you requested and have added to the parcel a few more crosses for Sister Marie-Anne to choose from. I think I must avoid unnecessary expenses. Our dear Sister Marie-Anne would explain that to you, if it were necessary. Give her my kind regards, and believe, dear daughter, that I am always zealously,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th July 1837

Next week, I am going to see dear Brother Benoit who is getting on wonderfully. Tell your former Mistress that I am going to see her nephews who are also getting on very well. It seems to me more and more evident that our veils have to be altered at the back. At Normanboch (?) they hang very well at the back, also they are very long. Look well into this matter with Sister Marie-Anne and let a pattern be sent for the sisters at Alost to examine.

L.S.J.M.J.

12-6

My dear Sister Louise

I thank our good God for the graces he is granting you and I strongly urge you to train yourself in the holy love of Jesus Christ. You have received a mind that understands its duties and a heart that loves them. Always make good use of both of them and your divine Spouse will be pleased.

You are right; there must be subordination among the lay sisters. There must be in their duties a first and a second and the latter must obey the former. It is impossible to make things go well when everybody is equal. How can one practice humility with the foregone conclusion that one does not want to be corrected except by the Mother or other higher Superiors? Arrange all of that with the Rev. Mother, without delay, and before the Very Rev. Mother leaves Mouscron.

I give you my blessing, dear Child, and am praying for you. Pray also for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

10th December 1837

L.S.J.M.J.

12-7

Just a few words to tell you, my dear Child, you must arm yourself with courage and submission to what our good God has judged it good to do. His adorable will must find us disposed to want his good pleasure in everything. So be at peace; do not let your heart be troubled: Jesus Christ must be enough for you.

Our dear Brother Benoit has settled his affairs at Ghent and Bruges. Blessed be God for that!

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of
Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

29th September 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

12-8

My dear Sister Louise

I am willingly taking advantage of an opportunity that present itself to say a few words to you: since our good God is pleased to try you with bodily ailments, you will do well to apply yourself above all to being very submissive to all your divine Spouse wishes. But you will also with simplicity and great docility, do all they tell you in order to regain your health. Let our Mother Mary see that the Institute has few subjects, and that we want to have the happiness of doing a great deal of work in the vineyard of the Lord; that, if you can be useful for that purpose, you are asking on the part of your Father in Jesus Christ, to have strength and other means that she knows you need in order to fulfill the object of our vocation. Then you will be at peace and expect everything from the holy and adorable will of the Lord.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th December 1838

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME LOUISE DESCAMPS

Born May 4, 1809; Professed Sept. 27, 1841; Died Aug. 21, 1876

(6 Letters dated 1842 to 1858: Nos. 12-9 to 12-14)

Praise be J.M.J.

12-9

I am pleased, my dear Child, to accept the invitation you send me to give thanks with you to our good God for the extraordinary favors you have received from his generous hand. It is right for us to recognize the blessings of the Lord, and it is a duty to testify our gratitude to him. A well-trained heart finds delight in the sentiments of the good things it has received, dear daughter, taste the sweetness of divine love. May charity enlighten you more and more, may it guide you in all your steps and give joys to your mind and body in the career in which Jesus Christ has placed you. Carefully set aside all that could upset the pious calm of a heart that your divine Spouse has been pleased to love, in order to rest there and maintain a sacred fire that is to burn eternally.

Pray also on your part, my child, for

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th September 1842

L.S.J.M.J.

12-10

I was sorry not to have met you, my dear daughter, on the day of the installation of the Council. However, I have no less zealously fulfilled my duty of commending you to our good God. I have just been offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass to the Lord for the Superiors of my children in Jesus Christ and have prayed specially for you. Generously open your mind to the lights and your heart to the impulses of grace, so as to be a good instrument in the hands of God for the good of the family of the children of Mary and Joseph.

Receive then the blessing of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th October 1853

Give my kind regards to your dear sisters on the Council

L.S.J.M.J.

12-11

You will have learned, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ that my health is good, and I cherish the hope that my spiritual children will obtain for me the complete cure of the neuralgia that has been tormenting me for rather a long time. I thank you for the interest you have in me. May our good God deign to reward the sentiments of filial piety that have always distinguished you.

I think you can model yourself on the counsels you have received from me. You are perfectly well known to me and experience in guiding souls provides one with lights; you have yourself experienced that since you have had a share in the direction of the Novices. Remain at peace in the humble knowledge of your inadequacy and go with confidence along the way holy obedience is tracing out for you; it will certainly lead you to God.

Always count on my sincere devotedness; never doubt the goodness of your divine Spouse, and rely on the sentiments of sweet mercy he nurtures in his heart for his Spouses.

Continue also, my dear daughter, to pray for

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd February 1858

J.S.J.M.J.

12-12

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am very pleased to find again those sentiments of confidence and submission that I have known you to have for many years, and that have drawn down graces on you and on the house of Coloma, in more or less crucial circumstances. Always preserve those pious dispositions and you will always have to congratulate yourself on them. Experience has strengthened you in the conviction that the good of the Institute and that of each member of that dear family are the sole objects of my vigils, my sacrifices and all my efforts. I can admit it, my dear daughter, in that you do me justice. I have no other interest and no other aims than the prosperity of the Children of Mary and Joseph, in the way traced out for them, in the service of the Holy Church.

I approve of the precautionary measures you have taken in conjunction with your sisters of the council. One must avoid giving rise to any kind of anxiety. The calm of the religious must be scrupulously preserved. I have had the happiness of finding it in all our houses on my last visitation. The peace of the Lord reigns in them; they are not the least in the world worried about the chapter meeting. I was really edified by that. They commend the matter to God and are silent.

In order to preserve these happy dispositions, from this moment no members of the Institute will go to Coloma before the closing of the chapter, except the Superiors and the delegates, who, in the terms of the Constitution, have to accompany them to the chapter. No pupil may be at the Mother House from the beginning of the retreat of the Ladies until after the closure of the same. The dignity of the Institute requires these precautions.

You will be kind enough to inform the Madame Superior General of this, and take the steps necessary to see that the Superiors are informed of it in good time, throughout whole Institute.

A further reason that puts us under an obligation to avoid journeys by our Ladies from now until the return of the pupils after the holidays, is the obligatory movement of the Superiors and delegates; more than twenty Ladies on their outward and return journeys will be seen on the railways, because of the chapter. Adding to them those who, as in ordinary years, will be changing convents, the number of Ladies of Mary who will be traveling in September will be considerable this year.

A final reflection, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the Superiors as well as the religious charged with electing the delegates, seemed to me to understand the great responsibility of the acts they are called upon to perform according to their Constitutions. They are praying and abstaining from talking among themselves about what concerns the persons. I can tell you that no Superior has consulted me about what it will be fitting for her to do at the chapter, as regards the continuation of Mme Olympiade or on the choice of a Superior General. One, or perhaps two ordinary religious have put a few questions to me about the choice of delegates. So you see that what you are worrying about is only of slight importance. You must let divine Providence act and pray. The result will be what pleases our good God and for the greater good of the family of which you are a member and which you love sincerely, as you tell me you do, and as I believe you do.

With a very good heart, I give you my blessing

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th August 1858

I am reopening a letter in order to answer a question contained in the remarks you sent me yesterday. One may not do anything that is wrong. One may not nominate a delegate of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

L.S.J.M.J.

12-13

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

A few months ago when the Lord was trying the house of the Queen of Angels by frequent ailments of the mistresses, Mme Marcelline wrote me these fine words: "Mme Flore is wonderful in her devotedness; she makes up for everything." On my last journey, I was surprised to find Mme Flore had become thin and tired; that was the result of her wonderful devotedness. To avoid the consequences of that excessive fatigue, I charged you with taking care of your dear Sisters. The parents who have seen her recently have been struck by the state of Mme Flore. I am writing to you again, my dear daughter, to draw your attention to the health of that Lady. Be so kind as to tell me what precautions you have taken as a result of my recommendation; what the doctor said or prescribed. It seems to be that complete rest is indispensable for the state of Mme Flore. She will not be able I think, to deal with the young Ladies who will be in retreat, and she herself will not be able to follow that retreat, nor that of the Ladies.

Do me the pleasure, Madame, to give me, without delay, the news and a response to my letter.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th August 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

12-14

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letter gave me great pleasure. I thank you for the good news you have given me. The ceremonial may be followed only in the points in which it is not contrary to the Constitutions. Now our Constitutions, art. two, no.3 states literally: each convent in which there are at least five voting Ladies chooses a delegate from the latter. So, everything has been done in accordance with that circular, in the desired manner and in conformity with the Constitutions.

Please inform Mme Superior General that she is mistaken in thinking that I said I would come to Malines for the profession. I may have counted on coming there for the 18th, but in no way for the 10th.

Receive, with my blessing, the assurance of my sincere devotedness,

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th August 1858

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME JUSTINE VAN CROMBRUGGHE

(Grandniece of C. G. Van Crombrugghe)

Born July 10, 1845; Professed Aug. 30, 1867; Died May 16, 1914

(16 Letters dated 1859 - 1864)

L.S.J.M.J.

13-1

You always give me pleasure, my dear Child, when you give me news of yourself, and in simplicity keep me up-to-date about what the grace of our good Jesus is working in your heart. I am pleased with the dispositions you reveal to me. Nourish them by practicing them, and with the conviction of the need for the help of divine grace for rendering to the Lord what the favors he is granting you so generously, require of you. Go on along the way to which the hand of the heavenly Father has introduced you, following with simplicity and loving confidence, the impetus you will receive from it.

Until I have the opportunity of speaking to you in person about Mary and Joseph, I recommend you always to honor sincerely those two great Patrons. I give you my blessing, my Child.

Your devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd April 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

13-2

I am pleased, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, with the submission you are showing to the decisions of your Superiors, whatever it must cost you to leave the novitiate. Fortunately, the absence will not be for long. The good dispositions our good God is giving you do not take away the means that the Rule grants to the novices.

I am praying for you, my Child. Continue doing so also for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th April 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

13-3

Your letter, Mademoiselle, gave me great pleasure. In it I find fresh proofs that you understand the designs of God on you, and wish to respond to those designs of mercy of the Father you have in Heaven. I congratulate you on those dispositions; they are graces you owe to our good Jesus. Yes, my Child, it is God the Savior who is so generously granting you those favors. I also see with keen satisfaction that you understand that mysterious way, and wish to respond generously to the loving invitations of the Lord. Persevere in those sentiments; they will lead you to eternal happiness, after procuring for you the sweetest of satisfactions in this place of exile, that of having worked for the salvation of your ...(end of margin torn).

Receive, my Child, the blessing of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd August 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

13-4

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me great pleasure. The generous sentiments of submission and devotion to the cause of the Lord that animate you are precious gifts. They are fruits of the grace of God the Savior. Always follow the impulse of that supernatural force and you will fulfill your duties to the great satisfaction of your Superiors, the true good of your pupils and in conformity with the designs of the religious Institute of which you are aspiring to become a member. The time in the novitiate passes quickly; apply yourself, my Child, to acquiring those fundamental virtues I have often talked to you about: humility, meekness, interior and exterior obedience. Do not be content with the theory; get on to the practice; look for the opportunities. Beg your Superior to allow you acts of the virtues; I am talking to you about. I know you are strong enough and enlightened enough by supernatural light to speak to you as I do. By the preceding, you recognize the devoted guide whom our good God charges with leading you. He is helping you with his prayers. He knows that (you) also are praying for him.

When the opportunity allows you to write to me again, without tiring yourself, add a few words on the way you have succeeded in putting my counsels into practice, in your studies and classes and in your health. (One line is almost entirely obliterated)

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st December 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

13-5

I am very pleased, my dear Child, to know you are at the Novitiate. I congratulate you on that favor and thank our good God for granting it to you.

You will work more directly at forming yourself (word illegible) the heart of Jesus, before uniting yourself with him for ever, and at acquiring the sentiments of meekness and humility, that will make you pleasing to your divine Spouse and fit for the work for which he destines you. For my

part, I shall pray the Lord to make you understand that he loves you and want to be generously loved by you.

Your devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Date cut off) -1861

L.S.J.M.J.

13-6

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me the greatest pleasure. I was waiting for one with great longing. You tell me what interest me, with that simplicity that proves to me you are preserving that confidence that has been useful to you and must still be. Always seek to know the wishes of your divine Spouse, and show yourself generous in submitting to them in every circumstance. Endure dryness with humble courage and loving submission to the will of Jesus Christ.

Do not forget that your age and your health require moderation in your studies and precautions in class.

I want your letters and mine to be seen only by you, me and the Madame Superior General. You must conform to that Rule of our religious family.

Receive, my daughter, with my blessing, the assurance of the sincere devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th December 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

13-7

You have done well, my dear daughter, to put off writing to me for a few weeks. I thank you for that delicacy and above all for the prayers you have offered for me during the great solemnities that we have been celebrating.

I do not forget you either, believe me indeed, my Child, in my prayers and at the Holy Sacrifice I have the happiness of offering every day.

I am happy to see that you understand what the proprieties require of you, as of all my children, in our relations with each other. Yes, my dear daughter, it is your right to chat with your Father with an open heart. It is also the duty of your Father to profit by your openness of heart to guide you in the way of happiness to which Jesus Christ is calling you. Your letters never tire me.

Always love to do the holy will of God. That is the whole secret of the spiritual life. As for occupations, avoid exercises that require you to use your lungs beyond your strength. You know that for a few more years you must be careful of your chest and neither speak more nor louder than duty absolutely requires.

I like to hope that you will get the blue belt as soon as you have the right to it. One communion more per week is a favor that I wish you to enjoy as often as you can.

Receive, my child, the assurance of the sincere devotedness of your

Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd January 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

13-8

(Dictated Letter)

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I regret for delaying so long in writing a few words to you My excuse, your charity will make you find it in the present time of the year and above all in the weak state of my eyes.

Remember, my child, what I have written to you previously and make use of the excellent book I pointed out to you.

(In the Founder's hand)

I commend you with confidence to the very good heart of your merciful Savior Jesus Christ. Set your mind at ease, my dear Daughter, by thinking of the divine Child who has been the object of

your most tender feelings of gratitude and affection, at the great solemnities we have just celebrated.

Receive my blessing and the assurance of my paternal devotedness.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th January 1864

L.S.J.M.J.

13-9

The details you give me, my dear Daughter, prove to me that our good God is leading you by the way of privations, after making you feel his presence and tangible help for a fairly considerable time. I bless those attentions on the part of your divine Spouse. You must recognize in them an attentiveness full of charity. You are more abandoned to your own strengths and your weaknesses. In this way you will better understand that basic virtue, holy humility. You will admire that ineffable goodness that supports you and loves you, you who feel so unworthy of that distinction.

What! you will say to yourself, God deigns to love me, and I know from experience that I am unworthy; I can find in myself only tangible proofs of unworthiness! These considerations will lead you to a sincere and lasting feeling of gratitude, submission and abnegation of all natural affection for the things of this world. I want you to repay the attentions of my Savior. I shall henceforth live for him. With his grace, I shall serve him, without feeling like doing so, providing that in all things, I accomplish his good pleasure. Such will be your sentiments, for already, thanks to God, such are the sentiments I find in your letter. They are worthy of a soul that Jesus Christ enlightens and that wants above all the fulfillment of the very holy and adorable will of her divine Spouse. May God be blessed for that!

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th August 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

13-10

Just a few words, my dear Child, to tell you that the principles set out in your letter are true ones, and you can follow them with complete assurance. Certainly, our good Jesus loves you, and the trial to which he wishes to submit you, must reassure you completely.

Believe in your devoted Father whom the good Savior has given you and who knows you.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd February 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

13-11

I have learned, my Child, that our good God is trying you through your health. Knowing your submission to the adorable will of the Father, we have in Heaven, I hope that you will not be upset, that you will do what the doctor prescribes, and your Superiors recommend, and recover from the illness that causes you some anxiety from time to time.

You know I am commending you to our good and powerful Mother Mary and our very devoted Father St. Joseph. Count on their help and keep your mind at rest, and your heart calm.

Receive, my Child, my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th of Mary's month 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

13-12

Here are a few words in reply to your letter, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. No, thank God, you are not in a state of tepidity. Be calm on that subject and have confidence in Jesus Christ. Another day, I will write to you at greater length.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th August 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

13-13

Your last letters, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, have given me very sweet satisfaction. The sentiments with which our good God is deigning to adorn your heart, in which he is pleased to make his dwelling place even without always manifesting his presence to your senses, are a pledge of that true and unvarying love that he bears you, the indications of which you will always find when the good of your soul requires it. The periods of darkness as well as the gleams of light are in turn the means used by your divine Spouse to sanctify his beloved. Thanks to Jesus Christ, you understand this teaching, and profit by everything that happens to advance towards Heaven. That is a reason for real joy for your devoted Father.

Persevere in that sweet self-denial and you will have the happiness of doing good to souls and storing up treasures of graces for eternity. I unite myself willingly with you in thanking God for his blessings, and asking him to continue to give them to us for his glory and our sanctification.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd October 1862

Be sensible about taking care of your health. In reply to the question that your faith and just confidence in prayer have suggested to you, I have the consolation of telling you that I feel the effects of the filial piety that my children in Jesus Christ obtain for me.

L.S.J.M.J.

13-14

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

(Dictated)

In the short letter I last addressed to you, I omitted to speak to you about the resolutions you made in your last retreat. I shall say first of all that I approve of all of them, but I think you will do better to make your particular examen on No. 6.

I have a good enough opinion of the common sense the Lord has endowed you with, to think I can dispense myself from repeating to you the care I recommended you to have of your health. You will always take care to keep your Reverend Mother up-to-date about all that concerns that subject, reminding yourself that you do not belong to yourself, but are a member of the family of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her blessed Spouse.

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of (your)

Very devoted Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th October 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

13-15

Yes, my Child, I have understood you. I have recognized you from the start and I saw that the Superior General judged you wisely. Far from feeling for you sentiments contrary to those you have known me to have since your childhood, it seems to me that your last letter has added to that confidence I have had in your will to love God more than yourself, and to serve him generously, notwithstanding the difficulties his service would present to your natural inclinations and personal tastes.

To spare myself the fatigue that detailed explanations would cause me, I will content myself with telling you that the principle that the Superior General indicated to you is true. You can follow it. Then, you will read Article 3 of Chapter V of the excellent treatise on interior peace. Ask your Superior General for that book without indicating what you are to see in it.

Finally, my dear child, always count on the mercies of God the Savior who set you apart when you were still very young, and is preserving for you the distinguished place he has given you in his adorable heart. Also count on the august Mary and our good Patron St. Joseph.

You know that I am very devoted to you in our good Master Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th of St. Joseph's month 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

13-16

My very dear Daughter in Jesus Christ

On reading, yesterday, the passage about Mary Magdalen in the Holy Gospel, in which that ardent servant of Jesus Christ is searching in a kind of distress, and does not find him nor recognize him, although our good Savior is at her side, I thought of you, my poor Child. This feature of the story of Magdalen is the image of what happens to many souls that are sincerely devoted to the Lord and whose love their divine Spouse wishes to test, by hiding from their eyes by the withdrawal of the awareness of the consolation of grace. This state alarms and disturbs them and makes them afraid 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, who they think is far from them, is in their hearts through his grace, and around them through his protection.

Learn, my Child, that your confidence in Jesus must increase, when you do not feel his tangible presence. It is, in fact, because that true friend wants to arouse in you sentiments more in conformity with those his heart has for you, a livelier faith, a hope more detached from every mixture of your own self-sufficiency, a love pure and confident in his infinitely divine mercy.

So, as long as the absence of Jesus Christ distresses you, as long as you are afraid of displeasing him, be sure that his love is in your heart, that you are his friend and that you will feel this when the trial is over.

Meanwhile, remember what you read in the treatise on peace of soul, and continue reading that excellent work.

Receive my blessing and believe in my devotedness.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME ELEANORE LABOULAIS

Mistress General of the Institute

Born Sept. 17, 1829; Professed Sept. 14, 1855; Died Apr. 15, 1895

(16 Letters Dated 1853 to 1862)

L.S.J.M.J.

14-1

It is with great pleasure, Mademoiselle that I have seen that I have been fortunate enough to rid you of a prejudice you had conceived with regard to me. It is so pleasing to me to have the confidence of the persons that divine Providence deigns to confide to me for direction, that I should purchase it even at the price of great sacrifice. I know that the success of my ministry partly depends on that attitude in my spiritual children. Let us bless our good God for this result of our first conversation. I dare to conclude from it that you will find among us and in me the way of perfection, and the means of traveling securely and with complete success, along that way which has eternal happiness as its end.

I am very pleased with the details you give me of the way you acquit yourself of your daily occupations. May our good God continue to give you his graces, and especially the one of fulfilling each of your obligations with perfection, and without trouble and anxiety, but with love, and you will advance fast along the way of perfection and store up treasures of grace for heaven while savoring here below the happiness of serving the Holy Church and enjoying that hundredfold promised to evangelical perfection.

Always rely on my true desire to prove to you that you will always find in me the devotedness that charity inspires.

It will not be due to me if you do not receive the holy habit at the time you desire to have it.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th December 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

14-2

I think, my good young Lady, that you somewhat exaggerate your miseries. However, it seems to me that in the midst of your rather outlandish judgments of yourself, I find certain indications that lead me to believe that our good God is no longer treating you as a beginner, but is already offering you the food of souls more enlightened by the lights of faith. In short, it is by the way of depriving you of the awareness of certain things you find encouraging that the Lord is pleased to lead you. If that way is not the most pleasant and sweetest, it is the one Jesus Christ, our good Savior and the most perfect of models, chose for himself. Walk bravely along it; humble yourself with your miseries; admire the goodness of God who loves you in spite of your imperfections, and whose love goes so far as to call you to the signal honor of raising you to himself to be his chosen friend, to be his Spouse.

May this consideration make you find the secret of those conversations with God in the moments set aside for prayer and meditation; may it make you sanctify, by the perfection of your motives, all your external actions, all your works, all your efforts to respond to the designs of your superiors, those of the Institute, and those of God and his Church.

I will make it my duty to help you with my counsels and prayers.

Your devoted servant in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd February 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

14-3

It was with sweet pleasure, my dear Child, that I received the news of the deed so happily accomplished on the 14th of this month. It would have been pleasant for me to receive your holy promises as the minister of the very merciful God who is raising you to himself and handing you over to my care. We have both of us, made the sacrifice of that legitimate satisfaction, but because of it I shall not be less full of zeal and good will towards you, and you will not give me less proof of confidence and submission to all that my sentiments of paternal devotedness suggest to me for your happiness. May the Lord be a thousand times blessed for the grace he has just granted you, and do you, dear object of the favors of our heavenly Master, accept my congratulations and the very sincere expression of the sentiments of devotedness I have for you, proofs of which, with the help of divine grace, I will give you as long as I live. Always pray for me, and count on my true desire to see you respond to the designs of Jesus, the beloved of your heart.

I joyfully call myself your Father in Our Lord.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th September 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

14-4

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letter strengthens me in the opinion I expressed to you, that the Lord is destining you for a kind of life of faith, for a way perhaps less pleasant to nature, but also less exposed to the illusions of the senses. I approve of the way in which you received the deprivation that marked the feast of the 8th of this month. I hope, you say, that our good Jesus has taken my wishes into consideration. Nothing must be more dear to you than the adorable will of your divine Spouse.

Accustom yourself, my dear child, to that heartfelt submission, that forgetting of your preferences in view of the good pleasure of God. As for the sensitivity that causes you some distress when humiliation comes your way, do not worry about it; the accomplishment of the duties of your state, the deeper knowledge of your nothingness and the need to seek to please only the Spouse of your soul, will make you more resolute and more indifferent to what concerns you every time your beloved is not displeased with you.

I am very glad to learn that you have acquired the knowledge necessary for teaching our mother language. Among the Ladies of Mary, that subject does not receive the care its importance demands. I like to think you will gratefully receive a work on the Flemish language and that your Superior and Mme Euphrosyne will have it read during the time devoted to the studies of the Ladies. I shall take advantage of the first opportunity of sending it to you.

However, you must not limit to the Flemish language, the study I have so much recommended to you. That goes without saying. You will do well to follow a plan. It will be necessary to ask for one. Your writing is good but it is a little too small.

Be convinced, my dear daughter, that I will make it my duty to commend you every day to the Lord, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th December 1855

When, after the occupations of the New Year, you have read the pamphlet on the usefulness of the Flemish language, the Madame Superior will be kind enough to send it to Coloma, so that it may be read there also. It is the work of a Jesuit Father.

L.S.J.M.J.

14-5

Since I am writing to your sister Mme Léontine, I shall address a few lines to you also, my dear daughter. I like to persuade myself that you are going courageously forward, and that even when you do not feel any devotion, you are following in the light of faith, the route marked out for you by the Rule and your common sense. I also like to think you have the time to study and have made progress since we saw each other.

My dear daughter, give me some news about all these matters and about all that may be useful to me for guiding you along the way of perfection. You know, very dear Child that you have in me an ever very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

30th January 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

14-6

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I like to think that the relief Mlle M. Louise is getting for you, will at last give you the time to study, as I so ardently desire. Give me some details on that matter and tell me what you have studied since the holidays. Have you been occupied with sewing, ironing linen, etc.? How much time have you regularly spent in educating yourself daily?

Do you set yourself zealously to honoring St. Joseph during this month?

Give me, my dear daughter, some information with simplicity and confidence.

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Date cut off - 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

14-7

I have only a few remarks to make to you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. You have no reason to worry about the state of your soul. Go forward with confidence in the holy presence of the beloved of your heart, and the beloved, the good Jesus, will be pleased with you. Accept the trials like the encouragements as coming from your divine Spouse; then everything will contribute to your advancement in the way of perfection. Always prepare carefully for the lessons you have to give. That is the surest and easiest way of educating yourself... in order to perfect your writing, make your letters a little bigger.

Count also on my paternal devotedness; dear Child, you know it is founded on charity.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd October 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

14-8

A few words only, my dear daughter, to tell you that you can content yourself with what you are doing at present for your education, and to encourage you once more to honor our good Patron St. Joseph with love, so as to obtain an active faith and great purity for yourself in everything.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

20th of St. Joseph's month 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

14-9

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am putting, with confidence, a third child into your hands. Take care of her as you are doing for the other two. Wishing to be an intimate guide and a devoted Father for them, I want their correspondence with me to be perfectly free, and their letters to be seen by no one, any more than those they receive from me. I think it will be a good thing also to apply this to the correspondence of Constance with me. You will kindly inform the four children of this and also the Madame Superior. I am always your

Very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

14-10

Madame Eleanore

Please, dear Lady, pass this letter on to its address. You will know that the interest I have in young Flore is founded on the dispositions with which our good God has endowed her soul. There is something great and there is something weak that shows itself in these sorts of subjects; in Flore, it is an inclination towards affection. God entirely deserves that sentiment. Try prudently to lead up to him the raptures this heart is called upon to produce.

It is necessary that she writes to me by herself and freely.

The same thing must be allowed to the other three, as I wrote to you.

Tell Constance, as coming from you, that it is the proper thing for her to write to me to thank me for the 50 francs I sent her to get herself some clothes, etc. Enter a little into her confidences in order to get to know her and be useful to her.

If they were to give my protégés occupations other than those their education demands, you will prudently inform me.

I am relying, dear daughter in Our Lord, on your experience and docility in carrying out my instructions which you know are in accordance with the designs of our good Master Jesus Christ, whose very humble and devoted though very useless servant you know me to be.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

4th October 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

14-11

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

You know that my occupations and the state of my eye do not allow me to write as often as I wish. However, as you know, I consider it important to keep in touch with my young protégés and to follow them up closely, although the confidence you deserve and I have in you, may allow me to rely on your care of them. To give these children a fresh proof of my feelings and to get them to understand how much I am concerned about their happiness, I am going to give them a brief reply to their letters with you as intermediary. You will be kind enough to inform each one of them of this privately. In this way, they will see the confidence I have in you.

You will read what precedes to all of them, but only to one at a time. What follows is for each one personally.

Marie Constance gives me the well-founded hope that my sentiments towards her will be understood, and will bring happiness to that person whom our good God loves with a very special love. Let her rely on those mercies of the Lord, and have great confidence in Mary and in St. Joseph. Let her not set too much store on getting letters from Mme Léontine. It is not the custom perhaps, to correspond with the Ladies who change convents. People are busy everywhere.

Flore wrote me a long letter containing her good sentiments and her happiness will go on increasing as soon as she is completely settled at Alost. I want her to have nothing in her heart that she does not tell you. It is to you that I have entrusted her. She can also write to me from time to time. But I do not want to take up too much of her time; her studies need it. It is with great pleasure that I have written to Mme Constance that I am pleased with Flore and that I cherish the hope that her Niece will come up to my expectations.

Sidonie also merits encouragement. She is finding some difficulty in getting used to her new mistresses. That is the means of practicing patience, and doing everything for our good God. It is easier for us to get used to the characters of others than to bring it about that others form themselves for us. That must be well explained to every person who aspires to community life. Tell Sidonie also that she must not be worried about what she wrote to me about her health; everything will sort itself out at the time decreed by divine Providence.

Eugenie is advancing more and more in my esteem and in my fatherly affection. I am pleased with the avowal she makes me of her faults and still more with the resolutions she has made to profit by all that happens in order to form herself to virtue, and make herself worthy to respond to the generous designs of our good God on her.

I give them all my blessing and you may tell them, Madame, that I am praying for them to our very meek Jesus, at the Holy Sacrifice especially; and for you, that you may direct them well.

I shall see whether it would not be useful for Mme Leontine to write a letter about the four subjects mentioned above. Their positions are exceptional. You may tell them so.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for yourself and your children, the blessing of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th December 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

14-12

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

The post that your Superiors have entrusted to you and the experience you have acquired, have allowed me to entrust to you the children that Providence has specially charged me with forming for the modest apostolate to which they are called. You have received from our good God, qualities suited to this kind of work. Be faithful to grace, my Child, and you will contribute towards the development of the dispositions that are to be found in the subjects entrusted to you. So, go forward with confidence, leaning on the powerful arm of your divine Spouse and Lord, Jesus Christ. Those are the opinions and counsels of a Father who knows you and prays for you with all his heart.

Here is what directly concerns my four protégés. I see that you appreciate them at their true value, and that is for me a guarantee that you will render them real services. I am happy to know that you have their confidence to the extent that they open their hearts to you and accept your remedies submissively, applying them bravely to themselves and congratulating themselves that they are drawing great advantages from them. What precedes is for all four, what follows is for each one privately. Try and get them all to believe in my wish to see them happy.

Constance will be grateful to you all her life for the care you are giving her, by teaching her circumcision of the heart. The merits of Jesus Christ will bring it about that she understands you and courageously puts the knife to the root of her weaknesses. Her heart, free from every disordered affection, will leap towards the sole good worthy of a creature destined to love its Creator and possess him eternally.

I am very pleased with her progress in everything, and I thank God for procuring for me the means of being useful to that person.

Eugenie is advancing along the right way. She understands her faults, admits them simply, and draws from them far-reaching lessons. In this way, she is learning to know herself without getting discouraged, and feels the need for the help of God for forming herself. Her last letter gave me a keener sense of pleasure than any other of her letters. It is lovely to hear her tell about her fault with a touching simplicity that is intensely pleasing to the heart of Jesus, her future Spouse, her God and Savior.

In all respects, the letter of Eugenie gave me complete satisfaction. That child keeps her place in my heart. Assure her of that.

You will render great service to Sidonie by confiding to her a few children to supervise. This person needs to form herself to a sweet, peaceful way of doing things. Her zeal would take on a disagreeable manner, it would drive the children away, and her remarks would not be well received.

I am pleased with her letter and her grades.

Flore is recovering. I am full of confidence that her small lapses will turn to her good. She will draw precious teaching from them. Tell her I do not keep the memory of errors caused by lack of experience. Let her be brave and have confidence in you and me. The rest concerning her relationships with her companions will be formed gradually, and by the grace our good God grants to prayer. The faults of 1861 must no longer count with me in 1862.

The letter of Flore pleased me very much.

After assuring my children about the consequences of their faults, and promising them the continuation of my affection, you will give each one, privately also, five francs as a New Year's gift, and the assurance that I shall go on praying for them. I know they are doing that for me.

You know, my dear daughter that I am also praying to acquit myself of that duty towards you.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th January 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

14-13

I have received news of our good Madame Léontine, and I am pleased to tell you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that I am edified by the sentiments of generous devotion with which that docile child is struggling against the difficulties bound up with the first changes of house. I shall however not ask her to reply or write to my protégés. That would reopen wounds that are perhaps not yet fully healed.

You will, I hope, have been pleased with the dispositions in which your four children received what I said to them through your mediation. The way they admitted their faults gave me pleasure. These are corrections that bring about great good in the souls that Jesus Christ is calling.

I am not asking for an immediate answer; I see that you have many occupations.

Always count on the heartfelt devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd January 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

14-14

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am writing to you to get myself news of your Madame Superior, without exposing myself to the danger of bothering our dear invalid. I was surprised to learn of the event you were expecting no more than I was, I suppose; but I am very edified to read of the religious way in which the illness is accepted, and that resignation and calm your Superior enjoys, make me hope that we have nothing serious to fear. However, be kind enough to give me a few words on the actual condition of the invalid and tell your Rev. Mother from me that I am commending her to our powerful and devoted Patron.

An objection made against our plan for the construction of a convent at the same spot as you are in at the moment, is that your street is sometimes impassable because of the waters of the Dendre that flood from time to time. Ask Madame Superior to tell you what you are to write to me on this matter.

I shall await your letter, my dear Lady, with a little impatience.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd of St. Joseph's month 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

14-15

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I sympathize with you in your troubles, and I pray our good God to take pity on the poor sister who has come and upset the harmony that was reigning in our house of St. Joseph. Bear like a religious, the unpleasantness that concerns you personally; as for the harm that thoughtless acts are doing to the pupils, which I was informed of during my first visit after the holidays; when possible, try to remedy it by training the person who has been led into error by misleading assurances, a susceptible character, etc., etc. Two of my postulants point out prudently how a mistress can be

liable to make mistakes when she lets herself go to prejudices, suspicions, sensitiveness, etc. In your position as Mistress General, give Mme (name effaced) to understand that you have to fulfill your duties towards the pupils and mistresses, that you believe you understand those duties and that you are following special indications, provided you by me, as to what concerns my protégés in the Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph.

For the rest, my dear Child, be brave. Think of the harm you can prevent by showing yourself to be firm. Think of the sufferings of our divine model, and ask that good Jesus for the graces you need to fulfill duties that are some times difficult, but that are entrusted to you in his august name.

Count on St. Joseph, on our divine Mother Mary. Count also a little on your Superiors whose feelings towards you are known to you; they know you also and love you in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please, say some words of encouragement to my children from Ostend, and to Marie Constance whose salvation is worrying me as you know

Your ever devoted Father in God

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th April 1862

Tell Madame Superior that the report the two Gentlemen from Melle gave me yesterday, brought me much consolation. I am cherishing the hope that we shall end by coming to an agreement. However, we must continue to pray to St. Joseph, so that, if it is a work of his, he will kindly continue to guide us and lead us to a complete and final success. Before the men, let us not speak too much about it? Let us be very discreet. Inform your Superior of what I am saying here.

My kind regards to Flore, while I await the pleasure of seeing her, which will probably be in Easter week. I hope in fact to come to Alost that week. Meanwhile, do you also, my Child, take courage from the memory of what Jesus Christ did and suffered for us. Nonetheless, and this seriously, I recommend to you great prudence as regards the fast and the penances you might feel inclined to do during these days preceding the Resurrection.

L.S.J.M.J.

14-16

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I have delayed writing to you as I wanted to weigh up a little what I should decide to do as regards (erased). It seems to me that I shall have to act very warily in order to avoid putting out a wick that is still smoking. Mme (name effaced) is more guilty than Fl. and the latter can be recalled to her duty, if we act cautiously and charitably. Let (name effaced) not know that I am aware of her blunders. Tell her what you think useful as regards her report, and we shall take counsel together on the course it would be right for me to take with her, when I come to Alost.

As for you, my very dear Child, do not lose courage. Profit by your very faults to advance on the way of perfection towards which we cannot tend enough whatever may happen to us. I do not refuse either to help you in your efforts, with my prayers. So forward, my dear Child, forward with the grace of our divine Spouse!

I am always very sincerely and affectionately

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th July 1862

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME COLOMBE VERDUYN
God-daughter of C. G. Van Crombrugghe
Born July 16, 1811; Professed Aug. 29, 1832; Died Nov. 27, 1852
(36 Letters Dated 1831 to 1852)

15-1

Mademoiselle,

Your letter pleased me very much; I came to the conclusion from it that you are loyally seeking God and that you understand the voice that is calling you to perfection. May these words give you to understand everything that you can expect from me. I shall not refuse you my help to enable you to attain the happiness God is preparing for you on this earth and afterwards in heaven.

Be of good courage then, Mademoiselle, and urge yourself on each day with the thoughts of the love of Christ for you brings to your heart and thus helps you daily to progress in the way of holiness, which has its end in heaven.

Be assured of my sincere affection and believe me your humble servant

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th July 1831

15-2

My dear Daughter

I am pleased to learn that you are ready to carry your cross in imitation of our divine model. That disposition is all the happier, since it immediately places you in the company of the saints. However, I think that you will have to arouse yourself to always have great courage: it would not be reasonable to follow Christ with sadness or cowardice. So be courageous, be joyful. Never melancholy. This would be very harmful to you. If, in spite of yourself, sadness sometimes takes over, shake it off by prayer, by talking with your Sisters or by doing a corporal work, according to the time of the day or your particular function.

I hope that this advice will enable you to profit by your fortunate position, and will help you to a real profession of the love of Christ crucified. You will obtain for me the great consolation of seeing you well prepared on the day of the great sacrifice when you hope to have the happiness of offering yourself entirely to God.

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd September 1831

L.S.J.M.J.

15-3

My dear Sister

I bless God for what he has done in your soul. Yes, my child, God loves you infinitely; love him too with all your might. God wants you to be tried; let these trials show how firm your love is. What I specially ask of you is that you be cheerful and courageous. The most terrible temptation for you is sadness. Combat it by considerations of the goodness of God; about the joy of his service. Talk as much as possible during recreation and show that you are happy to serve God, that you are preparing yourself with confidence for the union which will make you happy forever.

I wish you all the graces of the Resurrection and I bless you with all my heart.

I am sincerely your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th April 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

15-4

My dear Sister

I see more and more that God has designs of great mercy for you and that you, for your part, are trying to respond to his designs. Happy the soul that sees her Creator daily preparing greater favors for her and that continually strives to make herself less unworthy! Courage then, my Child, courage and meekness with humility and all will be well. Purify your heart so that it is more

agreeable to the one to whom you will have the signal happiness of consecrating it without reserve within a few months.

Tell Sister Marthe that I have understood with satisfaction that she more and more appreciates the excellence of the state to which God is deigning to call her. Yes, she will gain innumerable precious pearls to adorn her heart for Jesus Christ. Recollection, patience, humility, cheerfulness of heart are the adornments God is asking of her.

I hope she will prepare herself well this week for the lovely feast of Pentecost and will receive many graces.

I recommend myself to her prayers and to yours; I am also praying for you, for I am truly

Your affectionate spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 31st May 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

15-5

Dear Sister

I am delighted to see your openness of heart and your firm will to love your divine Spouse with all your might. With that generous determination you will go far; all the same, I must draw your attention to the fact that it is not always useful to pay close attention to the follies of the imagination and to recall to mind the objects of temptation. You must even completely drive out those contrary to the 6th commandment.

I also think I have observed that our good God wants to have you more humble, and it is for that reason that he allows the enemy to torment you with ideas contrary to holy purity. So always be courageous and humble, my dear Child, be cheerful and meek and you will become what I have predicted to you: a faithful Spouse tenderly loved by the meek and humble Spouse.

I am all yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

6th September 1832

L.S.J.M.J.

15-6

Dear Sister

I see that this rather roving imagination does not yet leave you entirely at rest. Yet, it is a strange, inconsistent mistress and does not deserve our attention. I tell you definitely, my Child, that you are where our good God wants you to be. You expose yourself to the displeasure of Mary and Joseph, by continuing in these kinds of doubts, and you would go far if you promptly put them in good order. Already it is noticed that you are too concerned with yourself and your mind is elsewhere than where Jesus Christ wants it. So, I forbid you, my Child, to spend any more time on these examinations. They do not come to you from God, but from your rather melancholy character, that would even lead you to becoming odd, and perhaps from your greatest enemy, the devil.

I pray Jesus Christ your divine Spouse to settle your heart and to attach you only to his holy will.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th January 1834

You must attend the community meditation, when that exercise take place in common. (The last sentence crossed out)

Praise be J.M.J.

15-7

Dear Sister Colombe

I have read with keen interest the letter you wrote to me. I see that you are on your guard against the surprises of the devil and that you are persuaded that you would have no more formidable an enemy than that of sadness and discouragement. Your sensitivity would have had consequences if you did not form yourself to humble and prompt obedience. The attacks against the sixth commandment are not so much to be feared if you are cheerfully meek, and do not examine those temptations. Continue to go forward in the direction you have set yourself and the good God will be pleased with you, the Institute of the Sisters of Mary will experience the effects of your services, and you yourself, my Child, will be satisfied in God, in your heavenly Spouse.

So, be diligent in doing what duty asks of you, without pettiness, but also punctually. Show the Lord your good will and you will triumph both over your faults and over the invisible enemies by your perseverance in using the remedies we have prescribed for you. Finally count on the help of my prayers, we like to prove that we have feelings that respond to our position as a

Very devoted spiritual Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th June 1834

Praise be J.M.J.

15-8

Dear Sister Colombe

Your letters confirm me in the idea that I have already expressed to you, that our good God wants you to serve him with confidence and the abandonment of yourself and your ways of seeing things.

The retreat you have just made, will bear fruit; purer lights, more tender love, more generous courage, more real forgetfulness of self; those are what you will have received during these blessed days. Peaceful cheerfulness will follow.

However, do not think, my Child, that you will have no more crosses; no, it will not be so; you will have crosses, but you have the grace to bear them; that is all that is necessary. So, there will even be cheerfulness in the midst of a few troubles and when laden with a few crosses.

I am very glad to see that your classes are doing well. That is where you must try and form yourself so as to be really useful to the Holy Church. I am pleased with your letter and your handwriting. However, you must go on practicing good handwriting; you have the ability. Avoid making the 'e' like 'c'; there are a few spelling mistakes, but I think they are due to carelessness and not to ignorance of certain rules of grammar. Study grammar carefully, it is indispensable to a good mistress in the Institute of the Sisters of Mary.

Good-bye, my Child, I am leaving you, but I shall not forget you in the presence of our good God. I wish always to prove to you that I am

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st December 1834

Praise be J.M.J.

15-9

I am very pleased, my dear Sister, to learn from you yourself, that you are imperceptibly recovering from the indisposition that prevents you from taking your class. I thank our good God for it with all my heart, and I congratulate you on having begun to win a victory over your imagination. I expected that rather gloomy imagination would have done you a bad turn, and that there would come to you an event capable of persuading you that you are under the influence of your imagination more than you thought. Take care to convince yourself more and more that we must follow the impulses of reason, of faith and of obedience, if we want to be reasonable, if we really want to be devoted to God.

To facilitate your cure, I exempt you from your office and all the other practices of the Holy Rule. In all simplicity you will do what you can, out of devotion, and in the way you think will least tire you. Be cheerful without being frivolous; have confidence in your Superiors, and above all take care not to allow yourself the least distrust in your divine Spouse Jesus Christ. You have received too many proofs of the love of the heart of Jesus Christ for you, for the least doubt to be allowed

you. I also give you my blessing and repeat to you the assurance of my sincere devotedness in Our Lord.

Your affectionate spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

Praise be J.M.J.

15-10

Dear Sister

Thank you for your good wishes for my happiness, and for the prayers which accompanied them. I too ask God to grant you each day fresh graces, that your heart may rise to the divine Spouse in a generous manner.

The apprehension which is tiring your mind and harming your physical health, is partly caused by this rather melancholy mood I have spoken to you about before. Be a little more cheerful, simple and confident, and think less about yourself. Be reasonably careful to chase away sad thoughts and somber imaginations; have more faith in the promises of God and more confidence in your holy Angel and in the Queen of Angels; be wisely moderate in all your movements and attribute all to the glory of your divine Spouse. These are remedies which will enable you to triumph over an imaginary but dangerous evil. Besides, what harm could the friends of God do to you? Your Sisters are in heaven, and are praying for you.

Pray too, my dear Child, for

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

17th January 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

15-11

Do not torment yourself any more, my dear Sister, with thoughts whatever they may be. The will alone can make good or bad the thoughts or actions of men. If thoughts that are not to be admitted present themselves, send them away gently and without getting alarmed. That is all you have to do. So, do not waste any more time in examining these thoughts, do not disturb yourself with them anymore; imitate little children who are afraid of their shadows and run away from a thing that pursues them.

You have always paid too much attention to your ideas; and you have not believed humbly enough that you had gloomy ideas. So keep in peace a heart in which Jesus Christ deigns to make his abode. You dishonor the divine Spouse with ridiculous fears and feelings quite contrary to his goodness. Tell me, my Child, has not Jesus Christ given you enough proofs of his love? Must you not believe him powerful enough and good enough to help you against the enemies of your salvation?

That, my dear Child, is worth more than remedies against such thoughts in particular. Be humble and have confidence in Jesus Christ. That is what your very devoted spiritual Father wishes you

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

12th March 1835

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

Praise be J.M.J.

15-12

The resolutions you have made, during your retreat, my dear Child, have given me real joy and I have thanked our good God for the lights he has communicated to you. I fully understand that you have not carried out exactly all you had prescribed for yourself, but you will have been less imperfect than you were beforehand, and by force of your efforts you will become what grace has made you see you ought to be. The task of perfecting yourself is not a task of a few days; you will work at it all your life. So arm yourself with courage; attack your faults with zeal, do not allow them any respite; purify your tastes and intentions and you will triumph over all your woes. Our good God will not refuse you the virtues with which he loves to see his spouse adorned. Appear

outwardly easy, and show that religious are happy people. Meekness and cheerfulness must always be your distinguishing characteristics; in that way you will do much good for Religion.

I do not fail to recommend you to the Lord, that is one of my sweetest duties, for I want to be really

Your devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th October 1835

Praise be J.M.J.

15-13

Dear Sister Colombe

The office we have given you provisionally will not be for you a load, a burden; it is so sweet, so easy to talk of what one's heart loves. Now, Jesus who is the object of all your love, will easily be the subject of your simple talks with the novices.

One thing above all is necessary, that is, for you to make the yoke of Jesus Christ light, by showing a cheerful, amiable appearance, and not wrapped up in yourself. That is the only remark I have to make at the moment. You know the rest and moreover you will have more need of prayers than advice at the moment. I promise you I will pray for you, do the same for me, my child, and believe that I am always,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

10th August 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

15-14

Dear Sister Colombe

I think you have taken the real means of correcting your defects of character; you must not talk too much about yourself, not even examine yourself, as I have told you. As for your slowness, rather somber appearance and rather plaintive tone, you will do well to watch over them and to pray that you will be corrected. You have already achieved much in this respect.

You need to remind yourself of the rules of spelling and to practice your handwriting. Your letter swarms with errors. (Some examples are quoted) These are a few examples of your know-how. However, your style is natural and satisfactory.

Continue to go along at your own pace with the lay novices. I think Sister Cecile should not have been admitted to her vows. We will probably have to send her away after a year. Hers is not a happy character, and it offers few resources for remedying her troubles. Watch over her and pray. I will help you with my prayers. Do not talk about it.

Receive my blessing, dear Sister, and believe that I am always

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th December 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

15-15

Dear Sister Colombe

Your case is terminated; this is now it happened: After acquainting myself with your letters and the opinion of the Dean, your confessor; after having heard the Cure, Fr. Braye and the mistress of novices, I took the statement to the Bishop of Bruges who was at Mouscron yesterday. His Lordship was kind enough to examine the reason and the facts attentively and he gave the following judgment: that you may have acted weakly, during the time of your novitiate, and that you may have to reproach yourself for not having opened your heart to me when I examined you, for which you must ask God to forgive you; and that everything being well considered and the pro and cons well weighed up, you must not and cannot change your Institute. That you must fulfill the duties laid down in your rules and your vows and that in this you must be tranquil and blindly obedient.

I am ever, dear sister,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd June 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

15-16

Dear Sister

The more I examine your case, the more I admire the wise decision of the Bishop of Bruges. I am therefore at rest on that point; be at rest also, my Child, and do not expose yourself any longer to the danger of doubts, from whatever side you may be inspired with them in the future. You have done what prudence requires and that same prudence now demands of you complete submission to the decision.

I am praying for you, do the same for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th July 1837

L.S.J.M.J.

15-17

I have only the time to tell you that your difficulty does not merit worrying about. Forget it, and you will be freed from it. Be cheerful, and speak amicably to the sister who is the subject of your temptation; grant your divine Spouse that mark of esteem for one of his Spouses. Would you dare not to love a person he loves? Well then, triumph over your dislike, you can do so; Jesus will reward you for your sacrifice. Once again, deceive the enemy and make fun of him; two days will be enough to deliver you from an evil that is only imaginary.

Believe in my experience and count on the devotedness of
Your very affectionate Father in Jesus Christ.
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

4th February 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

15-18

I did not fail, my dear Child, to commend you to our heavenly Mother, yesterday on your birthday and the last day of the octave of that glorious assumption that has caused us so much joy. You are on many accounts a Child of Mary, a happy prerogative!

You may begin your retreat tomorrow. I commend you all to the Lord and do you on your side, not put any obstacle in the way of grace; open your heart to your divine Spouse and renew your offering to him. If I can comply with your invitation, you will see me on Sunday evening. Meanwhile, I am putting off answering the letters of your dear sisters, but they are not to draw the conclusion that my feelings for you all are any less intense.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd August 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

15-19

Your last letters, my dear Child, have given me great pleasure. I see that you are progressing in the sweet way of confidence. That way is a safe one; do not leave it anymore. It will bring you each day nearer to that degree of perfection that you are called on to attain. You have taken an excellent model in putting before you that holy sister whom God had given us for a few years as an example on which the daughters of Mary and Joseph could base themselves with surety. Go on with your efforts; be generous and render yourself capable of being as useful as possible to the pious and beloved family of Mary and Joseph. Pray also for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th of Mary's month 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

15-20

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me the greatest satisfaction. Your feelings, the way of expressing them, spelling and even handwriting are all good. I thank our good God for the talents he has given you and I advise you to cultivate them carefully so as to make yourself all the more useful to the Institute, which is completely consecrated to the service of the Holy Church.

Take great care of your appearance, your accent; train yourself to use the tone you know I wish to see prevalent among the Ladies of Mary. Good manners stands out in a person charged with bringing up children of a good family. Do not neglect anything to achieve this result.

I promise, dear Child, that I will help you with my prayers. I want to be, in the full force of the term,

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th December 1839

I am sending you the first volume of Rodriguez

Praise be J.M.J.

15-21

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

You did well to inform me of the matter about which you have just written to me. Send me all the letters in an envelope. Then tell Sister Eugénie to receive no more communications, and that you are charged to decide the matter directly with the sodality member ("congreganiste"). Inform the latter not to be afraid to go to confession, indicating that the person concerned is bound by vows of religion. If the confessor insists on statements being made to the Superiors, she may say that everything has been done in this respect and she must not subject herself to any further steps, outside the tribunal of penance. If that "congreganiste" dare not deal with you, you could inform her through Eugenie of what I indicated here should be done.

I hope that our novena will obtain fresh favors for us and that the cure of our dear Sister Stéphanie will be among them, if it is a favor. The judgment of God being impenetrable.

Remember me to all your dear sisters; you know how sincerely I love you all and Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th February 1840

It is useless to put on the letters sent by post, the date on which one wants them delivered. That organization does not change its arrangements in any way because of such recommendations. Other arrangements would be possible with the coach service and other opportunities.

I like to think that Mme Philomène will profit by the help they are lavishing upon her at the Convent of St. Joseph, and that she will be formed internally and externally. She is in great need, as regards deportment; she is already a little lopsided. Here are the papers concerning the temporal affairs of Mme Philomène. You will hand them over to your Superior when she returns and Mme Honorine will explain matters to her.

L.S.J.M.J.

15-22

I am very pleased with your sentiments, my dear Child. Accept my thanks for the good wishes you sent me and go forward with simplicity and courage. Love the God of consolations even when deprived of consolation.

Would there not be any way of moving Sr. Eugénie to another convent? Independently of the deplorable things you have just written to me about, I think that it is that poor creature that is setting the Dean against your community, because of the false reports that are the fruits of her imagination. Talk it over.

Tell Sr. Clemence that her behavior causes me much pain and that her example is harmful.

Test the novices a good deal, but make them understand how useful this is. Mlle Vandenhove may write to me; but you may not help her to compose her letter. I want to see her own sentiments and what kind of education she has had.

I am sending back to the novices their letters with corrections. Explain to them the mistakes I have corrected.

Receive, dear child, the blessing of

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

17th August 1840

L.S.J.M.J.

15-23

I approve your manner of treatment of Mlle Clara. You may go on with it; it is better than what I had thought I would have to prescribe with restrictions for the novice.

Be calm about your own position. Go on in the dark without fear, in the fragrance of the perfumes of the beloved Savior and Spouse Jesus Christ. The instinct of love will always enable you to discern the traces of the one your heart desires in all and above all.

I also send my compliments to the novices and I give them as well as you, a big blessing. May the good God deign to make it effective.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

6th December 1840

Follow Mlle Clara up closely to accustom her to good deportment and good order in everything, but without frightening her. Let her often practice some rules of gymnastic. That is also very necessary and even more so for your two other novices.

L.S.J.M.J.

15-24

Be kind enough to tell me in complete confidence, my dear daughter, how the matters are going with the Ladies of Mary at Alost.

It seems to me that the decision to keep Mme Constance in the function as second assistant, weighs heavily on that Lady and that it could well be above her moral strength.

I also think from what I have learned recently, that the function given to the Madame Superior of hearing the pupils recite their lessons in class, is neither beneficial to the Madame Superior, nor to the pupils who are developing or might develop (if the pupils do not say their lessons well) a little aversion for the Superior and the boarding school.

Tell me frankly what you think, and what Mme Constance and Mme Félicie think, if you can find out without questioning them on my behalf, you will tell me also. Count on my discretion.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

15-25

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am still waiting for a reply from Ostend relative to your postulant of Assche.

Here are my answers to your novices. Kindly explain them to them and point out their mistakes in style and spelling.

You cannot refuse yourself the wish for a reward: David said that he had inclined his heart always to fulfill the duties of justice, for the reward. Do not be over subtle, my Child; love our good God generously and love his rewards. Serve your divine Spouse with great and true simplicity. Be cheerful (some words crossed out) without exaggeration; appear so in all circumstances.

Ask Mme Honorine to say a few words of encouragement on my behalf to your dear invalid. I will commend you all to-morrow in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. I do not have the leisure to say any more; but I am no less deeply

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th February 1841

If it as cold at Alost as it is at Ghent, I pity those suffering from rheumatism and those who are as unmortified as I am.

I like to think that your Superior will not leave you alone for a long time, unless the cold interrupts communications by railway. In that case you would have a double motive for desiring the thaw.

Praise be J.M.J.

15-26

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

You have acted rightly as regards Sr. Perpétue. She is a weak-headed and very vain person. If those ideas come back to her with any strength, she will not be permitted to make vows with us.

What you have allowed Mlle Clara does not seem so out of place, in view of the circumstances; but a permission of that kind being beyond your powers, you should have made her ask Mme Honorine for it, who is acting in the place of the Mme Superior.

I make the recommendation which you are often making to others; be less concerned about yourself; in that way you will do better in the sight of God.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd of Mary's month 1841

L.S.J.M.J.

15-27

Your last letter, my dear Child, gave me real satisfaction. May the good God be blessed for giving you the courage to overcome the difficulties that corrupt nature, together with the devil, has aroused in you. You must have seen, since calm is restored to your heart, that one has no real security except in humble submission to the arrangements of divine Providence and in a generous will to sacrifice all the feelings that would be opposed to those adorable views of the Lord.

The only thing that I recommend to you now is to make sure you remember the lesson so that in future you will be able to forestall the renewal of similar indirect attacks of the enemy.

Receive my blessing and believe in the sincere devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1842

Pay my respects to your Mme Superior; I have nothing to write to her about at the moment and she knows I have not much leisure.

L.S.J.M.J.

15-28

As I did not read your letter, my dear daughter, until long after receiving it, thinking it was a complimentary letter, I have not answered, as it was right that I should do, to the request you made to me concerning your pupil from Ypres. The difficulty that you put before me being, I hope, already removed it will be useless to talk about it any more. You will forgive my mistake, my Child; you know it was founded on motives that prove to be neither against you nor against me. I am persuaded of your good feelings and that is why I showed so little haste to read what I thought was only the expressions of what I have known very well for a long time.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th July 1842

L.S.J.M.J.

15-29

I very much approve, my dear Child, of the fact that you have not entered into an explanation of the causes of the woes you have experienced. Alas! it is always our weakness that causes or is the occasion of our ills. Get up promptly when you have a fall. More than any one, you must avoid looking back at them, examining them; your natural inclination towards gloomy ideas about yourself gives you a strict obligation in this respect.

There is nothing to prevent any of you taking warm water with milk, when cold makes you unwell. We have arranged that with the Mme Superior General. You may tell your Mme Superior so.

I am pleased to tell you that your letter is very well drawn up and well written.

May the good God deign to help you, my dear Child, and enable you to go forward generously in the way of perfection. Such is the wish of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

27th July 1842

L.S.J.M.J.

15-30

My dear daughter

I am very pleased with what you have just written to me. It seems to me, you have taken the right steps both to get me the help I need and to make yourself useful to your pupils. If you establish these means on humility, you will have the happiness of seeing blessings come down on your efforts. Be always on your guard against a certain spirit that has long pursued you; mistrust yourself and that enemy you have nourished without suspecting it, as it were, admitting it after many years.

I will make it my pleasure to help you with my prayers. May I see a large number of pupils come to you eager to know the good God, and to learn to serve him faithfully.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th August 1847

L.S.J.M.J.

15-31

You are right, my dear daughter; the Superiors are children of Adam just like those under them. But as Mme Marine is very sensitive because of her nervous, sluggish constitution, one must treat her gently and not give her any reason for distrust. At a well-chosen moment, make her the observation about which you have written to me and give her to understand that you wish her not to lose the rewards attached to punctual observance of the Rule and that this is the intention of your remarks. Take care to speak of yourself. Without that precaution, your remarks would miss their goal, because it would be advisable for me to make them directly and not through your mediation.

It is evident that Mme Marine cannot appear to occupy herself with Mme Constance and that, in reality, she cannot be much concerned with her. That Lady will get on better alone, than if one wanted to try and lead her. You must all behave with indulgence towards Mme Constance who is good but by no means great. Do you think that the office of assistant is in keeping with her character? Tell me in all simplicity when you write to me again.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

19th Feb. 1851

L.S.J.M.J.

15-32

Do not worry, my dear daughter, you will not be deprived of your children's statue, nor of the gifts the children gave to Mary. You gave me pleasure by speaking to me as you have just done. I have taken strong measures to put a stop to certain troubles you spoke to me about. Your Mme Superior had already informed me of her pain at sometimes seeing your Sisters show too little respect for the Mme Superior General. I hope that everything will be restored to order and that the former good spirit will soon reappear. Carefully avoid all that can put an obstacle in the way of the respect you owe to all your superiors.

Sooner or later, a chapel will have to be given to the sodality (congreganistes). I cannot decide how we can remedy the mistake committed last year.

I think you will yourself more usefully make observations to your Mme Superior relating to certain little acts contrary to true generosity, prudence and what unity requires among all of you, and the example you owe your pupils.

For the rest, my dear daughter, always count on my devotedness, prudence and the good will I have to be useful to you in everything. ... (End of letter and date cut off - it seems to have been done in photo copying. 1851 added in English translation)

L.S.J.M.J.

15-33

Although I have to congratulate myself on the result of my journey that I at first thought would be rather useless, I persist in thinking, my dear daughter, that you and your sister Mme Constance, are exaggerating things and that charity is not the sole motive of your observations; your mind with its tendency to look on the black side and the great susceptibility of Mme Constance have evidently a big part in what you say or what you think blameworthy in your Mme Superior. Do not forget that Mme Marine is your Superior, as I am your Superior, and that it is the same principle that must guide you in your feelings as regards obedience and love for us.

Next, my dear child, I think myself obliged, in conscience, to forbid you as well as Mme Constance to send anything, either note or letter, without recourse to the ordinary way, that is to say, through the intermediary of your own particular Mme Superior to whom you must hand your notes and letters sealed. If you think you need to take precautions, you could address to Mme Superior General the letter destined for me, or to me for the Mme Superior General, when you think you have serious motives for not addressing these letters directly. These roundabout ways are subject to thousands of drawbacks. And then what becomes of religious simplicity with behavior so far from being straightforward? These ways of acting would spoil you, my dear children, both in the eyes of God and in your own esteem.

I have said a word of what I have just written to Mme Constance, if my memory does not deceive me, but I see that it is a duty of my office to inform you both of this. So you will tell Mme Constance about my letter.

Do not worry, however, about what your badly enlightened zeal has led you to do; avoid falling again and the good God will be pleased with you.

Count also, my children, on the indulgence and on the devotedness in Jesus Christ of your spiritual Father, who hopes that his frank behavior will increase in you, filial and above all religious confidence. Let God be our good, our affection, our aim, and we shall be happy here below and in the other life.

(End of Letter missing: 1851 added in English Translation)

L.S.J.M.J.

15-34

You have wrongly interpreted my feelings, my dear daughter; you have weighed them in your balance, measured them according to your measure. Now, you know how little you can count on the rectitude of your judgment. Your temperament changes things also, by showing them to you through your black mood, at certain times.

You thought me very displeased with you, because of your reports about the Mme Superior. You were mistaken in that. I rebuked you for your exaggeration, your fault of naivety, of simplicity in these matters. Politics, my child, and astuteness are methods you must leave to the wise ones of this world, but do not have recourse to them with me.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 14th July 1851

L.S.J.M.J.

15-35

On my return from a trip to Mouscron on urgent business, I am sending the enclosed authorization, recommending you to send it back to me the day after to-morrow. Mme Superior

General and Mme Marie-Anne, who are at Mouscron, will come to Ghent to terminate the business. You will remember that you must sign in your civil names, Pélagie Rosalie Verduyn.

The health of Mme Catherine is declining daily, and the new law about mortgages which comes into force on the 10th of this November, has obliged us to take these precautions.

My respects to Mme Superior with my best wishes for the present solemnity. I shall pray for you all, and soon I shall have the pleasure of seeing you.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

31st October 1851

I beg Mme Superior to present my respects for the feast day to Mlle Colette and to tell her that the new Dean is my friend and that I consider this appointment a special grace from heaven for Alost.

L.S.J.M.J.

15-36

I willingly join you, my dear daughter, in thanking God for the favors he has deigned to grant you, during your pilgrimage, in this life, and especially for calling you to the sublime state of Spouse of Jesus Christ in the pious family of Mary and Joseph. These various gifts have just been crowned by the ineffable favor of receiving the last sacraments while fully conscious. We may now hope, my very dear Child, that you will obtain the place our august Mother and her divine Son have prepared for you in the abode of eternal happiness. Nourish the feelings of confidence that the grace of Jesus Christ has inspired in you. Count on the infinite merits of the divine Savior, on the love of Mary, on the intercession of St. Joseph, your Guardian Angel, and your holy Patrons, and on the prayers of your dear Sisters and your very devoted father in Jesus Christ.

I count on having the consolation of seeing you within a few days. Next week, perhaps even on Monday, I shall come to Alost, notwithstanding the small amount of free time I have at the moment.

In the meantime, count on my zeal in commending you in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, every day.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th July 1852

I beg you, my dear daughter, to go on commending to God your Superiors, your dear Sisters and your pupils.

LETTERS ADDRESS TO MADAME PAULINE D'HALLUIN

Mistress General of the Institute

Born March 23, 1846; Professed April 2, 1866; Died Oct. 17, 1942

(11 Letters: dated between 1862 and 1865)

L.S.J.M.J.

16-1

Well persuaded that you are not spending money uselessly, my dear Child, I am allowing you to ask Mme Clothilde, who has some money of mine, to give you ten francs. You may come back to me with the same request, when that small sum is spent.

I am taking advantage of this opportunity to remind you of the recommendations I made you, in my last letters, and to give you my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th February 1862

I suppose, as you see, that it is only a question of very small expenses. If I am wrong, Mme Clothilde will increase the sum as she finds good.

L.S.J.M.J.

16-2

My dear Child

I am not at all surprised that you slip into faults; I do not consider you as a perfect child, but as one having good dispositions to tend towards and reach perfection, with the help of the grace of God. The experience you are getting of your faults, will prove to you that you have to fight against disorderly inclinations; but you will have the consolation of seeing, that by fighting, you will obtain encouragement, the proof that success will crown your efforts, and that in the long run, your faults will give place to worthy qualities, to virtues opposed to them.

Strive above all to acquire humility. It is the foundation of all Christian perfection. Become meek and charitable in all your behavior. Watch over your heart, so as to prevent it from lingering with creatures. That is absolutely necessary for every person who is thinking of the religious state.

That, my dear daughter, is what your devoted Protector thinks he ought to tell you

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd June 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

16-3

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for the good wishes you sent me for my patronal feast day, and I pray our good God for the sentiments of filial piety your grateful heart nourishes for your benefactors.

Remain faithful to those good inclinations, and you will gather very precious fruits from them.

Before long, I count on seeing you and taking a few decisions about your plans.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

3rd August 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

16-4

I think, my Child that you are feeling the need to express your gratitude as regards the good things of every kind that the Lord is showering upon you. I myself am experiencing a great desire to join you in thanking the Author of the favors granted to you. I thank him that I am one of the instruments that his munificence is using to lead you to the objective that you are to seek and obtain. That objective is a glorious one; it is to procure the glory of God and the salvation of many souls!

Your dispositions, you tell me, are always the same; a great desire for religious life, and blind obedience for all that will be decided by the Father, who bears a sincere and great devotedness for you in Jesus Christ. Count on it then with confidence, and continue to give him the help of your prayers, as well as the consolation of seeing you ever more and more zealous in the fulfillment of all your duties.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th May 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

16-5

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me great pleasure. I see that you understand better and better the favors the good God is preparing for you. To do the Holy will of the Lord is the object of your desires, what you seek and the true goal of your efforts. To attain the knowledge of that adorable and amiable will, you repeat the generous words so full of faith with which you answered the questions I have put to you on several occasions I accept your undertaking: the final decision, about the Institute, will not be long awaited. Pray with confidence. I am doing so as well. My interest is bound up with yours. We want the fulfillment of what God wants, don't we, my Child? You will accept purely and simply the decision you receive? Answer me on the 1st Sunday in August, but without hesitation and for the love of Jesus Christ, Son of God and of Mary, our good Mother.

Meanwhile, I am keeping to your idea of returning to Coloma for a few months and entering at Easter at the place God destines for you.

Receive, my dear daughter, the blessing that I give you with all my heart.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th July 1863

I suppose you will go to the Holy Table on Sunday, and that you will talk matters over with the divine Son of Mary before writing to me.

L.S.J.M.J.

16-6

Mademoiselle

I have weighed with the principles of Religion, the motives you have put before me according to which you are expecting a final decision on the big question that rightly preoccupies you. I authorize you to present yourself to the Lady Superior General of the Ladies of Mary. It is that Institute that the Lord deigns to call you to work to win him souls, and to sanctify yourself, under the auspices of our two august Patrons Mary and Joseph.

As regards financial considerations, my dear daughter, I take it upon myself to deal with that matter with Madame Superior General. If you have the good fortune to be admitted as a postulant, I consider it right for you to spend the holiday time with your Parents and to be back at Coloma as a pupil for a few months after that period of relaxation. Finally you would go and say good-bye to your family, two months before Easter, the time fixed for your entry into the convent. However, I am giving you full liberty to make your observations to me about these last arrangements when you see me in Ghent.

The daddy of my nieces willingly permits you to accompany those young ladies, as far as my house. But on the 27th only, will my nieces leave Coloma for reasons that my nephew will set before the Mme Superior General. You will write to Mr. your father to ask him to be kind enough to come and fetch you on the 28th. As I have not had the pleasure of chatting with him, when he brings you to me, I would like to explain to him my plans for you. In the meantime, continue, my Child, showing the good Jesus the joy, the love and the gratitude of which your heart is full on account of the ineffable favors he generously grants you.

I enclose 20 francs. Your journey will necessitate a few expenses.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th August 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

16-7

Your letter gave me the greatest pleasure. The good God is granting you great favors and he is giving you the special grace of understanding that it is out of sheer goodness, and not because you have deserved the gifts you have received.

I thank you, my child, for the good wishes you have sent me and the prayers you have said on my behalf. Be assured that I do not forget you either, in the presence of the Lord.

It will be more useful for us to see you when you come back from your Parents, than before you go to see them.

I am adding 10 francs here for your small traveling expenses.

Give my compliments to your Parents, to Mlle your sister and to Mme Constance.

Your devoted future Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd January 1864

(Dictated Letter)

16-8

Mademoiselle

All your last letters have given me much pleasure. I have seen in them what it is important for me to know as regards your dispositions, and I have the conviction that the good God destines

for you a great favor. It depends on you alone now to prepare your whole being, with the help of grace, for your sublime destiny.

According to your last letter, you needed three weeks to prepare for your departure. I do not have the address of that letter anymore and you forgot to date that letter. Mme Superior General spoke to me on the 11th or 12th of this month. A few days more or less do not matter to me at all, but it is very important for me to see you again at Ghent, as you pass through.

If Mr. your father wishes to accompany you as far as Coloma and to return home the same day, he will have to set out by the train that arrives in Ghent about 9 o'clock and you have to go to Malines by the one that leaves Ghent at 11:30, to arrive at Coloma at 2 o'clock. Your daddy will find an opportunity of returning home, to Malines, about 5 o'clock.

Ghent, 3rd February 1864

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Remember me to Mr. your Father and to Mme your Mother. You will want to write to me, Mademoiselle, at least two days before arriving at my house.

L.S.J.M.J.

16-9

(Dictated Letter)

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letter gave me the greatest pleasure. The generous sentiments with which you wish to give yourself to God, give me the well-founded hope that you will not recoil in the face of any difficulty. However, we must always mistrust ourselves. It is on mercy of the Lord that we must count in regard to perseverance. Beware of having too much confidence in the present dispositions of your heart. We are all alas! so fickle. Remember the very generous declarations Peter made to his divine Master, and the weakness he showed at the voice of a mere woman. Did he not go so far as to deny his Master?

(In the Founder's hand)

You know my devotedness

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th February 1864

L.S.J.M.J.

16-10

(Dictated letter)

I thank you, Mademoiselle, for the charitable wish you sent me. I know the sincerity of your sentiments and your confidence in our holy protectors. The portrait you paint me of yourself confirms me in the hope that I have always manifested to you, that with the help of grace, you will manage to put right what needs to be put right in you, and to make yourself a docile instrument in the hands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(In the Founder's hand)

Be convinced that I shall help you with my prayers and receive, dear Child, my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th May 1865

L.S.J.M.J.

16-11

You gave me great pleasure, my dear Child, by giving me a few details about your present feelings, and what you are setting yourself as the objective of all your efforts: perfection, or what is the same thing, holiness, in the religious state. It is a great undertaking, but it is not beneath the power of grace. "If anyone would come after me", Jesus Christ said to his disciples, "let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

That, my dear Child, is the real foundation of holiness and the way to achieve it. Very blind would she be who would think she could attain to it by another way than the one the divine Savior

pointed out to us by following it himself. Now, she who does not walk in the footprints of our divine Model by following his example; she who does not bear her cross, by fulfilling the duties of her state, she who does not generously oppose the disordered inclinations of nature, she who does not fight against the pride of her mind and the vicious inclinations of her heart; no, indeed! that person is not on way of Jesus, she will not attain to holiness. She is evidently on a false track.

Weigh up these truths, my daughter, and conform your conduct to them courageously; you will discover in them the explanations for all the doubts in your mind, and the remedy for all the weaknesses of your heart.

You know the sentiments of your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MADAME CLOTHILDE MINNE
Vicar of the Institute; Superior of Coloma and Brussels
Born Aug. 22, 1812; Professed July 18, 1833; Died Jan. 11, 1842
(50 Letters: Dated 1833 to 1841)

Praise be J.M.J.

17-0

Reverend Mother

Tell your dear Sisters they must not attribute anything that would cause them pain, to the small number of visits that I have made to them. If I only consulted my heart and the rights of these good children, they would see me much more often. You know very well the reasons that oblige me to make visits elsewhere, and certainly, these journeys are not always inspired by motives that are agreeable to nature. I count however, before the season becomes harsh to make amends to you for the privations I have imposed on you. I do not know if it will be possible to submit to your desires this week. Let us join again (half line effaced) present with the other offerings we will be presenting to Jesus in the crib. May this good Savior deign to accept these offerings through Mary and Joseph. Let us be generous and we will prove to ourselves that God is never to be outdone in generosity.

I rejoice at the goodness of His Eminence. His visit will be a new blessing for you and your (new) young establishment. Be the interpreter, Rev. Mother, of my sentiments of gratitude to His Eminence and please give him for me, the most happy wishes on the occasion of the New Year.

I will write immediately to Melle and obtain for you that which you wish, the chronograms and the usages, etc.

I approve of the invitation composed by M Vanhymel, also the program for the little fete that you have submitted to me.

Write to His Eminence and his three grand Vicars, to Mr. the archpriest and to Mr. the Cure of St. John's. You may safely confide to them whatever you find best, for other friends.

You edify me, my dear Child, by your courage in the midst of trials. It is a grace that the good God gives you and it is a subject of great consolation for me since you have been charged with the government of our convent of the Queen of Angels. Health permitting, you may communicate at the Mass of His Eminence. It is a favor to receive the divine Spouse from a hand that is so dear to him. No longer trouble yourself (half line effaced). Keep God insight and no one can harm us. Our Rev. Mother at Alost has proposed to send Mme Bathilde to her convent, so that she recover more easily. I approve of the project, if you consent. ...

(End of Letter missing. Not Dated)

Praise be J.M.J.

17-1

My dear Sister Clothilde

I take advantage of the present occasion in order to say a few words to you: Never forget what you owe to Jesus Christ, in taking care of those whom he has given you for Parents according to the flesh.

Good-bye, my child, have courage and think of the resurrection of our divine Master.

Yours devotedly in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th April 1833

L.S.J.M.J.

17-2

Your letter, my dear Child, whatever you say, gave me great pleasure. I like you to write to me with this simplicity in which I recognize the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. But you will do better at revealing to me the heart which belongs to Jesus, my divine Master, if you take more care in expressing yourself. I insist on that before everything. Your short account shows that the good God is trying you, in allowing the enemy to stir up the bad foundation in you which results from sin. You must recognize that as the gentle solicitude of your divine Spouse to purify one whom he loves; you must humble yourself, but never be discouraged. Love, then, the practices of humility, and ask permission to do so. That is for you the quick and certain way to perfection.

Apply yourself to your studies with courage and perseverance. It is not through violent efforts, but calmly and repeating, that you must be taught. What you do not understand at first will seem easy when God gives his light. Take care of your handwriting. Every week give some time to writing a page or two carefully. Do not write letters in the vulgar way: for example, échec instead of é_chec, choc instead of c_ho_c, etc.

For the rest, I am pleased with your efforts, also be assured, my dear Child, that I am from the depths of my heart your very devoted spiritual Father.

Receive my blessing

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th April 1833

Praise be J.M.J.

17-3

My dear Sister Clothilde

You have good reason to say that letters from my children give me great pleasure. Yes, my dear Clothilde, these letters please me greatly and yours interest me very eagerly, because of your young age, and the little time you have had to form yourself, they show clearly that you could have special need of me. I agree to your proposal, so every month send me an account of what concerns you.

In a little while I shall go see you. Prepare for that time all that you want to tell me. In the meantime, count on my devotedness and receive my blessing.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th October 1833

L.S.J.M.J.

17-4

Do not be sad, my dear Child, whatever happens. Do not be afraid of a little trial or a little humiliation. These are means of reaching the heart of your Spouse.

I permit you to wait before using gaiters. I think your legs will mend without them.

I am all yours in our divine Master.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

15th November 1833

Praise be J.M.J.

17-5

Dear Sister Clothilde

I am well persuaded that without having written to me, you have prayed for me on the occasion of the great solemnity which finishes today. I thank you, nevertheless, my Child, for the sentiments of gratitude which you have expressed to me for the services which I have so loved to render to you since I saw you at our convent of St. Therese. For my part, I thank the good God for having permitted me to be an instrument of his kindness towards you, of his designs of mercy

towards you. Let us both rejoice, and let us never lose the memory of the mark (signs) of the love which the Lord has for us, so that we may never cease loving him with all our heart. ...

(Page cut)

So that dear Sister does not need to know that anyone has written to me about the subject.

Tell me also a little more clearly, that which caused your humiliation, something which you did not profit by, or at least did not find you with the sentiments which your divine Spouse would have hoped to find. Remind yourself that Jesus Christ says to you: Learn of me for I am gentle and humble of heart: therefore, you, Spouse of Jesus Christ, you must try to love humility.

If marking down your faults renders you more attentive and more humble, you would do well to mark them. If that does not produce those results, then do not mark them. That practice is not for certain cases.

Give a lot of care to the formation of your character. Try to be cheerful and always courageous. Be careful to flee from every sad or cowardly thought. I ask the Holy Spirit to grant you, my dear Child, the gifts of wisdom, of gentleness, of piety and of generosity. ...

(End of Letter is missing)

January 1, 1834 (December 1833 crossed out)

Praise be J.M.J.

17-6

My dear Sister

I think it is a good idea that each mistress correct, reward or punish her own pupils, so as not to do harm to the mistress or even the pupils, of a class which is out of control. It will be good if you come to an understanding with the sister who takes her class in the same place as you; you must agree on some general rules and then as far as possible, act uniformly.

The fear of darkness, of solitude etc. is a childish prejudice which will be corrected little by little through reflection and through faith and confidence in God. You see from your experience how dangerous it is to talk to the children of ghosts, were-wolves, phantoms and a thousand other falsehoods which frighten them and which leaves traces even when they have learned how ridiculous are all these assertions. Teach them their religion and the duties of the creature to the Creator and you will obtain what you want from the children, without giving them cause to be afraid and uselessly unhappy.

Your own timidity, my Child, will equally go away with time; it is a matter of the body rather than the will. Do not upset yourself about it.

Do a certain amount of piano practice. I do not want to make you exclusively a music teacher; you have to learn things that are higher and more indispensable. I want you to practice your writing very much; it seems you have the right dispositions, but examine well between the English style and the round slanted style. For the rest, use time, my dear sister, and this time does not come successively (Translator: "in one stretch"). I recall also another point: generally speaking, you do not open your mouth wide enough when you speak French; that might not perhaps be a disadvantage when speaking English; but you must give great attention to the language in which you have to teach.

I hope you will not refuse (illegible) to the charitable Sister, whoever she is, who corrects you when you speak badly. Yes, my child, you may believe that the good Sister Louise is in Heaven, and that she is interceding for us. This is one more patron for our Institute.

I doubt if you will be able to decipher my writing. I am almost ashamed of giving you such an example; however, you know I do not have to give writing lessons and you must not measure my feelings by my writing. Good-bye.

I am all yours in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 3rd October 1834

L.S.J.M.J.

17-7

Dear Sister Clothilde

I forgot if I told you that you should also learn commerce. It seems to me that you could well take advantage of the opportunity offered to you by the lessons Sisters Euphrosine and Flore are to have. Drop the history lesson that you can take up later without inconvenience.

I had the pleasure of seeing dear Brother Désiré; he dined with me on Saturday. I love that good Child; it is because he belongs to some Sister of Mary that I seem to love also. Ah! we must all love one another in our very merciful Savior Jesus Christ. It is in him and for him, as is right, that I wish to love our dear Clothilde.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

21st October of the year 1835

Be careful of your pronunciation and your writing. Today I was admiring ... (Second page missing)

L.S.J.M.J.

17-8

Here, my dear Clothilde, are some papers belonging to you. I conclude from these verses (1) that you want to love Jesus Christ solely for himself; (2) that you have only to practice writing to be able to write well. Do both, my Child, and avoid writing in such small letters as you have been doing for some time.

I am all yours in God and for God.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

21st November (1835 added)

L.S.J.M.J.

17-9

Dear Sister Clothilde

Be tranquil, and obey without any other reflection than the one that will lead you to fulfill the duties of the office entrusted to you. The good God will do the rest for you. Do not occupy yourself any more with what concerns others, in our present affair; I hope the others will fulfill their duties, as is appropriate. The Reverend Mother will tell you the rest. I am always

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated -or date cut off)

Praise be J.M.J

17-10

You gave me my dear Sisters, heartfelt pleasure, eight days ago, and I have been feeling the good effects of it all this week. I have begun a novena in honor of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and St. Francis de Sales, St. Joseph and our august and good Mother Mary as my powerful Patrons. In this novena I have been asking for the health of your dear mother, some other grace for some other person, and I will finish this exercise to-morrow, with much confidence. So it is in that adorable name of Jesus that I am placing my hopes for all of us, dear Child. You are included in the number of persons I have in mind in my special prayers during these nine days. I cannot tell you what fear and hope I experienced in receiving your letter and reading the news you sent me with so much friendship. Accept my thanks, and join me in softening the heart of your divine Spouse in our favor.

I ask you, dear Sister, to look at this list, and see what books you have received and whether you send me the price for them. You will return this list to me with your reply. May our good God deign to grant us often the sweet satisfaction, to you for sending me, and me of receiving news like that of last week.

I have experienced another consolation, my Child, that of seeing the great zeal the Lord is giving you for the salvation of your pupils; that is a great grace and you must foster it by responding to it with courage. You will perhaps be the instrument of the salvation, I will say, of the perfection of several souls. Persevere, and do not let even serious difficulties ever be able to halt your efforts. It seems to me that you will have the consolation of seeing your pupils follow with courage and perseverance the good impulses you have given them. I ask our good God for this other grace and I assure you that if you think I can do anything more to help you, you will always find me in reality

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th February 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

17-11

My dear Sister

I had noticed that you had more trouble than ordinarily in bearing cheerfully the light, sweet yoke of Jesus Christ; but I attributed it to that weakness of our nature, the sad effects of which I myself experience, especially when the weather is bad. Do not be frightened, my Child, of these involuntary sentiments of sadness. Suffer like a true religious those types of interior pains. God, who knows our weakness and sees that we are fighting with his grace, will not allow us to succumb. He will kindly come to our help, like the loving Father he is. Jesus, jealous of your heart, will restore calm to it, as soon as he recognizes that you do not want to consent to anything that on your part can upset its serenity. You are happy, my dear Child, not to have committed the fault in which your corrupt nature involved you, before coming to us. I speak of that taste so contrary to your nature, for being in a contemplative kind of life. Read the treatise on Christian joy, or what Rodriguez says of sadness. These means and a little more bodily exercise will help you. I know that from long experience. Do not dwell either on sad ideas, views about faults committed, etc.; but rejoice in Jesus Christ your divine Spouse who must take the place of everything for you here and in heaven.

Forgive my bad writing; I do not know why I cannot always write passably well.

I am returning the basket, but it is empty. It is not for lack of goodwill; you believe that on the word of

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th of Mary's month 1837

It is useless to tell you that I have prayed for you very much and I will still do so.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-12

I applaud, my dear Sister, the efforts you have made, to get the time necessary for applying yourself in conformity with my desires. Take care now, to use that time well in the sight of God and you will infallibly succeed in doing the work of your divine Spouse. It is to there that I want to lead you.

Examine also whether it would not be a good thing to take less piano lessons, so as to have more time to practice and to reduce expenses as much as possible.

This is what there is to learn for Vespers. You will see that it comes down to very little. You always have the same Vespers; only the antiphons vary.

It is very certain that he who would be content with Holy Mass on Sundays and feast days, when it would not depend on him to assist at Benediction and Vespers, would not be fulfilling the intentions of the Church; would be guilty of sin and should not be in an easy mind about his state. That will be enough for your catechism explanation. Note that there is an immense difference between mortal sin and venial sin. Go forward with confidence and simplicity. I give you my blessing and repeat to you that I am yours, as I must be in Our Lord Jesus Christ, my divine Master.

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Added) June 1837

17-13

(The end of the letter refers to two previous pages)

Here, my dear Sister, is another matter: Sister Cecile has told me that your Reverend Mother has been unwell, that she is having leeches, etc. You know my weakness on that point. However, I have tried to see the hand of God there, as elsewhere. I wish to submit myself to the good pleasure of our heavenly Master. I have made him numerous sacrifices of desire and affection for some time. Nevertheless, if we can do anything for the health of our Rev. Mother, I think God

wants us to do it. Do you think a consultation with my doctor at Ghent would be useful? I could make use of the opportunity Mlle Colette is going to offer us next week. The Reverend Mother with Sr. Henriette or Sr. Aloÿse could accompany Mlle de Brandt and return to Alost on the same day. Tell me also how the rheumatism is; I have a feeling that there is some relapse caused by the cold we have been having for about ten days. Write to me at your ease, dear Child, but let the Reverend Mother imagine that you are only writing about the matter that takes up the first two pages of my letter.

I pray God to go on giving you his lights and the peace of the Holy Spirit. Remember also in your prayers

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd July 1837
Praise be J.M.J.

17-14

Reverend Mother Clothilde

Your letter of the 15th reached me only yesterday. It seems to have had several stops before reaching Ghent; obviously it did not travel by rail. At the same time a letter from our Rev. Mother at Alost was given to me, undated, and without any indication that allows me any basis for conjecturing where that Reverend Lady is at the moment. In spite of these difficulties, I experienced very deep joy on reading these two letters; apart from the style which pleases me and because it is simple, natural and explains your thoughts in the way I desire, you tell me some very agreeable things which more and more arouse feelings of gratitude within me for the author of all good. The courage with which you tell me God has animated you, since your arrival and even earlier still, is a very great source of consolation to me. May the Lord be blessed for it! It is very true, my Child, that we have prayed very much for you; and praying to God is so good! Let us go on helping each other and always be generous, counting unceasingly on the almighty power of God.

It seems to me that is against the spirit of your Rule and even against decency, for you to accompany your pupils to Church. It will not be easy to have Holy Mass at 9 o'clock. It will be much if you can have it at 8 o'clock in the winter and 7 o'clock in the summer. The boarding school fees could be 480 francs so as to be a little above Alost; but we would be wrong, I think, to go beyond that. If everything goes according to our wishes, the price can be increased; as soon as the thing is known and appreciated, one can be more exacting.

I am sensitive to the signs of affection lavished on you. I count as being offered to myself all that people have the kindness and charity to offer to you. I thank our good God for them with all my heart, and pray for our benefactors. I am very sure that you too pray with pleasure for those charitable persons.

I have just discovered a line written in the hand of our dear Sister Olympiade, in the margin of your letter; I draw the conclusion from it that her letter is of the same date as yours, though that conclusion may not be strictly correct, since I received letters from her on the 28th. However that may be, you will observe that as the office you are saying is that of Our Lady, no special commemoration is needed. That concerns your convent and it is you I am answering.

Let us have good courage, dear Child, let our weaknesses make us more humble, and we will be more pleasing to the divine Child, who is our consolation in this time of mercy. If the Rev. Mother from Alost is with you, this may serve her as well as for you. Give my regards to her and also to your dear Children. I give you all my blessing, with feelings of devotedness that God is still increasing in me for my Children, as I see their zeal and recognize that our needs are increasing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 31st December 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

17-15

Reverend Mother Clothilde

I received your letter of the 6th the day before yesterday at Alost. I am pleased to see that you want to follow your star, and that you are seeking help in the ordinary means that your divine

Spouse puts at your disposal. That is a sure way, follow it courageously; it will infallible lead you where God is awaiting you. It seems to me that your dear Sister Olympiade is taking the best course which is to stay a few more days at your convent so as not to have to return there in a short time. Tell her that everything is going on very well at Alost, but that the very Reverend Mother is looking forward to the moment when she will be free to go to Bruges, where her presence is needed. Mother Elise left there for Ostend with several companions last Monday. They will be very cold, those poor children, but our good God will take care of them. It is for his cause that they have the happiness of undertaking the work that is calling them to that place. It seems to me that the boarding school fees cannot be more than 500 francs, for the reasons you put before me and because we can increase them later, if the Lord blesses your efforts. I will be very pleased to see your prospectus before you get it printed. At Easter, or even before then, I will be able to give you a young sister; try and arrange things so well that the time you spend in the class does not interfere with your other duties.

How happy I am, my dear child, to see you about to have the one who is your special treasure in your midst. O how good is the God of Israel! How much you are to be envied for being under the same roof as the one whom Heaven is not vast nor magnificent enough to contain! Always be sensitive to that mark of the special love of the Spouse and repay that ineffable love. Love and all will go well: love is the complement of the law, Church History tells us. Do not omit anything that true zeal may suggest for inspiring similar sentiments in your dear children in Jesus Christ.

Give my compliments to all the sisters in your community and especially to the Rev. Mother of St. Joseph's. It is needless to tell them that I am always very sincerely and intimately united in Jesus Christ with all of you; they know all about that

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th January 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

17-16

Reverend Mother Clothilde

The illness of our beloved Sister Aloyse, which obliged me to travel to Brussels, is the reason why I have put off until this moment replying to your letter of the 10th of this month. You have no doubt been informed of all the concerns the severe trial that divine Providence has sent to our convent of the Holy Angels. You must recommend our dear sick Sister and the convent she is in charge of to our Holy Patrons and your heavenly Spouse. May we appease the Lord and preserve that very distinguished subject whose position is still very uncertain! Reverend Mother Olympiade is a marvel of courage and of generosity. May the author of all that is good be a thousand times blessed.

It seems to me, Reverend Mother that you are not taking any risk in accepting the conditions proposed by the father of the postulant about whom you have written to me. But would it be necessary to enroll her in the boarding school to learn French? A lay sister would teach her well enough at Mouscron, while she does the duties of a sister destined for work.

I have had the woman who sells vestments, and the chasuble you coveted. She offered it to you for 380 francs, you tell me, and to me she presented it for 225 francs. I think it would have been easy for me to get it for 200 francs. The financial difficulties we are in prevented me from making that purchase and paying off your bill from Lyon. The word consequent that you use to mean "too strong" is of no value. You should say too expensive or too considerable a purchase. Consequent means acting or reasoning in conformity with one's antecedents. We are acting in conformity when we love God whom we say and know to be worthy of our love.

I am delighted to learn of the fine displays of success that our good God is pleased to manifest in favor of the convent of the Queen of Angels.

Take care of your health, dear Child, and of that of your sisters. You know the feelings on that subject of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th February 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

17-17

My dear Reverend Mother

I shall try and come to Malines next Monday; take the necessary steps to enable us to do a great deal of business in a short time. I will however give you as many days as I possibly can at the beginning of the week. I am putting off until Monday, in the afternoon, enlarging further on many topics. Meanwhile, tell Sr. Angélique that I grant her the permission she has just asked of me, and that you, my very dear Child, always promptly resist any temptation to distrust, to faintheartedness, and cast yourself without hesitation, into the heart of your divine Spouse. There you will always be sheltered from your own weakness and the effects of the enemy. I am praying a great deal during this month of salvation for us.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th of the month of our Holy Patron (added) 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

17-18

My dear Reverend Mother

Instead of Monday the 23rd, you are expected at the house of your very devoted Father on Tuesday the 24th of the month. You will arrange to be accompanied by Mlle Brisaert and you will get her to bring some work so that she has something to do and avoid the boredom of solitude, when we are occupied with the business that is the cause of this little meeting.

I give my blessing to the Rev. Mother and to her Children at the convent of the Queen of Angels.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(April or .August) 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

17-19

My dear Reverend Mother Clothilde

You have received from Alost, with the globe, keys that had been handed to me for you, by Mlle Hage, and our Rev. Mother at Alost must have informed you that this young lady asks you to send back to Ghent, the wicket-made basket with the lock. Here is the address of the person to whom you are to send that basket: M Raemert, clock-maker, rue des Champs.

I take this opportunity to urge you to finish the summary of your Rule, on which you were working in August. I would be pleased to receive that work when it is finished.

Your writing, my dear Superior, is becoming so small that it no longer has any character. Take care to write bigger, even in short notes, so as to spare your eyesight and not spoil your hand.

My journey, in spite of the bad weather, brought me much consolation, at your house at Brussels and at Hal. May our good God be blessed and may he deign to continue to give us his blessings. I do not stop offering him my prayers for you and your interesting house. Pray too, very dear Child for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

I have been to see our Rev. Mother at Alost, who is unwell; it is to be hoped that her indisposition will not be serious. I am also praying a good deal for Mme Bathilde so that she will respond to grace and become humble and courageous. Give my compliments to all your sisters.

I have sent Mlle Sergies of Waeke to Mouscron. There we shall see what we can do.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-20

Reverend Mother Clothilde

I agree with you, and Mlle Alexandrine will return to your convent after her clothing, if it is the pleasure of the good God. That is how I answer your incorrect phrase, 'would these be of inconvenience?' It should be, would these be of any inconvenience? Since I have begun, I will go on and add that instead of: 'I had to promise them she would return before they are consoled,' you should have said: to console them.

I permit the Rev. Lady Vicar to come and give you her help as you ask me to do. I have written to tell her.

May God be blessed! Yes, Mme Bathilde is quite different and I like to persuade myself that this happy transformation, being the work of grace, will be lasting. I specially recommend that Child, of whom I am very fond, to our good and powerful Mother Mary. Join with me and we shall obtain perseverance. Write to our Mother Superior about it.

I hope to send you a Missal and some altar cards before long.

I strongly recommend you to take pains with your writing which is neither in the English style nor in the cursive; it is a new kind of slanting round hand; but I doubt whether it will be honored by being adopted as a model. You know I am permitted to act somewhat inconsistently with my recommendations, in this matter. You must do as I say, and not as I do.

Good-bye, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ; give my compliments to all your dear Sisters and count on the devotedness of

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th September 1838

Praise be J.M.J

17-21

Reverend Mother

This day week, that is to say, Monday the 10th at 11 o'clock in the morning, Monsignor our Bishop will give confirmation to our pupils at the convent of St. Joseph. You would do well to come to Alost the preceding Saturday. I will try to arrive on Sunday, in the afternoon, and we can take the necessary measures so that all goes well and we would examine some points of our Constitutions, with our dear and Rev. Mother Olympiade. It appears to me that the health of that good Mother is pretty much in the same state and we must place our hope that God will have pity on us.

Give my regards to my dear Children at your convent and especially to our dear Lady Bathilde whom I always recommend specially to Mary and Joseph. I like to believe that our generous novice will not belie the good opinion that I have in her.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd December 1838

17-22

(The top of the letter is cut off)

Your two letters have given me great pleasure. You are quite right in saying that the kindness of His Em. the Cardinal is a thing worthy of our liveliest gratitude. The letter you received from him seemed to me to be worth preserving. It is Mary who obtains these marks of encouragement for us. Let us show that good Mother how aware we are of her attentions which are only the preludes of the more outstanding favors she has in store for us.

I do not think that the treasure of Superiors (Translator: seems to be the name of a book) can be of use to you. You would do better not to take it.

Treat your zealous novice prudently. Weigh up her ardor and moderate her naive tendency to tears. That Child would wear herself out, her physical strength would succumb, and her spirit would resent it. Let her love gently, sigh peacefully and await the sweet moment when God will let her offer an orderly and total sacrifice.

(Reverse side: The top is cut off)

Tell your dear Children that I do not stop recommending them to the Lord through the mediation of our good Mother Mary. Give them my compliments and in particular (the end of the line is effaced) of whom I have had less direct news for some time.

Like me, you must have noticed the many mistakes that disfigure that otherwise very interesting letter that Mme Alexandrine wrote to you. Do not say anything to her about this remark of mine, but require all your Children to write well and correctly always, and to speak in the same way. That is essential to such an extent that we will not achieve the aim of the Institute, if you do not conform better to my wishes than you are doing at present.

Good-bye, my dear Child; you can count on my zeal in fulfilling the pleasant duties imposed on me in my position as

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th of the month of our august Mother Mary 1839

L.S.J.M.J.

17-23

Rev. Mother Clothilde

I often make a mess when I do things in a hurry. It is the day after tomorrow, Friday, and not tomorrow, that the notary can come. As my letter had already gone, I am writing you a second one. I ask you to pardon me for my blunder. It is sad that at my age, I am subject to so many miseries.

All yours in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Wednesday, 8:15 in the morning

Praise be J.M.J.

17-24

Very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I thank you for the greetings you have just sent me on the occasion of the feast day of my patron, and I equally thank your dear Children for the sentiments of filial affection that inspire them. I hope that our good God who has fashioned the very sweet bonds that unite us in his heart, will answer our prayers, and that we shall have the happiness of serving him with zeal and perfection ever more worthy of him. I congratulate you especially, dear Child, on your restoration to health, and am persuaded that you will use it faithfully in the service of our good Master. You must have heard that our dear Sister Bathilde, after receiving the last signs of that real affection that our Reverend and zealous dear Olympiade bears for all of you, has departed with confidence to render an account of her conduct and receive the prize of victory that the grace of Jesus Christ has prepared for her. ... (The bottom of the page is cut off)

The letter of Mme Marie Charlotte gave me great pleasure; that Lady has only to follow the directions of the sentiments our good God gives her heart, to become a good religious, and to write in a very pleasing way. I am praying to our Holy Patrons to obtain for all of us, that we may make the graces bear fruit that divine generosity grants us so lavishly.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th July 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

17-25

Reverend Mother Clothilde

I have examined your plan of a new prospectus a little and sent it to Mme Vicar. I do not approve at all of your taste for imitating what others say. That sort of mania for copying the Ladies of the Sacred Heart and even the Sisters of Notre Dame, would have made you sacrifice expressions that were obviously better than those you wanted to substitute for them. You do not realize, dear Child, that every copy pales in the presence of its original; that, in following your plan, you would deprive your prospectus of its natural appearance, its distinctive character, and would give it a

borrowed look while proving your-self guilty of being an imitator or even a plagiarist. It was that very inclination, if my memory does not fail me, and not by any means economy, that led you to have the first prospectus printed at Malines rather than Alost. We will be careful to have the present work carried out better than the earlier one.

Do not upset yourself uselessly, dear Lady, by uselessly going back over things. It is much less due to your inexperience than to certain oddities on the part of your doctor, that I attribute the accidental causes that may have hastened the worsening of the health of Mme Bathilde. I think that we will be obliged to change doctors, as soon as we have the opportunity. I cannot give my confidence to a man whose method is in opposition to what is practiced elsewhere. It seems to me that there is no talk either at Berlaymont, or at Lille, of sending the Ladies or their pupils on a journey; not even of sending them to the country for an outing. Mr. Van Wymelbeke was very worried about the health of his daughter when I read him a charming letter from our young Mme Marie Charlotte that proved she is in good health and was going to take the country air with some pupils. At the word "country" the father imagined she was speaking of the garden, and I saw myself obliged to say that this remedy came from a doctor with 'systematic' ideas, so he showed surprise by such a remedy as soon as he understood that she was not speaking figuratively. Indeed the country air is better than that of the towns, but in this respect, Malines is as good as the country. So be at rest and bless the Lord for the graces he grants us in spite even of our defects and faults. That is the real way to please God. Is not that the way that Mme Bathilde ended her career, a reassuring and happy one?

I like to think that this month will obtain for us fresh proofs of the love of Mary for her Children. Let us open our souls and receive with joy what the mercy of her son will give us through the mediation of his Mother who is also ours.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd August 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

17-26

Reverend Mother

I put off answering you in the hope of doing so in person, but seeing myself in the midst of more or less urgent occupations, I do not know what to do. Tell me sincerely; is my presence so necessary as to oblige me to put myself out and to put off other business?

If it is possible, it is better to finish the work on the old building before the winter, rather than after it. I am not saying anything about the front: you can see from the street that the construction work is going on.

Do the day pupils still go to the parish for Mass, and was it not sufficient to take them to your chapel? In any case, I think the time has come for keeping your Rules at Malines, and no Lady must go out of the convent.

It seems that the lay novice Colette Van Aken that you sent to Belleghem will not be staying there. You will have to give her dowry back; it was you who kept it.

I pray our Lord Jesus Christ to bless, enlighten and strengthen you.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st September 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

17-27

Madame Superior Clothilde

Although the object of the request presented by all the Ladies of your convent of the Queen of Angels has already been achieved, I am pleased to come back on that matter again. The zeal shown by your Ladies to educate themselves pleases me very much, and their request, which is well drawn up, and all the little letters accompanying it, are pretty, show me that the success of their efforts could not be in doubt. If different more serious matters have left these prayers without a written answer, please tell your dear Children that I have not been indifferent to them, but that I

am very satisfied with them, applaud their efforts, and pray God to crown them with success. I pray all the saints to draw down blessings on your convent, and to inflame you with no less keen ardor for acquiring the knowledge that leads to the abode of their happiness, than that which causes you to shine by qualities equally as precious that are envisioned as means to make flourish a house that is consecrated to the Queen of Heaven and to the work of the sanctification of children. May that two-fold knowledge always act in harmony and God will be pleased with you! Such is the wish formulated for you and your pious family by

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th November 1839

Praise be J.M.J.
To Mme Clothilde

17-28

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Your letter has given me some details that pleased me very much: you have put me in a position to see your convent in the way I was hoping to have it for my direction and the individual good of your dear sisters.

I flatter myself with the hope that before long, you will have gotten rid even of the traces of the causes of catastrophes with which I foresaw your classes threatened, as a result above all of your being unwell.

The cause of extraordinary expenses that arises from the visits and sojourns made by strangers staying with you from time to time, especially engaged my attention. The capital draws many parents and friends of our religious, and if one does not take a few precautionary measures, your convent will become a hostelry, where recollection and money matters will be in question at every moment.

So as to take these measures, one must know the cause; I am asking you for a note that is as exact as possible on all the persons that you have been obliged: 1) to feed, 2) to give lodging to, for several months.

As for the young Protestant lady, it is true that, in the hope of bringing back to the faith a person about whom the Mme Superior at Malines told me so much good about, I had allowed her to come to your convent to be entertained there out of charity, for some time. But I certainly had never thought that another young lady would come with her. This is what you will do: 1) You will ask Rev. Father Boone if he thinks that the expenses this Protestant is causing you to incur, must or can be continued; in other words, if the hope of a good conversion is well enough founded to support these expenses for an establishment whose aim is solely the education of the young. 2) You will write to Mme Superior at Malines to inform her that you are putting on her account at 1 franc per day, the support of the person she has sent you as the companion of the Protestant. As your convent cannot make such generous gifts, you must not indulge in them, and the Mme Superior at Malines, knowing the state of the Institute, will not, I think, have authorized the said companion to stay with you, without receiving the assurance that the extra expenses will be reimbursed that are occasioned by the sojourn of certain strangers whom she send to your convent.

For the rest, my dear daughter, I again recommend you to take care of your health. Your house has only the very bare necessities as regards personnel, for it to function. Do not expose yourself to any imprudence that could stop the progress of your pupils as regards either instruction or education.

Also ask the Mme Superior at Malines what she thinks of your wish as regards (words obliterated by the seal) communion.

Be assured of my sincere desire to be useful to you. I will recommend you often to the divine Child and his Holy Mother during these days when you will be occupied so piously. In saying you, I am speaking of all the community.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd December 1939

I am very pleased also with the letter of Mme Théodosie. When you write to the Mme Superior at Alost, you will do well to send her this letter, so that she may know my opinion about the matters of which I am speaking.

L.S.J.M.J.

17-29

Madame Superior Clothilde (name added)

As the New Year period involves me in many occupations, I cautioned my spiritual Children, a year or even more ago, not to write to me around this time, except on business. As your Ladies have forgotten my recommendation, they must let me answer them through you.

You know, and I think that all your community is convinced, that I try to acquit myself of the pleasant duties I have undertaken on your behalf and that I pray especially for all my Children at the Christmas feasts. May my prayers help you to obtain a more perfect knowledge of Jesus Christ and, as a necessary result, a more tender love, a more perfect devotion for that Spouse of your souls, whose charity led him to take the form and the appearance of sin in order to be the victim who reconciles us with the justice of God! Let us carefully study that adorable Child; we shall learn all our duties in so doing.

Read the following to each of your Ladies, individually. As regards what concerns you individually, my dear Lady, I congratulate you on the supernatural lights you receive and which are leading you to understand the usefulness of crosses. That is a great step made in the paths of your celestial Spouse. Let us not imprudently seek to rid ourselves of these crosses, but let us try to carry them behind Jesus Christ.

Mme Marie Charlotte sends me greetings that I am very pleased to receive. I thank her for them and promise her a few more mementos these days. I should have preferred that a ceremony of a somewhat religious nature had not been in the game. I did not think of answering her in time. Her letter gave me great pleasure in all respects.

I haven't the courage to write to (name crossed out). A short period of trial is necessary, and we shall know where we stand. She has already made so many promises! You may however tell her that I have prayed specially for her. Would that we could help that poor religious to know herself and to turn back sincerely to God.

Mme Angélique gives me reason to think that she is constantly keeping to the path of her duties. May she preserve her confidence and tranquility of soul. That is what I specially wish her. I am pleased with her letter and I pray God to bless the efforts of that dear Child.

Mme Séraphine has much reason to thank our good God, and to go forward courageously along the path of love towards her divine Spouse. In the crib she will find the most perfect model of generosity and loving meekness. So let her always avoid whatever could make her melancholy; that passion is so opposed to the character of our Savior, that his Spouses must do violence to themselves so as never willingly to experience its effects. Her writing is getting perfect.

Mme Alexandrine gives repeated proofs that I was not mistaken about the dispositions our good God has given her. Let her persevere courageously and she will respond to the expectations of the Institute and above all of her divine Spouse. I allow her one extra communion. I cannot, I think, allow her what she wants.

(Name crossed out) must not trouble to write to me. I am sure of her sentiments and I shall pray for her.

Madame, thank your good Mothers for the nice letter they sent me. They are not mistaken in thinking that I am keenly interested in all that concerns them. Their progress in virtue and knowledge is the object of my desires and my efforts. I share the joy the Mistresses feel at the good behavior and success of your dear pupils. So, they could add therefore to my enjoyment by allowing your Ladies to frequently give me good news of your Children. I make a point of often praying for all of you.

I allow Sr. Mathilde to make her final vows. Tell your Ladies that I wish them many graces and that I give them a good share of my prayers these days.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th December 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

17-30

Madame Superior Clothilde (Name added)

I have received your letters. This is my reply to your last one: Mme Superior General is well. While awaiting the arrival of the Mother of Stam... we are looking over all your Rules and Ceremonial. I have send notice in due form to the person you found at my house. As soon as M... has gone, the Mme Superior General will go straight to Brussels. From there she will send you her circular letter. So, you may remain at Malines.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th April 1840

I send my compliments to all your dear Ladies, for the new blessings the Lord has granted to them, in giving them a Mother General who worthy of their esteem and affection.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-31

Madame Superior Clothilde (Name added)

The novice we sent from Alost to Belleghem, or rather the lame postulant who, after receiving the veil at Belleghem, left the Institute of the Sisters of St. Joseph, last year, has returned to her family in Brussels. The Superior at Belleghem has sent me 12 francs belonging to that girl. If you can find her, you will send her those 12 francs; unless the Mme Superior General thinks the small sum should go to her Institute to pay for stay of that girl at Alost.

I am enclosing an interesting letter from my cousin Pauline. You will read it with the Mme Superior General for your consolation, but under the seal of secrecy. The Mme Superior may keep it. It is a proof that this person is not yet lost to us.

Arrange everything so well that the multitude of tasks does not harm either the instruction of the pupils or good order; nor the recollection, nor the health of your dear sisters: moderation in everything.

It seems to me that a hand is expensive at your painter: 70 francs! It is enormous. Please tell him so. At Ghent, the portrait of the Rev. Superior General of the Sisters of St. Joseph, with a hand, and all of it very carefully done, did not cost 200 francs. The painter took into consideration as Mr. Cels might have done, the position of an Institute occupied with constructions and other expenses at the moment.

You can see from the variations in my writing, that I have written this "in installments" as Mme de Sevigne used to say. I find it a convenient way: it offers me the advantage of saying things when they come into my mind. It is more important to you to have useful things from me than to have carefully written phrases. I have not undertaken to be your teacher of handwriting and literature; I would fulfill my duties badly. What I want to be and that always, is

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th July 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

17-32

Madame Superior Clothilde (Name added)

Here at last are my answers to the letters you send me at Malines. I hope they all know me well enough at your place not to be upset or astonished at my long silence.

You will have learned of the holy death of our Lady Leocadie. It was on the 5th of this month that this beautiful soul went to receive her crown.

It seems to me that everything is going on well at Malines. Our good God is pleased to get us pupils so that we may have the opportunity to make his holy law known and loved.

I am confidently expecting that all is going on equally well at your place. Keep to our customs and to all that has just been regulated. It is the true way to avoid the evils of those innovations that are the fruit of our individual minds or our own views.

I am always sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th October 1840

L.S.J.M.J.

17-33

Madame Superior Clothilde (Name added)

It is a very pleasant piece of news that which informs me that you are getting more order and regularity in your classes. On that depends the progress of the pupils and the reputation of our Institute at Brussels. I thank our good God for this success he is deigning to grant your combined efforts. Persevere on this good way; you will go far in the presence of God and men.

What you tell me about the Ladies and the Sisters is equally a subject of consolation for me. I am easily convinced that the Saturday when you had the exercises you told me about, has produced a doubling of fervor which will go on increasing until Christmas.

I am sending my replies for a Lady and two novices. Read the latter, before passing them on, so as to be in a position to second me in the means I am using to guide those two subjects.

Let us all be of good courage and show ourselves worthy of the confidence with which the Lord honors us. Let us form for him faithful servants for the various states and count on his help in a work so agreeable to his fatherly heart. I am offering prayers for your community and for you in particular, my very dear Child. You know how sincerely I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th November 1840

Praise be J.M.J.

17-34

Madame Superior Clothilde

I was not aware of your illness nor of the visit the Mme Superior General made to you. I am very pleased to learn from you yourself that you are better and have been encouraged in virtue by the example that Mme your Rev. Mother General left you. I have always noticed that singing, lengthy explanation in class, in general, everything that tires the chest very much, does not suit you. Avoid all excess of that kind, and you will ward off these illnesses; that is worth much more than all the remedies prescribed to cure you which really makes things awkward in your position. I am delighted to learn that you are pleased with your dear Sisters and that the novices give you satisfaction. Carefully cultivate those good dispositions.

I have been very edified by the rectitude your brother uses in his dealings. Being unable to give a letter of recommendation on the simple information you gave me about the relative of Ardoye, I addressed myself to Mr. Désirè. The latter send some information back to me, but without speaking of the morality of the relative. So as not to waste time, I decided to send the recommendation to Waeke, adding to that dispatch that if Mr. Désirè believed his candidate deserved that action on my part, not only because of his capability, but also because of his religious conduct, he could send the letter on to him; that I was relying on his sincerity. A few days later, I had the pleasure of receiving a visit from Mr. Désirè who came to explain things verbally and to bring back my recommendation. I was charmed by such delicacy, and your brother went up very much in my esteem. You understand that all this must remain secret; I have told you for your consolation and also for your instruction.

At the first opportunity that occurs, I shall try to arrange the matter of the reduction of the boarding fees, about which you wrote to me. In less than ten days, you will know the decision of Mr. the Superior at Melle. I hope it will be according to your wishes.

For the good of your children, I will allow them to write to me for Christmas, but I cannot give an assurance that I shall have the leisure to reply to them.

You would do well, my dear daughter, to get yourself the three short works of your Rev. Father Boone: on fashions, on the theater and on bad books. You will find good points in them for your pupils and you will be able to talk about them to the Jesuit Fathers who are willingly follow

their sentiments in these sorts of things. You will find them, I think, at Demat, rue de la Batterie, 24, Brussels.

I send you my wishes that the Christmas feasts may obtain fresh heavenly favors for your dear Sisters and all your pupils. You know that, as Superior, you are at the head of the list of recommendations that I unroll before the Lord. No one is more sincerely devoted to you than

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

(Not dated)

Praise be J.M.J.

17-35

Madame Superior Clothilde

I give thanks to God for the favors he is showering on your house, and congratulate you on being the fortunate objects of his blessings. I like to think that your sincere gratitude will allow the Lord to continue his kindness; so I refrain from exhorting you to it.

The plan of which you speak to me needs to be further matured. Your present house employs ten subjects; now, if we have to base it on that example, shall we have subjects in a large enough number? For the rest the whole of this affair will be dealt with Mme the Superior General. I count on going to Malines in about ten days time.

I thank you for the information you have given me of the visits of Mr. the Superior of the Josephites from Brussels. I shall use it very prudently.

Tell your dear Ladies that I thank them for the beautiful letters they have just sent me, and that some of them rather resemble, as it were, little pieces of eloquence, as Mme de Sevigne would have said. I am very pleased with the sentiments found in them. I do not have the leisure to answer them and besides there is no great need. Let your Ladies be good enough to reflect for five minutes before the Blessed Sacrament and they will receive the answers for which they have asked me.

I must however tell you that the handwriting, generally speaking, has not improved. Yours, my good Lady, is becoming more and more insignificant; further progress of this kind and I shall be obliged to send your letters back to you for you to make them legible. You know I set store on reading what you write to me. Remember me also to your sisters.

I must finish; the letter has to be taken to the post. Receive my blessing and always count on my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 6th February 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

17-36

Madame Superior Clothilde

I am delighted to learn that all your dear Sisters vie with each other to give you subjects for satisfaction. I am counting on having the pleasure, in the month of May or even a little sooner, of expressing by word of mouth how happy I am to learn of all the good you tell me about. I do not have the leisure to answer the letters you sent me; I beg you to assure the Ladies and novices who wrote to me, that I am very pleased with their sentiments and the manner in which they expressed them to me. We shall see each other before long as I (word obliterated by the seal) to tell you.

I have read your remarks about Alost and Brussels, both those you sent me, and those you addressed to Mme Superior General. There seemed to be nothing in them to warrant modifying the decision taken during your stay at Ghent. Our plan for Alost will be carried out, and we shall continue following the designs God may manifest to us for Brussels; we will keep our minds and wills in the dispositions required to enable us to follow, with docility, the ever adorable designs of divine providence. That, believe me, my dear child, is the only thing important to you. What use would it be to us to do many and great things, if God does not approve of them, or if he is asking us to do something more modest?

I am always sincerely your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th April 1841

I thank you for the news you sent me of the kindness of Fr. Thyphons, etc. The health of Mme Kokaert gives me cause for concern. I shall make it a duty to recommend to the Lord, at the Holy Sacrifice, that charitable Lady. Give her my greetings.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-37

Your letter, my dear daughter, gave me real pleasure. It is sweet to me to learn from yourself that you are putting yourself in the hands of the Lord and receiving from him all the remedies you need for both soul and body. That is the true way of not putting any obstacle in the way of your cure.

We will make a novena in honor of St. Joseph for you. Please tell your Children from me, that from Sunday, we will begin that exercise of piety, and that we will say the litany of our Holy Patron for nine days.

The journey to Grammont will not take place. The information I have obtained caused me to make that resolution.

Receive my blessing and believe in the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd October 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

17-38

Madame Superior

I have learned with great joy that your mind is at rest and that you are abandoning yourself generously to the holy will of God. We are doing all that we can to get you spared for the Institute for many more years. If that wish is in conformity with the merciful designs of the Lord, I hope it will be fulfilled; we have too many reasons for counting on St. Joseph, to have the least doubt in that regard. For your part, keep a clam heart, loving all that your divine Spouse wants. Next week, you will have the consolation of seeing your Rev. Mother General. With her, you will take all the measures necessary for keeping your convent functioning in the best possible way.

Receive, my dear Child, my good wishes for the feast of All the Saints, and always count on the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th October 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

17-39

The same day I received the letter enclosing your pious wish that I should solicit prayers from the Carmelites for your Reverend Mother; I made it my duty to get that help for our dear invalid. I took alms to those good souls and asked for the help of their prayers in favor of a person whose recovery seems to me very important for the good of a religious house. Since then, and today especially, I have prayed it seems to me with fervor and confidence, to the merciful Jesus whose sufferings are the concern of Holy Church and whose love for us is manifested in everything. My heart is more at rest than it has been since the 17th, and I understand that the Lord is the absolute master of all of us; that our views must be subordinated to his ever adorable wishes. Those, my dear Child, are the sentiments of your Father in Jesus Christ; strive to put yourself also at the mercy of your divine Spouse and acquit yourself with zeal and in simplicity of all he asks of you. Jesus was obedient even to the cross.

I have just received the letter you sent yesterday: thanks to the Lord, you will be able to lessen to a small extent the weight you had laid on me in spite of yourself by your news of last Tuesday! Send your letters by post, my Child, I will receive them 4 or 5 hours earlier and the cost of carriage is the same. It is a much surer way.

I am all yours forever in our Lord who was obedient even to death on the cross.

I am touched by your sentiments of filial piety. Yes, Jesus Christ, his Holy Mother and his foster Father will be touched by your perseverance. Do not let your responsibilities frighten you, my good child. Oh! how much heavier was the cross your divine Spouse carried! Let us blush at our lack of generosity.

(Letter not dated. Postmark: 3rd March 1836)

Praise be J.M.J.

17-40

I have just received, my dear sister, the letter you sent yesterday. It seems to me that our good God will deign to grant our prayers, and that, after the trials, we will be able to rejoice with full hearts at the sight of fresh favors. Let us have confidence in the protection of Mary and her Holy Spouse. Jesus Christ will have pity on us. I do not cease to implore him by all that is dearest to him. I beg you, my child, to forbid anyone to tire our Reverend Mother. You alone may see her, and the others once a day for a moment, and in your presence to receive her blessing. Sister Agnes ought not to be in the infirmary; her weakness will have done harm to the Rev. Mother. I also beg all the community not to relax in any way; for fear of delaying the moment of mercy. Read this to the community.

You may read to Mlle Colette No. 1 and 2 that follow, if you think it is good.

I give you my blessing and I beg the Lord to give you light and strength with calm and confidence. You know how sincerely I am

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

2nd of St. Joseph's month 1836

You must not stamp your letters; they are worth more to me than the cost of carriage. You will find in the case containing the chasuble a circular announcing the death of our dear Sister Eugénie, and a copy of a new collection of Flemish works printed in Ghent.

Would you not find it a good thing to subscribe to De Verzameling, a copy of which I am enclosing herein? It would provide reading books for the Flemish section of the congregation. For a small fee, you would obtain in the long run and inexpensively, a collection of useful works. I think I remember you distributed reading notes to the 1st section and the day pupils also, for a small fee. What is that fee? It might perhaps be needed to buy works for these libraries. The fee would provide for the cost of acquisition and upkeep.

If I had foreseen what has happened since, Sister Claire would not have left. If necessary, I shall send you a Sister novice from Grammont; write and tell me what you think about it, after talking it over with Sr. Henriette.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-41

Blessed be God! My dear Sister, and the most Holy Virgin and St. Joseph be thanked for the great graces you have just received. I opened your letter in fear and trembling, and my joy was so great on learning the good news, that I did not have the words expressive enough to testify my feelings of gratitude to God. Glory be to the divine goodness that has deigned to grant the desires of our hearts! Let us double our efforts, very dear children, to show our heavenly Spouse how much we desire to prove our sincere and constant devotion to him. Thank Mr. Willemaers for his zeal and his attentiveness in making known to me the happy results with which divine Providence has crowned his case for our dear invalid. See that the diet prescribed by the doctor is strictly followed. I dispose of all that I have in order to hasten the recovery of our Rev. Mother; do not spare me; I have nothing so precious that I would not give it most willingly to cooperate in promptly restoring to you the Superior whom God in his mercy gave you, and whose illness has made you appreciate her good qualities better. How happy I am to see (name effaced) so near to resuming their usual occupations. I congratulate them and thank our good God from the depths of my heart. I recommend to them prudence and fidelity to what their situation requires. You know I do not want to prescribe childish precautions, but merely what the doctor orders according to the needs of our convalescents.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th of St. Joseph's month 1836

The enclosed has been composed entirely by my godchild Colombe. Give my compliments to our Rev. Mother, the convalescents and all our Sisters. I shall commend you all specially during Holy Week. Continue to write to me and to pray for me.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-42

I have received with joy, my dear sister, the good news you were able to send me of the improvement there is in the condition of our Rev. Mother. You know how keenly interested I am in all of you, and consequently you understand with what feelings I learn of the favors our good God grants you.

I am very far, my child, from doubting your gratitude for the promptness with which I asked for the help of prayers of the Carmelites for our dear invalid. I am well enough acquainted with your heart to know it to be opposed to ingratitude. However, on this occasion, I shall make the remark that you must always mention that you have received my letters and tell me something about their contents, so that I know whether they have been delivered to you and whether my intentions are understood and carried out

It would be very pleasant for me to receive at Grammont, a few lines written in the hand of our Reverend Mother. Make this wish known to her, provided however that her condition allows her to give me that satisfaction.

As for you, my good child, learn from the conduct of the holy women who were going to the sepulcher of the Lord to render the homage of their love to the Lord Jesus Christ, to have great confidence and even fearlessness in the enterprises that zeal for your office must inspire in you. Neither the soldiers who guarded the sepulcher, nor the fury of the Jews, nor the other difficulties daunted them. Love and the faith which animated them gave them every hope. So hope also for all the help you will need as time goes on. Hope for it courageously and expect it from that Providence that has placed you in your present state and duties. We do not know by what means we shall succeed, but God knows and we ourselves shall also know when the time comes. So do peacefully what depends on you, the Lord will do the rest. Your enterprises will be sure to succeed to his glory. Should we ask for anything else?

To respond to your pious wish, this is what I have found it good to inform our Sisters in our convent when the Mother there is ill: Write out the first seven lines of the prayer on p. 132 of my Manual, changing 'I come' into 'we come' and 'for men' into 'for us who have the honor to be your children'. Then:

You know, O our Mother, that the one your son gave us to represent you among us, is ill, and your children who are always weak fear that, abandoned too much to themselves, they will relax in their fervor in the service of God. Deign to come to our help; obtain the prompt recovery of our dear invalid, if that is not contrary to the very adorable will of her divine Spouse, your son Jesus Christ. O Mary, show that you are always our Mother, that your maternal heart addresses itself to the divine heart of your son, in favor of your children!

Monstra te esse matrem,
Sumat per te preces,
qui pro nobis natus,
Tulit esse tuus.

Finally a prayer to St. Joseph: copy out the first seven lines in the same Manual, p. 104, and add to them:

St. Joseph, our Protector and our Father, your children are in trouble: she who among us takes the place of your chaste Spouse who is our Mother, is unable to look after us. Alas, our weakness is enough to tell you how important it is for us not to be long deprived of her presence

and the effects of her solicitude. Deign to join Mary to obtain for us what we ask for humbly and with confidence. Amen.

You will say these prayers in the morning after meditation.

Here is a treatise on Arithmetic that Sr. Gonzague will want to examine; our brothers think a great deal of it. I shall talk about it to our Mistress General, next week.

Awaiting the sweet pleasure of seeing your Reverend Mother and all of you, I sign myself with true devotedness in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your affectionate spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th April 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

17-43

The good dispositions in which grace has put you, very dear Sister, are a real subject for joy for me. I bless the Lord for the attentions full of love he deigns to have for you, and urge you to correspond generously with the designs of your divine Spouse. May you triumph over the weaknesses resulting from original sin, with the help of that good Mother who, through an unique privilege, did not share in the sin of Adam. I entreat Mary to let us feel the effects of her goodness towards us, today when we celebrate her immaculate conception.

You gave me very real pleasure, my dear child, by giving me good news of your Rev. Mother. You know that I appreciate the grace God grants your convent through the ministry of your superior whom he favors with exceptional gifts. Continue praying with me to preserve for a long time that means of salvation we owe to his mercy. Please, however, without pettiness, have my desires as regards the precautions to be taken carried out. I expressly charge you with this task.

You may now and then send me a copy, or rather an installment, of the work you wrote to me about.

Receive, my dear Child, the blessing given to you with a good heart by

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

8th December 1836

My health is good and I completely got rid of my dental trouble. I have at last managed to get for my friend D. Minne (the rest of the line is obliterated by the paper fold)

17-44

(Letter not dated, but addressed to Sister Clothilde, assistant at Alost.)

It is not for me to speak or to reason about what medicine might do for our dear invalid; I shall take care not to make myself appear ridiculous. All the same, I charge you to ask the doctor whether healthy nutrition or even caustics would be useful at the moment. A plaster of Burgundy pitch, between the shoulders, or a vesicatory on the arm, might be used. These are my thoughts. I do not attach much importance to them; they do not deserve it either. Never mind, I have no objection to speaking out of place through excess of zeal.

I am going to Grammont, God willing, on Wednesday after dinner. Write to me before that time and also on Saturday so that I find news again on my return here. I shall perhaps have the satisfaction of coming to see you next week. Tell your Rev. Mother so, and that I always love her very much in Jesus Christ. Do not be in too much of a hurry to buy clothes for the Sisters and postulants. I hope that the Rev. Mother will be able to do that herself in a few days.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-45

Very dear Sister Clothilde

To ask for nothing, to refuse nothing; in the last analysis this was the grace-filled inspiration of your recent retreat. It is also the main resolution you made during those holy exercises. I thank the good God who inspired these beautiful sentiments and who has helped you continually to keep them vividly before you. You must understand, dear Child, that it is a consolation for the Superiors who urges you in Jesus our common Master, to find in you these dispositions, favorable also to

their point of view and to the needs of the humble family of Mary and Joseph. The convent, which we will have the happiness of opening at Malines, will be dedicated to Mary Queen of Angels. Our good Mother Mary will deign to take it under her special protection. I am convinced that much good will be done there; abundant graces will be given to our Institute through this new channel which divine goodness is about to open for us. So that you may enter into the merciful designs of God, and that you may participate in a special way in the blessings to be bestowed on the Convent of Mary Queen of Angels, your very Reverend Mother and I have decided to name you Superior of this new convent. We delegate our dear Child Olympiade, Mother of the convent of St. Joseph, to install you in the function with which we are going to invest you.

Thus, Reverend Mother, is the will of God made known to you. He who has imposed the yoke upon you, will give you the strength to carry it. The unction of his grace will lighten its weight. His light will direct your steps; his divine love will carry you through the difficulties that may come your way and your generous surrender to the good pleasure of your Spouse will make you understand, as did St. Paul and St. Francis Xavier, that the Lord will reward with much liberality, all that one has the honor of doing for him. You will recognize that the only talent that you will need for governing will be a great desire to constantly obey your Sovereign Master. This disposition will lead you to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit so as to obtain in everything, the glory of him whom you represent in your House. Offer in advance and renew it occasionally all the duties and obligations of a Superior and a Mother.

Distrust of your own power will produce that prudence and exterior modesty which will win the affection of your sisters who will be edified by your humility and self-forgetfulness in their service. Another very real advantage of the Superiority, and one which you must pledge to accept gratefully because God confides it to you, is that in it you will have a greater opportunity of practicing several virtues more perfectly than before: you will have more occasions and more means of exercising charity; of communicating sentiments of zeal for the glory of God; you will multiply yourself in some way working through the hands of your sisters to extend the kingdom of your divine Spouse, praising God through their lips, and above all, through each of their hearts you will love him. Does this not give evidence that in spite of the difficulties which it offers, your position is one to be envied? I realize that your piety will be sometimes less consoling because of the multiple concerns of government, but your love for your divine Spouse will evidently be more true and more solid; it will be of the same caliber which Christ demanded of St. Peter when he asked: Do you love me, Peter? and told him, Feed my lambs. Well! if you love Jesus Christ, love his Spouses; form them for their sublime functions; feed the lambs of this tender Shepherd; watch over them, defend them from the snares of the wolf and the attacks which he plans against both the sheep and the lambs. How honorable, how beautiful and how meritorious is this task which is imposed upon you! Instead of being frightened by this burden, rejoice at seeing it being laid upon you by the one who loves you more than you love yourself and put your full confidence in this good Master. This is the advice, in the name of God, of one whom you know is devoted to you, and who will always consider it a pleasant duty to prove to you, that he is in very truth, Reverend Mother

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd December 1837

Among the things which I shall send you, you will find a silver-gilt chalice, my offering to Mary, Queen of Angels.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-46

Reverend Mother

I am pleased with the sentiments you have for your Father in Jesus Christ. I think you will never have occasion to go back on anything: like his Children, that Father has a sincere desire to fulfill the designs of God in all things. May we go forward with our dear Sister Aloÿse in the ways of charity, always with courage, with generosity! Let us count on our Holy Patron and our august Mother Mary, when the moment ordained by Providence comes. The postulant from Ghent may enter only as a postulant. Here are a few portraits of our angel Aloÿse. Have two of them framed, one will be for the parlor, the other for Mr. the archpriest. I shall have one framed for Msgr. the

Archbishop that you will have the honor of offering him together with a letter. Give copies to Mme your assistant and to Mr. the Superior of the Junior Seminary. These friends will, I think, take care to get them framed. Mr. the archpriest has probably already communicated to you my replies to the other matters, you wrote to me about.

Our dear Lady Bathilde will deliver my letter to you. You will have a good subject in that Sister; but take care that she is cheerful and do not let her study to excess. She will tell you that my journey to Mouscron was a happy and pleasant one for me and my children.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ and for ever

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, last day of St. Joseph's month 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

17-47

Reverend Mother

The news you communicated to me surprised me all the more since last Friday our dear invalid wrote to me in her own hand to reassure me. The designs of God are to be adored and his methods surpass our understanding. So, my dear child, let us submit; it is the best means of obtaining mercy and enriching ourselves with merits before the Lord. The ceremony to-morrow morning will fill with supernatural strength the hearts of all the Spouses of the Convent of the Queen of Angels. (The two following lines are crossed out) You know the weakness of your poor Father, Rev. Mother; and yet I want to submit to all that God ordains. I pray with confidence, and ask for what I need in order to guide, as is my duty, the friends, the beloved daughters of Mary and Joseph. Yes, let us arm ourselves with courage, the Lord will be touched by our good will.

Go to Alost on Thursday. I invest you with all my powers to take such measures there as you deem fitting. Our good Lady Flore will tell you what I wrote to her in the last place. You will write to me from Alost. May it please the Lord to let you give me good news!

Our Rev. Mother Superior is recovering little by little. I have just received a letter in her writing.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

(Not dated)

I do not know who wrote the letter from Mouscron. It seems to me that the English style of writing is being neglected.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-48

Madame Superior

Although you have felt some natural opposition to carrying out the orders of divine Providence, the Lord will nonetheless bless your humble efforts in the new post to which his hand has led you. You will find the grace and all the means necessary to fulfill your duties, and attain the objective of your mission, every time you follow the voice of holy obedience. To the ordinary motives of working with zeal, you now have this one of adding to the good reputation of your Rev. Mother General, by accomplishing all she led them to hope of you at Brussels. So, whatever nature says, set yourself generously to the work, and success will crown your efforts; be an angel to the Convent of the Angels, and let your Queen find in you that docility that is the distinguishing characteristic of the heavenly spirits. On these conditions, I promise you unfailing happiness and prosperity.

I want it to be for sleeping that people go to bed at your place, and if to achieve that end, another dormitory is needed, tell me where you will find one. If you count on exchanging the two places next to the chapel for the two where your dormitory is, the expense would not be great; I would agree to that arrangement; you will not even have to write to me anymore about it; I will leave it to you with complete confidence.

I repeat my recommendation to you to take pains with your writing. Many words which are not written in full show signs of speed resembling haste. May Jesus deign to send you the favors of the Holy Spirit so that you may become more and more pleasing to his divine heart that is always

burning with zeal for the salvation of mankind. And you, my dear daughter, pray for me during these days of grace. The good you will obtain for me will be reflected on you and all your pious and very dear family.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st June 1840

I shall pass through Malines the day after to-morrow, without stopping there, on my way to Tirlemont where our Josephites are going to begin preparations for the (illegible) the establishment.

Praise be J.M.J.

17-49

Madame Superior

I join with you and all your dear community to thank the Holy Virgin for having obtained that which all of us desired, that of an increase in pupils, the reputation of your house and the general good of the Institute, which we would appear to have need of. I am not late in fulfilling my promise: I have said with all my heart the Te Deum that I promised. I permit you the novena and the communion that you asked, but you must say the Te Deum without any chant. Join with the practices of your novena, that of care with your writing; if you become docile, your hand will follow your example, firmly rely on it.

We have decided, I think, for a portrait with my hand. But I don't know, my dear daughter, where your judgment is because you think that each house should have the portrait. Should it not be just one (house) and the right belongs to the Mother House.

I did not have the least idea of the indisposition of Mme Superior General and I recommend her to the good God. I think that some imprudence, some little excess are the cause of the indisposition. Assign Mme Angelique to watch over our dear Superior whose docility I also suspect as that of your (word illegible) I do not like these half docilities and neither do they please God, I think.

I pray the Holy Spirit to enlighten all of you, to strengthen you, to give you peace and to make you true children of Mary and Joseph, the faithful Spouses of Jesus Christ.

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th June 1840

(Above letter is the same as No. 4-10. Translation from French to English somewhat different.)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO CLOTHILDE VAN WYMELBEKE
Niece of C. G. Van Crombrugghe;
Superior of Brussels; Superior of Coloma; Novice Mistress
B. May 26, 1832; P. May 20, 1845; D. July 29, 1878
(174 Letters dated 1834 to 1865)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-1

Your letter gave me great pleasure, my dear Niece; in it you gave me proofs of courage and of those sentiments of piety that work great things. May God the author of all good be eternally blessed! The renewal of your baptismal vows will have set the last seal on the project of renunciation that grace has inspired you with and I like to think you will have no more of those assaults in which nature only too clearly manifests its great weakness. I have been edified, my dear Niece, in seeing how you attribute to the fact that you have good parents, the victories you win in the attacks of both nature and the demon. Go forward in the same way, and soon that calm, which is so useful in the career you are embarking on, will be assured to you for ever. Soon you will enjoy the happiness promised to those generous souls who leave all for God. You will receive a hundredfold, already here on earth, what you sacrificed on the altar of divine love. Be convinced that I am joining with you in praying that you will obtain an abundant shower of blessings; I am very

sure St. Joseph will help us and already we will have to thank him for what he has deigned to do for us since your entry into the convent. Let us be grateful and we will continually obtain new graces.

Count, very dear Niece, on the devotedness of

Your very affectionate Uncle

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th of the month of St Joseph 1843

L.S.J.M.J.

18-2

My dear Niece

I like to see that you remember dates marked by the special blessings of the Lord. Gratitude stirs up the fire of love in the soul; it inspires sentiments of generosity and enables one to triumph over the obstacles that might be met with in the accomplishment of one's duties. So nourish those dispositions and with the memory of what God has deigned to do, acknowledge how unworthy you were of those marks of his goodness. I will make it a duty to help you to thank the Lord and to pray to him to go on giving you his graces, so that you may respond to his tender solicitude and, helped by St Joseph, be formed in humility, generosity and the knowledge needed to be useful to the Institute.

Pray too, my dear Niece, for

Your devoted Uncle

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent (1844)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-3

I am pleased, my dear Niece, with the dispositions I see you in. I thank the Lord for all that his divine love deigns to do for you. Nourish gratitude, and you will more and more experience the fact that we will not have too long in all eternity to thank God for his mercies and to praise and glorify the author of our happiness in the company of all the saints, and all the angels and their august Queen. It will not depend with me if you do not obtain the fulfillment of your desires; I wish also that the month of Mary will again be a memorable time for you in that respect. However, await the decision calmly. I pray with all my heart our august Mother to help you prepare your soul for the beautiful sacrifice that Jesus Christ is expecting of you.

I have not heard anything about your sister Annette.

11th April 1845

L.S.J.M.J.

18-4

Your letter, my dear daughter, was very pleasing to me. I congratulate you on the happiness that divine goodness causes you to enjoy. Go on always cheerfully and generously, and the tenderness of your heavenly Spouse will make itself felt in your heart and in your undertakings for his glory, both in yourself and in the souls confided to your care.

I will make it a sweet duty to commend you often, during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th January 1846

L.S.J.M.J.

18-5

I am profiting by this opportunity to say a few words to you, my dear Child. The good wishes you addressed to me pleased me very much. I thank you for that sign of filial piety and promise to commend you often to our good God. Continue forming yourself as a Spouse of Jesus Christ, and as an instrument destined to render service to the young.

I am very pleased with your sisters. Faith dominates everything with them. It is in the light of that torch that they see and appreciate things. Annette, they say, will become a religious. I would like her to offer herself to us. Thank the Lord, my dear daughter, for having parents as devoted to

their religion, who give such a fine example in all things to their children, as do your Papa and Mama.

I give you my blessing and always willingly call myself

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-6

I cannot thank our good God enough for the graces he grants you, my dear Niece. To experience that keen desire to live for the Lord and to belong without reserve to Jesus Christ, is a happiness added to so many others. These happy dispositions are a powerful help in detaching the soul from the things of this world in order to abandon it with full confidence to its Creator. Nourish these sentiments that grace is forming in you; continue with courage, with cheerfulness, with humility to work at your sanctification and you will become a worthy Child of Mary, a true Spouse of God the Savior, and an instrument of mercy for the salvation of many.

I shall make it my duty, my dear Niece, to commend you specially above all during Holy Mass.

Your devoted Uncle

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th November 1844

Please tell your pupils that I was pleased to see the good you were able to write to me about them. I like to think they will persevere in the way they have taken, and on which you helped them to embark.

Praise be J.M.J.

18-7

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Although I was not anxious about your actual situation, knowing your submission to God, I am very pleased to have learned from you yourself that you have settled down and that everywhere you are finding your dear Spouse and his help for working on his vine. Continue, without noise, without agitation, to train yourself for the tasks you have to accomplish in the convent of St Joseph and under the special protection of St Joseph. Do not set yourself to study too hard. Not being used to much studying, you must train yourself gradually for that new kind of occupation. So it is with moderation and for not too long a period at a time, that you will try to acquire what you need in this respect.

I give you, my dear daughter, my blessing and I am pleased to sign myself as always

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd of the month of St Joseph 1847

Praised be J.M.J.

18-8

Your letter, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, gave me much pleasure. Your sentiments of filial piety and your devotion to your holy state cause me real joy in Our Lord. Nourish those sentiments by means of prayer and by a union that daily becomes more and more intimate with your divine Spouse. It is very true that we must not worry about the imperfections of our pupils. We must above all see the image of God disfigured by sin, which we are called upon to help to reform, clean or beautify. Continue being joyful in God, meek towards all, humble in the sight of Jesus who was meek and humble of heart.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th July 1847

18-9

I thank you, my dear daughter, for your good wishes. I have prayed specially for you to the divine Child. May you more and more appreciate the outstanding happiness of being a member of a family completely devoted to his very Holy Mother. May you also learn in your talks with your divine Spouse, how to guide your pupils to follow him towards the only real happiness worthy of souls destined to live eternally. Think of that great destiny; that thought will support you; it will help you to say to your pupils sound things capable of directing them along the path religion traces out for them.

Good-bye, dear Child, may God enlighten you more and more, and may his grace make you an instrument for the salvation of many.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

10th January 1848

L.S.J.M.J.

18-10

My dear daughter in Our Lord Jesus Christ

I have seen with pleasure that your zeal for the good of your pupils is increasing and being purified. May our good God be blessed for that! It is another effect of his mercy; it is a fresh grace for which you must thank him.

Please thank the children of our cousin Spitaels for the New Year greetings they sent me. It is not possible for me to write to all those who send me greetings for certain of the big feast. You understand that, but I ask you to make those children whose letters you sent me to understand it.

Give my friendly greetings to the Madame Superior and all your dear sisters.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-11

It is indeed a long time since I wrote to you, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ. The causes of this are numerous, but none of them tells against you.

You give me great pleasure by doing what depends on you, always to appear good humored. You please your divine Spouse by that attitude of mind and heart, and you give your pupils one of the most useful examples that a Mistress can give. You know that towards your sisters you are practicing a virtue, support of one another, by trying to make recreation pleasant. It is such a precious thing to help each other to make the yoke of the Lord sweet and to prove that Jesus Christ spoke the truth when he uttered that saying to us.

I always make it a sweet duty, my dear child, to commend you to the Lord. From your earliest childhood you have received multiply proofs of the goodness of God in your regard, that it must be easier for you than for others to arouse in yourself a lively gratitude and to form yourself with zeal in what you need in order to make our Creator known and loved by your pupils. However, do everything in moderation; no excesses; no bitterness even against yourself; but always meekness, confidence and love of Jesus in your heart and on your tongue. Amen. Isn't that right?

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st January 1850

L.S.J.M.J.

18-12

I thank you, my dear daughter, for the letter you have just written to me. In it I find those sentiments of generosity that God has given you from your first years and which grace sanctifies through fidelity. Let the Lord be the goal of our efforts, and we shall hardly need that human help that is granted to beginners. Find in your sincere love for the divine Spouse of your soul the encouragement, the help that are sometimes refused us elsewhere.

You will gain in authority, to the degree that the pupils of last year are changed or replaced by new pupils. But try and see to it that the latter do not copy the previous ones. It would be

perpetuating the evil not to prevent the insubordination caused, or at least aggravated, by certain imprudent acts on the part of Mme Clémentine and her friends, from being passed on like a contagious disease.

Twice a year I receive a letter from Mme Colombe, your cousin and my goddaughter. It always contains such good and naive sentiments of gratitude towards her former mistress, Mme Flore, and family affection for you and Mme Marie Charlotte. Please tell Mme Flore, and add, from me, that I approve of the wise precaution that Lady has written to me about as regards the measures to be taken by the Mistress general.

Ghent, 16th February 1850

L.S.J.M.J.

18-13

I pray our good God, my dear Niece, to grant your prayers and those that others have been offering for me. I try to make good use of the graces of the Lord and to share them with my spiritual children. I make it my sweet duty to commend you every day to our Holy Patrons, and through them, I ask for that you to become true daughters of Mary, and good instruments in the hands of divine mercy for the good of the young people that Providence has deigned to entrust to you. So you see that I ask for all the good qualities of a Religious and those of a person devoted to the education, for you, my dear daughter, and for all your worthy sisters.

You will offer my thanks to your Mme Superior General for her good wishes, pending the time when I can do so by word of mouth, next week.

Please read and send back the writing of my goddaughter. I call myself for ever

Your devoted Father in Our Lord.

C. G. Van Crombrughe

6th August 1850

L.S.J.M.J.

18-14

It is finally your turn, my dear Niece, to get a few lines from me. You did not doubt for a moment, I am sure, that you had a share in the prayers I offered for my children on the lovely feasts we celebrated a few weeks ago. They are very sweet duties and one gets real satisfaction from fulfilling them. So I presented you often to our good Jesus, and it was through the hands of our august Patrons Mary and Joseph that you were offered and that the blessing of the divine Child came down on you.

I like to think, my dear daughter, that you felt the effects of those powerful blessings and will have been carrying your crosses with courage, with generosity, in the sight of God the Savior. We must not be completely without crosses, but we need to carry them with faith, with love, and at least with submission to the adorable will of the heavenly Master. So you will try, or will always seem to be joyful with your sisters and with your pupils. Win the affection of the latter by giving yourself generously to their needs, and show yourself severe only when your duties and the good of those same children demands it. Leave the supervisor to do what her function entails. The children must always have a mother in their mistress. That is the role that specially suits you.

Receive, very dear Child, the blessing of your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ and give my compliments to Mme Flore, Mme. Marie Charlotte, Mme Aug. and Mme Julie.

Ghent, 7th February 1852

L.S.J.M.J.

18-15

I am very pleased to see you happy in your new post, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ. I draw the conclusion that you are allowing yourself to be guided by the spirit of obedience and detachment. Neither Mme Mélanie nor any other Lady is allowed to go out for business of the kind

you speak to me about. What do the Ladies at Jette do? And those at Doorzele? Don't they have good pianos? Don't they have all that the good of their houses require?

I am praying for you, dear Child; I am also praying for your superior and all your dear sisters.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd October 1852

L.S.J.M.J.

18-16

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I owe you several responses that time has obliged me to refuse you, since you have been at Brussels. Now to make up for those letters, I am writing you a few lines to tell you I thank the Lord for sending you to the convent of the Holy Angels where your character can be formed, and where you will breathe easily under a Mother whose sentiments put you in harmony with each other. Profit by that situation, my dear Child. Become expansive towards the children and even with the Parents and with your sisters. Our good God will help you in your efforts to acquire those fine qualities.

Please tell Mlle Stacke that I thank her for the good wishes she sent me. I am pleased with the whole of her letter. There is a marked improvement since before her last letter. I am also very satisfied with the little letter of Anna. Tell both of them that I am praying for them, that I love them very much in God, and that I try to give them proofs of that in accordance as they strive to serve our good God by fulfilling all their duties.

Receive, my dear daughter, my blessing.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

13th January 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-17

In response to your long letter, I will tell you, my dear daughter, that your Mme Superior may follow the orders of the doctor and eat meat; that you may also listen to what your doctor at Ghent recommends and may follow what he prescribes, only when he prescribes the usual things. I do not know what kind of treatment he subjects your sick to, and I cannot take responsibility for it. You must not talk to him nor write to him about Mme Félicité.

I will be very pleased to learn that the improvement experienced by Mme Julie is maintained.

I cannot say any thing at the moment about Mme Cecile. I am pleased with your wish to help your sisters; but zeal must be wise. You cannot expose your house, without serious reasons and your dear Mme Superior will understand what I mean. If Mme Julie recovers, I will not see anything to prevent you from calling Mme Cecile to your house. Meanwhile, let us be prudent and put our confidence in God and our Holy Patrons.

My compliments to your Mme Superior and Mme Julie.

All of you can count on my devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

5th of the month of St Joseph 1853

Tomorrow the feast of St Colette is the anniversary of the foundation of our religious congregation at Alost, in 1817.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-18

Your two letters, my very dear daughter, gave me pleasure; and in spite of the defects you noticed in them and the spelling mistakes I found, you gave me to understand that you have a large heart, and that you are going forward with courage, and will correct what a state of constraint had given rise to in your sentiments and external demeanor. It is to a great extent to Mme your present

Superior that you owe that result. But it is to our good God that you owe the effects of his fatherly solicitude. So, my Child, always be grateful.

I have just at this moment received the letter that your dear Mme Superior wrote to me. I thank that good and devoted child for the good things she is asking for me of St Joseph. "You are also praying very much to our glorious Patron for all your children", she says to me. Please tell her that most certainly I am trying to fulfill that sweet task with zeal. I thank her for the news she gives me. I am of the opinion that we must not be in a hurry to send Mme Julie back to Coloma. I hope to come to Brussels the first week after Low Sunday. On that occasion, I will decide about her return. I am continuing to pray for that dear invalid and for all of your other sisters.

I have seen with pleasure the satisfaction of the family of the relative of Mme Théodosie. Please tell that Lady and add that it is sweet to me to do something she finds agreeable.

I hope that your Mme Superior will allow me to have recourse to your mediation, to spare me a second letter.

Tell the young Ladies, or Mme Superior will tell the young Ladies who wrote to me, and also to the two Milles Stack, that tomorrow at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass I will commend them to the Lord in a very special way.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Vigil of the feast of our Holy Patron 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-19

Your zeal is carrying you too far, my dear daughter. I approve of your intentions, but I do not adopt the means you are proposing to me to go to the aid of Mme Félicité. Be content with praying to our good God for your worthy sister. I cherish the hope that she will be preserved for you. If the Lord decides otherwise, we will have the grace to generously make the sacrifice he asks of us. In the meantime, be prudent; I would be very upset to see your confidence lead you into the courts to bear witness that Sr. N is practicing an art that no diploma allows her to exercise in Belgium.

For the rest, continue, dear Child, to serve the good God cheerfully. Generosity pleases that Father we have in Heaven.

I do not have the time to write to the good Milles Malvina and Adèle. Their letters were an object of great consolation to me. May the Lord deign to continue giving them his special graces, and may they respond faithfully to so much love on the part of God. Act either you or Mme your Rev. Mother as my interpreter with those dear children. I hope to see them before long and to tell them by word of mouth how much joy their happiness causes me.

The young lady who brought me the notebook and the letter of Mme Aloÿse was very satisfied with all she saw at your place. I am very pleased with that result. The letter of Mme Aloÿse was very pleasing to me as was that of Mme Julie. I dare to think that next Tuesday or a few days later, perhaps a week, I will give them an answer by word of mouth at the convent of the Holy Angels.

While waiting for the happy moment when I will see the Mme Superior and her very good children, I beg her to be convinced that I commend her with her children to the Lord, especially at the Holy Sacrifice.

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th April 1853

Lost/missing

18-20

L.S.J.M.J.

18-21

Madame

This is the young pupil I was to recommend to you. You would do me great pleasure and render service to a widowed mother, and her little daughter, by accepting among your day pupils, the interesting child in question. You understand that I am asking for free admission.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th September 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-22

My dear daughter in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your letter and that of M M Ph. gave me the most heartfelt pleasure. Those addressed to your good parents were also what they should be. I hope our good God will bless your efforts and that you will respond to our expectations, without getting upset, but loving the new part of work, or if you like, the new cross your divine Spouse has entrusted to you.

Count on my help in prayers and in advice.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th October 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-23

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

It is urgent that you have a teacher of Flemish. Consult the Fr. Superior of the Josephites, and then also the Rev. Father Rector of the Jesuits. You will then choose one with full knowledge of the facts.

In the case of extraordinary occupations, it suffices to add, at the end of the office, that which was recited before your arrival.

Be content with substituting once a week the reading for the Way of the Cross.

I will write to Mme Marcelline and to Mme Bathilde when I have more spare time.

Go forward with courage, my dear daughter; the good God will send his Holy Angels to help you. I continue also to commend you specially to the Lord.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th October 1853

Your dear sisters Justine and Pauline have fully recovered. All the family is enjoying good health.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-24

Madame Superior

From what Mme the Superior General has written to me and Mme Marcelline has confirmed, Mme Bathilde does not have the qualities required to procure for you the help you need. Mme Honorine will do the work of the bursar and Mme Bathilde will render the services that Mme Honorine would not be fitted to render in your convent. I have not found any motive for opposing that plan. You will be pleased with Mme Honorine who is a good religious.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ, allow Mme M. Charlotte to find here my thanks for the good wishes she sent me. I have prayed also for all of you and for Mme. M. Charlotte in particular again yesterday, on the feast of St Charles.

Please tell Mme Marcelline that I received her letter yesterday, at the moment probably when she was reading the one I had written in answer to her earlier letter. I accept the proofs she gives me to prove that she had already understood me, from those earlier outlines.

Receive, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, my blessing for you and all your beloved family at the Holy Angels.

I recommend Mme M. Charlotte to follow up for me, and in the sight of God, Anna Staeck whom I saw with joy entering on a sure way to arrive at eternal happiness. Read to Mme Marcelline what I have written for her above.

Always count on the very sincere devotedness of

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th April 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-25

I like to persuade myself that all is settled and that you have the happiness, my dear daughter, of enjoying the most perfect harmony, and the result of your generous efforts to procure the happiness of your dear sisters and that of your pupils. I will be pleased to receive news from your convent from time to time. Mme M Charlotte can replace you when your occupations would not allow you to write to me in any detail.

You will receive 10 copies of the life of St Colette and you will be kind enough to distribute them at 2 francs a copy. So, that is 20 francs to my credit on the account of Me Staeck.

I will make it my duty, dear Child, to commend you frequently during this time of preparation for the feast of Christmas, to Mary, to St Joseph and above all to our good Savior. When I say 'you' here, I mean you and all your dear house.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th November 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-26

Madame Superior

There is nothing to stop you postponing the moment or the day of the celebration of the feast you speak about. The motives you allege are so good that you would do wrong not to fit in with what they propose.

In connection with the little parcel that Mr. Superior of the Josephites will bring you, you will see that I have written to M. M. Charlotte and that in the letter I inform you of my feelings about certain things. Weigh it up well so as to understand me.

I will add my prayers to yours, my dear daughter, to obtain the graces we need for you and for the others. Be cheerful and generous.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

X (?) 14. 1853

L.S.J.M.J.

18-27

Madame Superior

The details you gave me about what preceded the beautiful feasts, gave me great pleasure; and I was consoled to learn that your dear sisters showed themselves generous in the moments of trial. May our good God be blessed, my dear Child, may his holy name be glorified by us and by our pupils. Such will always be the desire of our hearts, won't they?

I very much approve of the changes you have made. Do not worry about a few criticisms. Before acting, weigh up the pros and the cons; after taking action, be without regret.

Mme M. Charlotte is to write only when her strength allows her to do so. She will carefully keep the original works. She may also copy the little exhortation that is to be found in one of the notebooks of the late Mme Colombe and that I probably gave in the past, in one of other of your convents. I will take care to claim back all the letters addressed to my dear deceased children, and, after looking them through, I will send them to M. M. Charlotte.

Enclosed is a letter from M. M. Charlotte to the late Mme Félicité. I would like the author to change line thirteen on the first page: "are some of the most precious gifts" in place of "the most precious gifts". It will be more correct. Then the letter may be useful to the family of our dear deceased one.

Once again, my compliments to all your dear sisters at the convent of the Holy Angels. I very willingly join you all to honor, glorify and love our good Savior Jesus.

I am expecting the report of my dear daughter Anna and an accompanying letter from her in which I will find both her style and her sentiments and her heart open to her Father.

According to the letter you sent to Marie Staeck, you have seen that your information was not correct about the situation of that young Lady.

I conclude, my Child, always be calm and united to your divine Spouse. I give you my blessing, you and all your excellent sisters, my Children.

Your very devoted and affectionate father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th December 1853

You will hardly have any free time during the first fifteen days of the New Year. It will be the same with me; so, we will not have time to write to each other.

I have decided that the novices, absent from the Mother House are to write every 4 or 5 weeks to the Mme the Mistress of novices, and that their letters and the replies sent to them are to be handed to them sealed.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-28

Madame Superior

I returned on Thursday very satisfied with my journey. My stay at the convent of the Holy Angels has been short, but it has been doubly consoling for me. Our good God is devotedly served in your house; sweet harmony reigns there among my happy children; our pupils are cared for with great zeal and intelligence and as the good Father we have in heaven requires.

The state of Mme Marie Charlotte did not seem to me as worrying as the doctor appeared to tell you. But what is consoling above all is the complete submission of that dear daughter in Jesus Christ, to all that it pleases the Lord to decide in her regard. Please remember that every day, at about 6:30 during this season, I offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Our invalid, and all my spiritual children have a special place in it, in the memento for the living. Let us double our confidence during this month consecrated to our Holy Patron; great graces await us.

My cousin Charles has just delivered to me the parcel that Mme M. Charlotte entrusted to him. I thank that lady for her short note, and pray God to continue his kindnesses towards her.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of the month of St Joseph 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

18-29

Madame Superior

I am profiting by the opportunity offered by a very kind young Lady to address these few lines to you.

It seems to me you will do well to get a tooth put in. But make careful inquiries about the dentist before confiding in him. ... (The end of the letter is missing)

(On the reverse side):

For the rest, my dear daughter, love God and your neighbor. Have peace at heart, and confidence in our dear Patrons. With these dispositions we will go far. Try and have them always and ask for what you lack.

I am always very sincerely

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th January 1854

18-30

(The beginning of the letter is missing)

...

Be assured that I will commend you specially during these 55 days; after suffering, comes rejoicing. Make these truths felt by those of your children who have special need of them because of many trials and spiritual or bodily sufferings.

I also give you my blessing with the repeated assurance of my devotedness. Tell Mme Clementine that also.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

11th April 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

18-31

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I left you on Saturday, very pleased with all that I had seen and arranged at your house. May God be blessed for his blessings.

Here are a few more lines for our dear invalid. You would do well to ask Mlle Van de Putte, all that it is important for you to know and all that has to be done in the event of the death of our Mme Charlotte, or that of any other of your dear sisters, should the case arise.

I think that the change to other premises of the Josephites will still require my presence at Brussels.

In advance, I wish you a great abundance of graces for the feast of the triumph of the august Mother of Jesus Christ.

I shall pray very much for you and your dear sisters, especially for Mme Clémentine.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th August 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

18-32

Mme the Superior General does not have the power any more than you or I do of granting the dispensation solicited by Mme de Campigneulles. The sister could not obey us in this abuse of power on our part.

It is for the chaplain to take the funeral service. You will arrange with him. Two assistant priests are enough. Fr. Robert has neither the power, nor the right and he would not have the will to take the place of your chaplain. As for the fees, you will arrange them amicably. That cannot be the same everywhere; those expenses differ from one place to another.

Please tell me about you (obliterated by the seal) on my next journey.

It is right, without it being written in a particular Rule, for the religious to be able to write to the spiritual Director of an institute; as well as to the Bishop of the diocese and to the Holy Father the Pope.

I am sorry I did not see the postulant you write to me about. In any case, couldn't she be suitable for the Sisters of St Joseph.

May the Virgin deign to grant you a great blessing so that the school year may end well and you as well as your pupils spend the holidays piously.

Good-bye, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ.

I am always devotedly yours in our good Master and I give you my blessing as well as to Mmes Clémentine and Honorine.

17th August 1854

18-33

(The beginning and end of letter missing)

...There would be sufficient motives for examining that matter without prejudice, and to enlighten the conscience of those Ladies by love of the truth and by charity.

When the occasion arises, I will revise the chapter on Holy Communion in your Rule.

The Superior of each of our convents may, in extraordinary cases, grant communion to one or other of her religious, and even in certain exceptional circumstances, she may grant it to the whole community.

On Friday, I hope to perform the ceremony at Coloma.

(On the reverse side):

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Beginning and end of letter missing)

I hope that you will not delay too long in giving me news, my dear daughter. We are very pleased with Mary. Her faith edifies us and maintains in us the sentiments of affectionate devotion we have for her. She will tell you the news that may interest you. I commended you to our good Jesus, today when we celebrated the feast of his sweet and august name. Your dear sisters and pupils had a share in my petitions and prayers.

We are very pleased with Mlle Staeck. I congratulate you on being the instrument the good God needs to render services to those two sisters who are so worthy of interest.

Mlle Mary told me that (name illegible) was to go away today. So my letter will reach you after her departure, which prevents me from sending her my kind regards. You will send me your news as soon as possible.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-35

Madame Superior

I have learned that the Ladies of the S. H. are established at rue du Cerf, No. 7, and that my niece is in that establishment. I urge you to find out whether that street is part of the parish of the Dean. If it is, I think those Ladies will be asking him to be their confessor. That occupation would not be of advantage to you. Try to forestall those Ladies, that is to say, try and get the Dean before them. Ask whether he is willing to take on the task of being your confessor, since he is your parish priest, and that he informed you in the beginning, that he had not yet got his bearing, but he did not refuse to render you that service, etc. Please weigh up the foregoing with Mme Clémentine, and act with prudence. See also whether it is not time to remind him of the project for the free school.

I hope you are pleased with the number of your pupils and above all with their behavior.

I count on having the pleasure of seeing you during the course of this month, and, meanwhile, I give you my blessing.

Your very devoted Father in our good Master Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th October 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

18-36

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am pleased to learn that your dear pupils are in retreat. I pray the Holy Angels of the Ladies, the Sisters and of all your children to draw on all of you the kind attentions of God. Grace is so necessary! Let us call it to our aid by all the means at our disposal. May our dear Sisters contribute towards obtaining it for your pupils. They will be rewarded. I will help you with my prayers. I will specially commend your novices, your invalid and also my child Anna Staeck.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your affectionate devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th October 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

18-37

Madame Superior

You have taken the best decision. I myself will write in favor and positively, this time, of the good your lady. If the objection based on her rheumatism is not founded, you may be certain that my intervention will not be rejected any more. Tell that young lady that I am praying for her granddad and for her. You will add the rest of the above, as you find good. If one day anyone gives any sign of surprise that you employed this young lady in class, you will be able to say that it was with my consent expressed on my last journey to Brussels.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin will be rich in results, be very sure of that. Continue to pray and to hope.

You bring me sweet joy by announcing to me that our young Ladies are being well formed and that Mme Clémentine is going to a lot of trouble to train your mistresses in such a wise and practical way.

Receive my blessing, dear child, and always count on my sincere devotedness in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th December 1854

Whenever you write to me always tell me something about the novices. Assure them that I recommend them specially to the very Blessed Virgin, so that they will become true children of Mary and Joseph.

There is a possibility of having a very distinguished piano teacher. She has received four diplomas from the conservatory in Ghent. She is one of their few students here. And besides that she is also a person of great piety. She receives communion every day and I hope that she will become a religious. Perhaps with us. She would like to be employed in one of our houses in order to know her vocation and to spend a year or two. Would you be able to employ her and to give her a reasonable salary? She is a very fine person and from a middle class family. Her father is an architect. Her brother and sister are all receiving a very good education in good houses (schools). In Malines they needed a music teacher, they have written me, and it is a pity that this situation did not present itself three months ago.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-38

Madame Superior

It is only since yesterday that I have been sure that my journey will not be made this month. I think I can fix my arrival at Brussels on the 5th or 6th of next month. You will want to inform the people concerned and advise them to put off taking the steps you spoke of to me until my arrival.

I join you, my dear daughter, in giving thanks to the Lord for his blessings, and to ask him for the help you need to guide wisely the flock he deigns to entrust to your care and to the zeal of your dear sisters.

I will do your errand at your mama and I acquit myself with pleasure of the duty of commending you each day in my prayers.

What you tell me about our protégés is a subject of consolation to me. May they profit by the means that divine Providence affords them.

Let us all profit from the feasts we are going to celebrate. Let us rejoice at the sight of the happiness of the Saints; let us be zealous in helping the souls in purgatory to obtain that ineffable bliss quickly, and we try and assure ourselves of the possession of that beautiful Heaven and avoid the need to finish purifying ourselves after our departure from this world.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th October 1855

I saw the Mme Superior General yesterday on her return from Mouscron. She is very well and is very pleased with the convent of St John the Baptist.

18-38 (2)

(Only the middle of the letter, front and back extant)

... will come to our aid. Let us count on the goodness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and let us have patience. Here are a hundred francs for the account of Mlle Anna Stack. You will receive another two hundred before long for the same purpose. May the good God deign to bless that work and give his love to ...

May we staunchly love the heart of our divine Savior! I wish all of you that ineffable favor.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

L.S.J.M.J.

18-39

I allow you, my dear daughter, to send the letter of the novice. I have commended, you, your dear sisters, your novices and your pupils, and above all these, my daughter Anne, to our good Jesus lying in the crib. St Joseph and the very Blessed Mother of the divine Child will deign to support my petitions.

Always count on

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

1st of year 1855

Please send the enclosed to the post at once. Our cousin Melanie Van Crombrugghe is in England.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-40

Your letter, my dear daughter, satisfied me on every point. Let us carry our cross courageously. The Lord will be glorified by it, and we will receive rewards in Heaven. So courage; the simplicity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent. Our good God will do the rest.

Please tell my dear Anna Stack that I am very pleased with her letter, as much as with the handwriting as with the style and above all the sentiments. There are a few variations in the places between the report of this term and the preceding one. Except for deportment and domestic economy, the higher places are in that of the present year, that is to say, the months of October, November and December. I congratulate my Child. I like to think that progress in piety, in love of the good God and zeal for his glory, are no less noteworthy and consoling.

Give my compliments also to all the novices, even the good children I saw in particular last year.

You will have learned of the death of my step-mother at Grammont. She rendered her soul to the Lord on Saturday at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, after receiving the last sacraments last Thursday.

Be assured that I am praying for you and all your dear sisters. Let us have confidence in God. His mercy is great, his power infinite.

I am always pleased to call myself

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th January 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-41

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Already you have overcome nature and you have rejoiced at the ineffable happiness that crowns the life of our worthy Dame Marie Charlotte. The example of virtue and evangelical perfection left us by that model, and the prayers her affection for our Institute will address to her divine Spouse will produce very consoling and lasting effects. So, let us praise the Lord for procuring for us, through Mme Marie Charlotte, so many fine examples during her earthly career, and furnishing us with such powerful help in heaven, where she is occupying a distinguished place beside our august Mother Mary conceived without sin.

These considerations soon changed the first impulses of nature saddened by the announcement of the death of that child of benediction, into sweet consolations for your worthy mama and your no less excellent papa. All our relatives shared the sentiments of pious confidence that the exemplary life of your sister inspire in us.

I think, my dear daughter, I must remind you of the precautions I prescribed for you in connection with the fast. You will ask for a dispensation for all the mistresses and all those of your sisters whose weak health or tiring occupations would leave you in doubt as to the possibilities of subjecting them to the fast without harming their health or the duties of their state. You also, my dear daughter, need a dispensation. So you will at once put things in order and ask for these dispensations.

Always count on my devotedness. I recommend Mme Clémentine to watch over you as regards the care of your health.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th February 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-42

My very dear daughter

I cannot yet fix a time for you, but I hope we will see each other before Easter. If the weather turns mild, I will take advantage of it to make a short trip. So, we will put off dealing with the matter of the novices. However, nothing forbids you to ask for help, if it is needed; the classes must be taken, the pupils have a right to that. The novices also have the right to be trained and, according to our Constitutions, they must as a general rule, be trained at the novitiate. From time to time you must give news of the novices to their Mistress, that is to say, send her short reports. Mme Clémentine must, according to the Rule, provide regular reports to the Mistress general. I am reminding all our houses of that obligation, tell Mme Clémentine so.

We have made other souvenirs of our late dear Dame Marie Charlotte. You will receive some for your convents and our friends.

I think you will let it be seen, by the way you express on Sunday, your joy on the occasion of the publication of the Bull proclaiming the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of the august Virgin Mary, I hope, I say, that you will show the public that you are the children jealous of the glory of their heavenly Mother and happy to give an external proof of it. So let your illuminations attract attention in a religious way.

All is well with your pious Parents. They understand the happiness which the Lord rewards his servants, and that Mme Marie Charlotte worked steadfastly as a generous servant, or rather, as a faithful spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Receive my blessing, dear daughter, and believe in my sincere devotedness.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th February 1855

Henceforth you will seal the letters of the novices that you are sending to the Novice Mistress, and you will write on the address the name of the novice so that the letter may be delivered closed. I will inform Mme Superior General of that arrangement as regards the correspondence of the novices, and that of the reports to be made, in unsealed letters, to the Novice Mistress by each superior, and to the Mistress General by each individual headmistress.

I am reminding you of the request that I made to you concerning a piano teacher of exceptional talent and rare piety. If you found a good situation for Mlle Tiron whom you know, a situation at 800 to a thousand francs, you would do that young lady a great service. (This is between us). She does not like the post where she is.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-43

Madame Superior

You will have to be very prudent in the matter of the house. It is true that the Parish Priest is buying a house that pleases him; but it is also true that the premises for your free school cannot be so near to your house, that the public will in any way confuse it with the latter.

As for the second proposal, do not go too far. When you have acquired the ideas needed for negotiating clearly and surely, you will be able to write to Coloma that the Ladies who are patrons of the free school keenly desire to leave the temporary site and acquire permanent premises. That it is to that effect, that they are taking steps to obtain a suitable building, etc. You may even say that it was I who advised you to write, if you like.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th of the month of Mary 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-44

Madame Superior

I am very well aware of the grief that Mlle Anna is feeling. The cause of it is very sad and painful. But let us submit. I had already taken a step to counteract the haste this matter was being dealt with. My step remained ineffective.

Tell Mlle Anna that I could not urge her to make a fresh request for a trial, because I think she would do so uselessly. You may promise her that I will continue praying for her.

Communicate gently to that poor young lady, the contents of my letter.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th April 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-45

Madame Superior

Do not be preoccupied too much about Mlle Anna. The decision has been taken and you can abide by it. You will even need to calm down more quickly in these kinds of circumstances. You do not have to render an account to God in respect of these acts of the Superiors. Leave them the responsibility and do not torment yourself. Prudence requires you not to occupy yourself any more in these matters. Let each one get on with her own charge.

For the rest my Child, courage, prudence, confidence in God and our Holy Patrons.

I will be very pleased to know when Mlle Delputte is coming to us.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th April 1855

I am very happy to know Mme Alexandrine is happy. Assure Mme Clémentine of my devotedness.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-46

Be calm, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. Your letter explains many things to me. I am very satisfied with it.

To spare you the trouble of a second letter, Mme Clémentine from whom I am expecting a few lines, could take your place and write to me for you.

Be convinced that I will commend you specially to St Joseph first of all, and then to our very Holy Patroness par excellence.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

23rd April 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-47

My dear daughter

Here are some letters from the Mlles Stack. I do not oppose the journey in any way. It would even be better if it took place in June, if their cousin arrives then.

It appears that Mme the Superior General wants to know how the Father of your novice behaved. You can tell her that you learned from me that she wants some details on the matter, etc., simply and respectfully, so as to avoid fresh explanations taking place.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

25th April 1855

Read my letters to the two sisters and send on to Marie the one addressed to her. Please complete the address. My compliments to Mme Clementine whose letter I was pleased to get.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-48

Madame Superior

I think that already, for the sake of peace, you have sent Mlle Tiron to Malines.

Although there has been and still is grave anxiety about the condition of your brother Joseph, I still hope he will recover. The submission of that young religious to all that comes from our good God is admirable. Yet, if he could have a preference, it would be to go to his Creator, the novitiate having prepared him for that step which decides his whole eternity.

Invite Mme Vande Putte, on my behalf to come and see the big procession that is being organized at Ghent in honor of Mary conceived without sin. You will be kind enough to give her our dear Anna Staeck as a companion.

This procession is to take place on the 20th of this month. So, I invite these ladies for Saturday the 19th, some time after dinner. Mlle Anna will stay with her papa of Ghent and will have accommodation there as she did during the last summer holidays.

Let us take advantage of the blessed times in which we are living.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd May 1955

18-49

(The top of the letter cut off)

It would be very pleasing to me to receive a visit from Mlle Vande Putte. It is so long since that good friend of our Ladies of Mary gave me the hope for the pleasure of seeing her at Ghent. Mr. Simoens and Mr. Van Wymelbeke will also be very happy to receive a person who has given them so many proofs of her devotedness. It would be very pleasing to see Mlle Horion in company with Mlle Vande Putte. This little outing would not be useless for our postulant. I hope you will agree to my proposal. You will be kind enough to inform me in time, of the day when I will have the pleasure of receiving these two ladies. ... (The rest of the letter has been cut off)

(On the reverse side: the signature:)

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

L.S.J.M.J.

18-50

Ghent, 25th May 1855

My dear daughter

So our good God wanted to reward the pious Joseph and crown an edifying life with a holy death. Up to a few weeks previously, I had flattered myself that we would retain that capable young servant of the Church. May the adorable will of the Lord be done.

The submission of your papa is admirable. That of your mama will be what it can be in a mother nourished on sentiments of faith and charity. But the state of her health does not allow us to make know to her at the moment the sacrifice God requires. I have just seen our invalid; I ascertained that she is much better, as they had told me, according to the doctor. ... (Rest of letter has been cut off)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-51

5th of the Month of the Sacred Heart, 1855

Madame Superior

It is certain that a free school is an element of prosperity, a source of blessing for religious establishments and above all for those dedicated to the education of the young. It is the wish (vow) of our Rule, as constant practice proves, to have a free school wherever we have an establishment. So, it is a real advantage to obtain premises that allow us to have a class for the poor. I even think that, when our means allow it, we should willingly make sacrifices to get us the

means of making our good God known to a large number of children of the destitute class which has rights to our attention and affection in our Master and Savior Jesus Christ. That, my dear daughter, is how we expect things to be in our religious family. So, it is according to those principles that I desire to see our superiors conduct themselves. ...

(End of the letter is missing)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-52

Madame Superior

It is not possible for me to come to Brussels this week. The project you speak to me about does not seem acceptable to me. I will give you the motives on my next journey. Meanwhile, my dear daughter, be content to commend the whole matter to our good God. Do not talk to anyone about it; do not even ponder over it. That takes up one's attention uselessly. I would even say it would up by being harmful.

Your dear mama is recovering slowly, just as we could wish. Her recovery will be on a surer basis, we think.

It is probable that I will come to Brussels next week.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th June 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-53

My dear daughter

It seems to me that the Rule I sent you belonged to your convent. If that is so, you may keep it. If it does not belong to you, send it back to me, by rail. In both cases, I will look into your remarks when I see the alterations in the notebook.

So as not to spoil the matter of the English lady, go about it prudently. Do not get too involved. We will need more proofs of the qualities and the means of that person that you have, before giving her a reasonable hope of being admitted by us. When you have more grounds for recommending her we will see what step we must take.

I do not think that the health of the Mme Superior General is ruined, as you said.

The lady bursar, according to the instruction of the Lady Superior of the convent, is in charge of the (lay) sisters, as regards work, and the material goods, and the kitchen, and the table, etc. So, that means the Lady cannot escape from the authority of her superior, nor correspond with the Superior General about her function as bursar. She is immediately subject to the local superior and it is from her that she receives direction as a Religious and as an official.

I came back from Mouscron yesterday. I am pleased with our Ladies and their pupils. The Rev. Mother Superior of the Sisters of St Joseph is getting better, but slowly.

Your parents are well. Your mama is improving from day to day.

Receive, very dear Child, the blessing and the assurance of devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th July 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-54

Madame Superior

I absolutely share the opinion that Sr. Mechtilde will be better at Brussels than at Mouscron. So, it is enough to let her spend the holidays at Mouscron and return to you when school re-opens. However, that sister must no longer be portress, but the function of messenger will be left her as being useful to her.

Your reasons concerning Mlle Emilie are entirely founded. If I had known them, I would have taken care not to propose to Mme Superior General that she leaves that young lady with you. It seems to me that Mlle Thérèse would suit you better than Mlle Emilie and that the latter needs to be tested in the novitiate. Do not think that the misfortunes of the family of Mlle Térésia are to

cause you any worries. They experience a feeling of compassion for that family in Brussels. I am well informed.

It is possible that at Malines another arrangement will be found that responds still better to your needs.

I permit you to make use of what I am writing to you, with Mme Superior General. It is as if I was writing directly to her to spare my time.

Your very affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th August 1855

Mme Superior General will write to you about Mlle Loncin.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-55

Madame Superior

I am convinced that the glass corridor is indispensable. Religious as well as hygiene motives, and the laws of propriety together require it. I did not think of speaking of it to Mme Superior General. You may invoke my support. I know that the parents are asking for this passage and some children will be leaving you if you delay in granting them this proof of your concern for the health of your pupils. A friend of your Institute, at Brussels, will not hide from you what is being said if you ask him about this matter. Do not delay, I repeat to you.

Your remarks about Mme Térésia are founded. I will not propose that she comes to your house. I hope you will get what your house requires. They are convinced at Malines that it cannot be weakened without imminent danger.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd August 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-56

You may send your letter, my dear daughter. Do not speak anymore to Mme Superior General about (name crossed out) and accept her for the sum that exempts you from asking for any exemption. I am leaving you the 300 francs for the good of (name crossed out). Let silence on this object be kept and let us act very prudently lest we put an obstacle...(End of sentence crossed out). I would like you to have had the happiness of bringing this matter to a successful conclusion. You could put it off until my journey to Brussels.

End the letter to Mme Superior General in a friendly way and wait patiently for the outcome.

Receive the blessing of your

Very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

5th September 1855

Lost/Missing

18-57

L.S.J.M.J.

18-58

Madame Superior

I am of your opinion as regards the sentiments it is fitting to nourish as regards the pupils. The adorable will of God and zeal for its fulfillment in all things, those are indeed what must specially concern us. I will willingly join you in asking for the graces necessary for the accomplishment of the duties this twofold obligation imposes on us. May the heart of the divine Spouse of all of you deign to preserve the sweet unity that reigns in your convent. May the Holy Angels be pleased to come to our aid and drive away all that would be capable of disturbing that holy harmony of the Children of Mary, their August Queen.

You may admit Mlle Van (name difficult to read) as you are proposing to do. I hope that child will give you the same motives for contentment as her good sister Mlle Teresia whose happiness is so obvious that it adds to that of her sisters. While waiting for me to answer Mme Raphaele directly, please tell that dear Child that I am making it my duty to commend her to the Lord so that she may carefully preserve in all its beauty the bridal robe in which Jesus Christ has with ineffable tenderness clothed her.

Good Sister Mechtilde is returning to Brussels. As I had told you, her stay at Brussels will not do her any more harm than that at Mouscron. I think that the function of messenger, but not of portress, suits her.

Receive, very dear child, the blessing of your

Very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th September 1855

I hope to see you during the first two weeks of October.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-59

Madame Superior

I came away from your house very pleased. May the Lord deign to preserve his spirit among the Children of the convent of the Holy Angels.

They have not yet informed me how the business of the free school at Alost ended.

I have spoken about the two postulants. The one from Brussels is not accepted either at Malines or at Bruges. The one from Binche is not either at Malines. She may ask to enter with the Sisters of St. Joseph. If she decides to do so, she may write to me.

I hope my niece M. Van Crombrugghe will return to Coloma before long.

Prepare yourself and your sisters with confidence for the very touching feast of the Presentation of our Mother and model, the august Mary.

Receive, dear daughter, the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th November 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

18-60

Madame Superior

You will be sorry to learn that our worthy cousin Henriette is dead. But what must console all of us is that she edified and consoled her parents and numerous friends by the holy dispositions in which she gave up her beautiful soul to her Creator.

I will look into the matter you have written to me about. You will not make it known to anyone. It will be enough for the guardian (tutor) to have made his steps known to a person whom you are forbidden to indicate. I said or intended to say that a novice may not be employed in the function of messenger. I have not asked for an extra sister for Brussels.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th November 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

8-61(1)

Madame Superior

Please give the money for the subscription to Fr. the Superior of the Josephites in your town. That will save you from making investigations that would perhaps be difficult for your messengers.

I refer to a letter send yesterday for other matters and I repeat with pleasure that my sentiments are always the most affectionate.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

23rd December 1855

L.S.J.M.J.

8-61(2)

Madame Superior

Receive my thanks for the good wishes you have addressed to me and the details you provided me with.

I am also very touched by the petitions Mme Clémentine has offered up for me during the lovely feasts we have been celebrating. Be my interpreter to that dear Lady. I will not be writing to her at the moment, but she may be sure that I am praying and will pray for her every day.

Dear Anne continues to give me great satisfaction. She deserves my continuing to render her the services that I am so pleased to be in a position to render her. Tell her to go constantly in the presence of God and to form herself in the virtues of the true servants of the Lord. I am writing to Mlle her sister.

Also tell Mlle Van Vervenhuyse that I am pleased with her letter. We will have the opportunity of discussing her vocation again either by letter or by word of mouth. Tell her so. Give the advice that the important matter and the position of the young lady requires. Give her the hope that our good God will take care of her and that I will try and be useful to her until the end. Her writing is a little too small. On that point, I wish the dear child to persevere in applying herself. I say as much for history, arithmetic and all that is taught in her class.

Receive, my very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of your Father and in all circumstances give your dear sisters the very definite assurance that I am commending all of you to our good God, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

I am also praying for your pupils and in particular for those to whom I have promised prayers.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd January 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-62

Madame Superior

I hope that St Joseph will take into his fatherly protection the enterprise that Mme superior General is occupied with. I was pleased to learn of the desire to give the new convent the beautiful title of the great privilege of the Blessed Virgin. I gave my consent happily to that good project.

Here are another 100 francs for Mlle (name crossed out). I would very much like to know from that young lady what her views are and the desire she is fostering in connection with her vocation. It is now some time since she gave me any indication.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th of the month of St Joseph 1856

Pray with confidence to our good Patron to inspire that confidence in your dear sisters and your pupils.

You have been edified to see the generosity of your Parents towards Mlle Landos.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-63

I do not know, my dear daughter, when I will have the pleasure of seeing you. I thank our good God for the favors he deigns to continue giving you and I congratulate you and your dear sisters on the way you correspond to grace.

You will learn from your travelers that you have been uselessly entertaining anxious suppositions about the health of your dear mama.

I am pleased with Anna. Her letter and her report prove to me that she is always animated with the sincere desire to please our good God. It is a disposition that causes me sweet satisfaction.

Your affectionate Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th April 1856

Please, deliver the enclosed to Mme Emérence.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-64

Madame Superior

It seems to me that you cannot invite Mme Emérence to your feast. I cannot then allow you to make that invitation, nor to subscribe to the desires which would be expressed in favor of an invitation of that kind.

Please tell Mme Léocadie that next week I will need the notes that she promised me and those I sent to her.

I will think about the matter of the sister of our dear Anna.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th of Mary's month 1956

L.S.J.M.J.

18-65

Madame Superior

It is for me to ask for the extraordinary confessors. So, you will be good enough to leave to me the case of examining whether it is proper to busy oneself with the question of replacing Father De Stack. I confess that at first sight, I find it a type of indelicacy to think of a successor to a man who, for so many years, has given us proofs of such pure zeal, such disinterested devotedness, before he himself invites us to replace him.

It might be that the business of seeing the house before deciding on its purchase would bring me to Brussels before long.

Address yourself with confidence to the Sacred Heart of the divine Spouse. Pray to him for all your dear sisters, for your pupils and for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Letter not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-66

I do not know Madame Superior, if I have already answered your letter of congratulations. I have been so busy and I know how indulgent you are. That dispenses me from stressing the point. I will content myself with repeating to you my promises to add my prayers to yours to obtain the blessing of our good God on my children, on my efforts to make them happy and on myself. I grant you a communion, in accordance with your request.

So as to decide on the matter of Anna Staeck, without worrying that good child, I am writing to her sister the enclosed letter which you will be kind enough to send her after reading it.

How is the business of Mlle Devaderre? You will please tell that young lady that I am interested in her and would be pleased to know the feelings of her parents about her wish to enter religion. What will she be able to give, and when would she be able to enter?

How are your invalids? Was Sr. Marthe already weak and sickly on her arrival from Coloma?

I wish you in advance the grace to celebrate well the triumph of our Mother the august Queen of Heaven and earth, Mary conceived without sin.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Give my kind regards to Anna. I do not have the time to answer her letter which I am pleased with.

Tomorrow is the anniversary of the death of your grandma, who died on the 10th of August 18 (rest of date obliterated by seal).

It has not been possible for me to answer your novice, but I am praying for her.

Ghent, 9th August 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-67

Madame Superior

I am very pleased that we will be able to continue caring for Anna. However, do not say so yet. I hope that Mlle Devadderre will end up by triumphing over the obstacles that have delayed her entry into religion. I will take steps with our sisters; let her do as much with her parents.

You do well, my dear daughter, to count on the Blessed Virgin and to seek happiness in fulfillment of your duties. I have also made it my duty to pray for you every day.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st August 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-68

Madame Superior

If I have understood you rightly, I must conclude that your state of mind is the result of present fatigue, and that a few days rest, after the prize-giving, will restore everything to good condition. Take a few precautions to avoid useless fatigue during the holidays, and limit yourself to that. If Mme Clementine has not yet written to Coloma, I urge her for the same motives; to be content with the remedy that I think is sufficient for your sisters.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th August 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-69

Madame Superior

Here is my letter to Anna. Please read it and deliver it to our dear child.

I hope you will arrange for her to spend some time with your parents. A servant, Angelique, is ill, but I think she will be going tomorrow to her mother. Marie Van Crombrugghe will be delighted to have Anna from time to time and at my place she will also be welcome.

It is not impossible that the day after tomorrow I will be going to Brussels.

All yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

1st September 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-70

We have been very pleased with Anna. Your mama found real relief in her company. Your papa and good sisters love her as if she were a member of their family.

I am enclosing a one hundred franc note for you. You will give Anna a receipt that she will send to me. Say on it: Received from Canon V.C. 100 francs as boarding school fees for the school year 1856-1857, which he will please pay for Mlle Anna Staeck, our pupil.

I like to think that the rest has given you back enough strength to resume, with zeal, the numerous duties of your office. All the same, my dear daughter, I recommend you to take care of yourself as you have to take care of your dear sisters and not allow yourself to do anything imprudent. I will recommend you to our good God with confidence and that zeal you know I have for you.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 30th September 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-71

Madame Superior

It is very regrettable that the agreement between you and Mme Emérence is not being religiously observed. Mme Emérence may be acquainted with the regret I have just expressed.

I commend to our good God the young people you have written to me about. May they preserve and nourish the pious sentiments our good God has put into their souls.

Will you please explain to me when I have the pleasure of seeing you next week, in what consists the difficulty of Mme Eudoxie.

I will reply by word of mouth to the letter of Mme Louise. ... (Rest of the letter cut off)
(October 1856)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-72

You may perhaps already have been informed of what this letter is about, my dear daughter; an act of submission to adorable Providence.

I know all you have done for the young lady since or (illegible). I praise the good God for the way you have handled the whole of this matter. It is to his grace that you owe the prudence and enlightened zeal you have displayed. Let us adore the ways of Providence.

Let us pray for the Institute.

All Yours

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

25th October 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-73

Madame Superior

I have read the two methods for the examination of conscience. That of Fr. de l'ad. does not suit you as it involves the confessor in it. For that reason, I desire you not to communicate it to any of your sisters.

I have reread what I wrote on that matter. I noticed nothing that can give rise to any imaginary idea. You will do well to point out to me the passages or expressions that seemed to you less precise in your copy.

Here is the list of instructions contained in the notebook I have with me.

I give you my blessing, my dear daughter.

(End of the page cut off) ...

(on the reverse side) ...

Please tell Mme Stéphanie that I am pleased with her letter. She can be at peace. I have not yet received the proofs.

Our English lady has been welcomed at Alost. Please give my compliments to Mme Clémentine.

(2nd sheet marked No. 73: the list of instructions mentioned above)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-74

Madame Superior

I do not know how Marie Louise is succeeding in the struggle she has had to sustain for a few days. We will not have to regret what we have done for that convert. The purpose of your efforts, in particular, and the sacrifices of persons who have taken an interest in her, is known to the one who understands the intentions and all the movements of hearts. If success does not come up to our expectations, let us adore the plans of God without understanding them and let us be at peace.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity of having to examine the story that Mme Stéphanie is having printed.

You have forgotten to send me the notebooks that Mme Théodosie has corrected.

Receive, dear child, my blessing.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th October 1856

I count on seeing Mme Superior General on Wednesday, on her return from Mouscron.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-75

Madame Superior

I am sending you the book containing the letters, etc. that I sent in the past to the Ladies of Mary and in which I find many mistakes in both style and grammar. I would like the biggest ones at least to be corrected while we have our good Lady Theodosie to make the best corrections.

I am also adding two of the notebooks you sent back to me with the request to Mme Théodosie to complete the one by writing in it what is missing that is in the other.

The work I am asking of Mme Théodosie is not in a hurry. She will do it at her ease.

The way of the cross may in no way take the place of the reading on Friday anymore than on any other day.

I will examine what concerns the time to be given, in the evening, to the preparation of the meditation of the next day.

Next Sunday you will, I think, have a visit from my nephew Henri and his young lady Maria. See that they are pleased with your house and the Ladies.

Give my kind regards to Mme Clémentine. I give her as well as you, my dear daughter, my fatherly blessing.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not Dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-76

Madame Superior

I will remit to you during the course of the 2nd semester a hundred francs for the boarding fees of Anna and then the same sum for the 3rd semester, etc. I have the firm conviction that this expenditure will be useful to religion. So I will incur it with pleasure.

Count on my zeal in commending you to the divine Child, my dear daughter, and all your sisters and pupils.

Receive the blessing of

your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

22nd December 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

18-77

You have dealt well with the business of the hotel. You have made the matter known and that is enough.

I think it is my duty to warn you that the so-called news confidentially made known to Mme Superior General by Maria, and that the family here was unaware of, is fictitious or broken off, if it really existed. Your papa is counting on coming to Brussels, one of these days. As he, like the other members of the family, does not know of the so-called marriage project, be careful to say nothing about it, neither you, nor any of the Ladies who have been informed of the secret confided to the Mme Superior General.

Before long you will have the decisions relating to the matter you submitted to me in one of your last letters and relative to the uniformity that must be established in our houses.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

26th January 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-78

I join you, my dear daughter, in thanking the Lord for the mercy he has shown towards the convert. The letter of my mother Mélanie, that I am enclosing here, and that you will send back to me when you write to me, will give you a few more details that will interest you.

Please deliver to Anna the little letter that I am sending to her. Read also the one I am addressing to her sister and then send it on without delay.

May our good God continue to give you, and in his mercy, continue to give all your dear flock his most abundant blessings.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Beginning of the January 1857

Everything is well with your parents. Continue to tell your community about your convert only what can interest them in her favor.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-79

Madame Superior

You will do well to refer to the Rule and see, on the day or after the day of the retreat, whether you can see all your sisters, on the day itself, etc., etc. But before making the change, wait until you receive the decision on the time to be given to preparations for meditations etc.

You may accept the task of having Masses said with the income you tell me about. I will be in a position to find a good place for that good work. As for the second piece of work, we will talk of it in the summer, when I will have the pleasure of seeing you. If however, the matter should become urgent, you will please write to me and not talk about it until then.

Pray to the very Blessed Virgin to present you yourself, my Child, your dear sisters, and your pupils to her divine Son, next Monday.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 31st January 1857

The news you give me about our poor convert gives me very great pleasure.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-80

Madame Superior

It seems to me that the house about which you have written to me would be suitable for the Ladies of the Immaculate Conception. You have taken the most sure means for attaining the goal we must always have in all our undertakings. Persevere in that way; I will help you to the best of my ability.

I have given your papa the hundred francs that were missing from your account, and that I will have to send you for the boarding fees for Anna Staeck. I am adding twenty francs here. You will have the receipt for 120 francs sent to our good Anna. But that is not in a hurry.

You will take care to ask for dispensations from fasting for your mistresses and all the sisters whose health or function leads you to doubt whether they should be allowed to fast. As for you, my dear daughter, you will conscientiously follow all that the doctor and I have prescribed for you.

May our good God deign to continue giving his blessing to you and all your dear community.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th February 1857

Please put the enclosed letter in the letter-box.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-81

Madame Superior

I hasten to answer you that the conditions on which a novice is admitted, cannot be made worse, after her profession. In the case you submit to me, the thing is very obvious. Do not permit the Religious to be saddened by making known to her the pretensions raised in connection with her. But tell her mama not to be anxious, that things will remain as they have been agreed before her profession. If demands are made on her in this matter, you can make them known to me.

For the rest, I am of your opinion on all the other points. Let us pray and expect from our good God the help we need. I have prayed a good deal to St Joseph. That powerful patron will come to our aid.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th March 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-82

Madame Superior

It is on my orders that the acknowledgments you speak to me about, are sent to you and that they must be written out and signed.

The postulant from Wacke is a niece of Mme Eulalie, with the name Minne.

The architect has written to me. He found the premises up to his expectations.

Our good Anna is always well loved here by all the family.

Mme Céline Tiron will deliver so me other papers to you on Monday.

All yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-83

Madame Superior

This letter will be delivered to you by Mlle Célinie (name crossed out). You know the esteem I have for that person and the keen interest I take in her. So try and render her all the services in your power. I will be very sincerely grateful for all you do for her.

You will read the other letter, when you have finished your talk with Mlle Célinie, or when you have some leisure.

(In the margin of letter) on Saturday you received the letter which is mentioned here.

Your very devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th April 1857

Sometimes there are pupils who would find private lessons or tutoring very useful; but ordinary mistresses do not always have the time to give this tutoring. Do you have any of these pupils at the moment?

Mlle Tiron could render them service for a few weeks. She will explain the rest by word of mouth and tell you her terms. I hope you can accept them generously.

You will please send back the book in which several of my instructions are written out. That is a folio. You will send back at the same time the notebook of the Rules of the Black Sisters, when Mme Théodosie has entered what is indicated, in the note that is in the notebook. However, the matter is not urgent, that lady must not put herself out. She will choose the moment that suits her for doing what I am asking her for our Black Sisters at Grammont.

I am remitting to Anna Staeck 100 frs which, with what I have remitted to you on various occasions, makes a total of 330 francs.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-84

Madame Superior

This letter will be delivered to you by Mlle Cel. Tiron. (In the margin of letter) The letter will reach you by post. Mlle Tiron will deliver another one to you on Monday.

You know the sincere interest I have for that person. So, try and render her service. I will be really very grateful for all you do for her. (Next sentence crossed out)

On the first page, marked O, of the notebook, in the Flemish language that I am sending to you, you will find a note for Mme Théodosie. I beg that Lady to enter in the said notebook what I

have put in that note. 1st, on page No.0 and then on page 71 what is to be found in the written note I have put on page 71. To begin with

Schikkingen Wegens hot Sculp. Closter

as far as the end of the writing page 3 helpster voorgelezen worden.

In the notebook: Special Rules of the Institute of the Josephites, add: p. 5, No. 3 between the first two lines: Bursars, Prefects, Supervisors, Teachers.

You will then be kind enough to send that notebook to the Superior of the Josephites in your town.

Mr. Parrot, the architect, will have informed you of the task I have entrusted to him. I do not have the time to enter into any other details on that matter.

(In the margin) I will write a few words to Mme Clémentine and send them by Mlle...?

Please, deliver to Mme Clémentine the enclosed questions and ask her, on my behalf, to let me have her answers to each of the questions, in the same order as I have followed. She will also use paper of the same format as that on which my questions are written. I will be very grateful to that dear daughter in Jesus Christ for the little work she is doing for me.

It is a long time since the decisions on the points we had spoken about, relating to the time to be spent on the examen, etc. etc. were decided, and the Mme Superior General has informed me that the circular containing those decisions and a few others, were sent to our convents. I do not understand these things

Has Mme Clémentine sent, in conformity with what has been prescribed, the reports at the appointed times, to Mme Flore? And has Mme Flore replied to those reports each time they were sent to her?

You will keep to yourself alone what I say (end of the sentence crossed out)

Always count on the divine Spouse, my dear daughter. You will find in his very good and compassionate heart all you need for acting according to his designs and according to your true interests.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th April 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-85

Madame Superior

I am very pleased to see your submission to what your Superiors decide about the hotel that is in question. Continue paying scarcely any attention to the matter except in your talks with God. If I am not mistaken, you wrote to me that they do not occupy themselves about it at your place. That is in order and must continue for the good of souls.

On Tuesday, at Mouscron, I performed the beautiful clothing ceremony. I cherish the hope that we will have two good subjects, in all respects, in the young novices.

You must have received 330 frs for Mlle Stack from me since October. On my next journey, probably in the course of this lovely month, we will see what I have to add in order to fulfill my undertakings. You know the interest I have in that excellent Anna. You also know that I am sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th May 1857

Everything goes well at Mouscron

L.S.J.M.J.

18-86

Accept my thanks for your good wishes and my congratulations on being spared on these days of disorder. Your pupils might have been frightened and added to your worries. Have good courage; pray and keep calm remembering that God is watching over us.

Here there is uproar at night, but they do not go so far as to assault anyone.

I have not been able to come and see you and it would be difficult for me to fix the time when I will have that pleasure.

Receive my blessing and count on my devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd June 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-87

It is indeed a long time since I wrote to you. I had nothing particular to write to you about and always had before me the project of coming to see you. I hope that project will soon become a reality and that it will again be my excuse if I am brief today.

I have done your errand to my niece Louise; who was very pleased with her journey, it seems to me.

Your precautions will contribute towards saving your good sisters. I like to convince myself that your remarks will have been appreciated and that Mme Superior General will have done what depends on her to obtain the help your house and the good sisters need.

While awaiting the pleasure of seeing you, I give you my blessing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd July 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-88

Madame Superior

I will make it my duty to pray especially for you and your invalids. Be kind enough to tell Mme Louisa that I am pleased with her submission to the will of her divine Spouse and that, if the time for being rewarded is approaching, she will experience the accomplishment of the magnificent promises made to her at the time when she offered herself to our good God. If, on the contrary, that happy moment is postponed, she will profit with an intensification of fervor, by the means that the Lord grants her of increasing her merits still more. So, may the will of her divine Spouse be accomplished in all things. Let that be the prayer of our dear invalid.

Receive my blessing, for yourself, my dear daughter, all your beloved sisters and especially your invalids.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 7th July 1857

Tomorrow, I go, with all the boarders of Melle, on a pilgrimage to Autem-St. Liévin. I hope to have the happiness of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass on the tomb of the Holy apostle of our country of Alost. We celebrate, at this moment, the jubilee of the 12 hundredth anniversary of the martyr of St Liévin. I commend all of you to this Holy martyr.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-89

Madame Superior

I like to think that the condition of our dear invalids is no worse, and that you will have the pleasure of informing me of the recovery of one, and of such an improvement in the other, that soon after you will finally be able to give me very good news. I have prayed a good deal for them, and for you also, my dear child. I was consoled to see that you are carrying your cross with generosity and I thank our good God for it. Give me news of your invalids often and give them my kind regards.

Your ever devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th July 1857

The anniversary of the entry into religion of the late Lady M. Charlotte.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-90

Madame Superior

I thank you very sincerely for the good wishes you just sent me. I am above all touched by the prayers you have offered for me. May we always carry out more perfectly the respective duties of our offices.

Tell your dear invalids to take courage and to commence the month of the triumph of our august Mother, with a totally new ardor. I wish the same disposition to all my dear children of the convent of the Holy Angels.

My good Anna also has her share in my wishes and the prayers I am addressing to the Lord for my spiritual children. Please tell her so.

I am very pleased about the fresh proof of devotedness y our chaplain has just given you. You must inform Mme Superior General with all the details and without too much delay. But leave Mme Superior the care of drawing practical conclusions from it. I will help towards achieving that result whenever it is a question of the personnel of our houses.

You may look for a lay messenger. Try and find out how they proceed in this matter at the Ladies of the Sacred Heart in Brussels and at the Sisters of Notre Dame. I shall also get information at Ghent, Doorzele and elsewhere. I will inform Mme Superior General of the permission I have just given you.

Mme Marine will communicate to you a few small articles that have been settled and of which you have not been informed. But copy them out and do not keep the writing of that Lady. I have not kept a copy.

I have done your errands to your sisters.

May our good God deign to continue giving you his blessings; and you, my dear daughter, continue to love that tender Spouse of your soul with all your might.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th July 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-91

Madame Superior

Our Lords the Bishops think that in our present circumstances prudence demands that religious not show themselves in public, several of them together. That answers your question. You will therefore have your retreat at your own convent, and you will examine how you can prudently sent to Coloma, those of your sisters you want to allow spend some time there. You will speak about the first part of what proceeds only to your councilors, to avoid causing anyone to worry; and as for sending a few subjects to Coloma or elsewhere you will make your plans known to me, before making a definite decision.

I have collected information about the messenger. Not only is it fitting, but it is also necessary for you to have a lay woman to fulfill that office. It is more prudent to have her permanently, that is to say, for her to be at the convent, as the servants will be there. A good deal of prudence is needed in making the choice. There are generally many people who have had crosses in the world; who know how to appreciate that world and whose faith and integrity are known.

If you think that Mme Clémentine wishes to make her retreat at Alost, you may allow her to do so. The retreat will begin at the end of this month. As a companion you will give her such a Lady or Sister as you think suitable.

I hope that they will take Mme Louisa at Coloma. I will occupy myself with that matter.

May our good Mother Mary deign to bless us and obtain for us the right dispositions for preparing ourselves for her big feast.

Receive, my dear daughter, the assurance of my devotedness.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th August 1857

Anniversary of the death of my very worthy mother, in 1826

L.S.J.M.J.

18-92

Madame Superior

I like to think that the indisposition of your sister will not degenerate into an illness. Our good God will deign to be pleased with your submission to his Holy will.

I have written to Coloma to inform them of the wise precautionary measures indicated by their Lordships the bishops, regarding the movements of religious at this moment.

It seems to me that it will be useful for your health if you make your retreat at Alost. You may go to that convent as soon as you are free. The retreat will take place on the 30th of this month or on the next day. You will inform Mme Marine that you are coming.

Be prudent about the suggestions to be made to the doctor on the treatment of Mme Louisa. Do not take any responsibilities in these matters.

In my letter of yesterday, I have urged Mme Superior General to summon Mme Euphrasie and Mme Louisa to Coloma.

I will perhaps have the pleasure of seeing you, before your departure for Alost, but that must not change any of the arrangements made for you above.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th August 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-93

Madame Superior

I like to think that the reopening has brought you true satisfaction. Your former pupils will have resumed with zeal their habits of work and submission. The new ones will pattern themselves on the good models they have in front of their eyes. I am praying our good God to grant you that sweet consolation.

The matter of the free school must not worry you any longer; at least I hope it does not. You have acted under obedience and the obligation of allowing your sisters to go out to take the classes must sometimes have caused you some anxiety.

For a long time I have been waiting for a letter from Mlle Marie Stack. If you are writing to her, please inform her that I think the house (firm) that she wrote a few words about in her last letter, merits confidence. However, I will await fuller information before coming to a definite decision.

I have received a letter from Anna. That excellent child expresses her feelings of gratitude to me in a way that touches me keenly. She will obtain blessings from Heaven for us. The Lord will welcome the petitions of that angel. May that merciful Master for whom we are working, deign also to bless you, my dear daughter, your good sisters and your pupils.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-94

Your letter, my dear daughter, has entirely satisfied me on the point about which I had written to you.

Now, I am going to ask you to send the enclosed to Mlle Anna Staeck. I do not have her address and I already owe that good child a letter for some time. So, please, send it to her without delay. When you have the chance, you will let me have her address.

Always entirely yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

8th October 1857

If you have the time, you may add a few lines to Anna. However I want the letter to go. You will write to me when you have some leisure.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-95

Please read the enclosed and then send it on without delay to her address. I want you to understand my intentions and know where you stand as regards this young lady. I am asking you to provide her with board and lodging for some time. You will not do it for nothing. I think she can well afford to pay.

I am sorry to cause you so much trouble, but I know how devoted you are to charity and to what I think ought to be done in the light of that Christian virtue.

28th October 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-96

I have written to Mme Superior General asking her to postpone the execution of the project for all the religious to take up residence at Malines. It is a more important matter than the Mme Superior imagines. So, you will await fresh orders before beginning to carry out that plan, and you will even wait until I write to you again about it myself.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-97

Madame Superior

I have told you that in exceptional cases, such as coming to the aid of a respectable family that is suffering a reverse of fortune, or one highly placed with an honorable position whose resources do not correspond to that situation, you are allowed to admit a pupil at fees reduced by one third, from 600 reduced to 400.

I was very surprised therefore that the Mme Superior General wrote to me that, on my orders, they were writing to her, from Brussels, that a Superior may reduce the boarding fees to one third of the price, from 600 to 250. I am convinced that there is a mistake in that allegation; but I wish to know who is the author of it.

Mme Superior General will come to Brussels to choose a (word illegible). The business of the family of our late Lady Falvie, is taking the business into (word illegible).

I have prayed a great deal for you, my dear daughter, and for all your convent of the Holy Angels.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd November 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-98

Madame Superior

I hope that Mlle Stack will succeed in the efforts she is making, and that our good God will procure a suitable post for her. The temporary stay she will make at your convent will not be useless to her ruined health. But if it were prolonged too much, it would become harmful and tiring. You will give her to understand that with tact. I do not have time at this moment to answer the other letters.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th November 1857

L.S.J.M.J.

18-99

Your letters, as always, my dear daughter, have given me pleasure. Prepare yourself with confidence for the feasts that bring the holy time of Advent to a close; put into that preparation

simplicity, the importance of which is so well understood by the divine Child Jesus, and you will experience the effects of that preparation in yourself, as well as in your sisters and pupils.

What a beautiful letter dear Anna sent me! It is a model of its kind.

Mary is pleased with her post. I am really happy about that and bless our good God for it. That post will be useful to her, it seems to me.

Always count on my devotedness in Jesus Christ

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

29th November 1857

Add the missing address to the enclosed, and when you receive one from the same person for me, send it to me, in one of yours.

Read my letter to Mary Staeck and close it before sending it to her.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-100

Madame Superior

I congratulate you on celebrating the feast of the 16th with joy and confidence. Yes, we must rejoice in the prerogatives of Mary. We must also, as children, who know and love their adorable mother, count on her tender care, today above all when the enemies of her divine Son, driven to almost unbelievable excesses of infernal zeal, show us what they would do if their ardor was not stopped by her who is called upon to crush the head of the infernal serpent.

Confidence then. Mary, our mother will give the angels the charge of watching over us.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

16th December 1857

All your relatives are well.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-101

Madame Superior

I know the sincerity of the sentiments that animate you; and your good wishes always give me pleasure. Receive anew my thanks for all the good you wish me. I will remember you to your cousin Colombe. Please tell Mlle Marie Stack that I will receive her with great pleasure, next Saturday.

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd January 1858

If I have not sent my greetings for the season to your dear sisters, I am doing so at present. Please be the interpreter of my sentiments which are so well known to you.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-102

Madame Superior

My health is excellent, though I am suffering from neuralgia. I hope that trouble will leave me little by little and will not leave any trace behind it.

Mme Superior General wrote to me that the trial is not causing her any great anxiety. We will know before long what to expect.

You will take care to forbid your mistresses to fast. In case of doubt, you will ask your confessor for dispensations.

Mme Angèle is not enjoying perfect health.

Receive with my greetings for the season, my blessing for you, my dear daughter, and all your sisters.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th February 1858

The mama of the late Mme Félicité died last Saturday at Grammont.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-103

Madame Superior

I know with pleasure that you, and all your dear community, are preparing yourselves with zeal and confidence for the feast of our good Patron St Joseph. The nature of the requests you are making is another of satisfaction for me. It is the glory of God, the good of souls and the prosperity of the religious family of which you are members that you are requesting. You can count on being answered. I expect it from your pious dispositions and the help of our powerful protector will be granted to you. So prepare your souls for the graces that are going to be granted to them.

My health is excellent, and the neuralgia that has been making me suffer for some time, will leave me, I hope, before the end of the month of St Joseph.

I am always very sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th of the month of St Joseph 1858

Please complete the address on the enclosed letters and send them on.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-104

Madame Superior

I am profiting by the opportunity my niece Maria is offering me, to ask you for news. How is the dear family at the Holy Angels? How are your pupils? And how is M. Stack? Have you any new of Anna? I have not received anything further from her since the New Year. Does Mlle Lejeune like being at Coloma? How does she speak of that house? I am still hoping to come and see you, next month.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th April 1858

Lost/Missing

18-105 to 18-108

L.S.J.M.J.

18-109

Madame Superior

Your German novice seemed to me to be of a happy disposition. But I doubt whether she is very certainly called to be a lay sister. I could not ascertain her final decision; she kept repeating that it was not possible for her to express herself in French. I think you will not keep her. I have not had the opportunity of talking to you in detail about all your personnel. In general I am pleased with all your dear sisters and the cleanliness of the house. As for the classes, we have talked about them. I have received the prospectus from Jette and the Ladies of the Sacred Heart at Brussels.

I have just seen Doorzele and the new Bois. The number of pupils increases at the Ladies of Doorzele and with the Sisters, where there are 800 to 900 including 500 pupils at the free school. The 300 or 400 others are one hundred and well above that in boarders; about sixty weekly boarders and some day pupils. There are over 40 religious, at Doorzele, there are also about as many religious. But that is the motherhouse. There are some aged and infirm subjects.

It would be difficult to form an exact idea of the great cleanliness that reigns in these establishments. One must... (End of first page. The second page cut off)
(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-110

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

Here is a letter I had written for Mme Emérence and that for reasons that no longer exist I had kept back. I am sending it to you because it contains some useful information. I am also adding to it another letter that will be useful to you for directing Mme Apolline.

I congratulate you, my dear child, on the post of responsibility that the Lord has given you. You will work with zeal at forming those elite subjects that Jesus deigns to choose from among

thousands to occupy a distinguished place in his heart. Study at the feet of your divine Spouse, the very noble science of supernatural love. Read and reread the rule of the mistress of novices, in order to enlighten yourself and make the fulfillment of your duties in every circumstance easy for you. The little book that Maria will deliver to you will be useful for forming the novices for the direction of your pupils.

I give you my blessing and I promise you to pray for you.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 1st October 1858

Here are two saying you can apply to yourself and quote to the novices:

When the Mother shows the way,
it is easy for the child to follow the silver path
When someone leads it is easy to follow.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-111

Reverend Mother of Novices

The obligations of the Mistress of Novices have grown in number, we cannot hide the fact; they are grave; they are sacred. But the Holy Rule also invests that high official with special prerogatives. Just as no authority lower than His Grace, the Archbishop of Malines has the power to reduce those very important duties; no one may diminish those rights or hinder the free exercise of them.

You have to form the members for the religious family of Mary and Joseph or the Ladies of Mary; you have to assist the efforts of those of your pupils who are called to the supreme prerogative of Spouse of God the Savior. But to fulfill those noble functions, as your Institute requires and Holy Church desires, you have to know in depth each and every one of your children. You owe them instructions in common; you owe them individual ones. Now, to know them you have to surround yourself with lights and those lights you must seek wherever they may be found.

From these principles, it naturally follows:

1) You must follow and observe your novices, in public in the midst of their companions, or when they are with the community, and in particular when they are alone. On those who are already employed in studying, teaching, or boarding school supervision, you will get information from the Mistress General of the Ladies of the boarding school. You will question the Lady charged with the direction of the domestic work about those of your children who are engaged in that work. You will see and you will control all their correspondence.

2) In exceptional and extremely rare cases when the well-established needs of one or other of our houses makes it obligatory to employ a novice elsewhere than in the novitiate, you will retain towards her the same duties and the same rights as if she was in the novitiate. You must follow her in spirit, you must get to know her and guide her. From this it results that you must have regular correspondence with your novice, and that correspondence is secret to the extent that no Superior has the right to get to know the contents of the letters to novices write to their Mistress, nor of those the Mistress writes to her pupils.

Such is the spirit of your Constitutions, and of all the Rules of the Mistress of Novices in religious Institutes.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th of the month of your Holy Patron, 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

18-112

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

These papers, which may help you get to know the novices, will be delivered to you by M. Lefevre, the piano teacher of the Ladies at Schaerbeek. I am very pleased to have the opportunity of recommending this young person to the Mme Superior General. She is one of our pupils and merits our confidence.

All yours in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-113

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I would be very pleased to receive from each of your choir postulants, a letter that would inform me of their desires, their way of expressing themselves, their writing, etc. It is the custom.

Mme Superior General makes me fear that your indisposition will perhaps be the reason why you not give me the satisfaction of seeing you next week; so, would it be for the visit to Mouscron, a fortnight later? Fiat!

Many good wishes to all the novices and postulants.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th November 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

18-114

Here is a small parcel, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, that you will want to deliver prudently to its address.

I hope your presence, in company with the Reverend Superior General, will help to do good to your dear sisters of the convent of St John the Baptist. Be at ease everywhere and put at ease those with whom you have to deal.

I recommend the lay sister novices to you. They have not had all the help we owe them. Tell them I have made this special recommendation to you.

Take special care also during your visits in seeing the young sisters and the young ladies who are still under your direction.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th November 1858

L.S.J.M.J.

18-115

My dear Reverend Lady

To save the times of your Reverend Mother General, I will address to you what I was counting on writing to her about the young postulants.

I am happy to learn that they have obtained the favor of being admitted to exchange their lay clothes for the livery of our good Master Jesus Christ. I like to persuade myself that, on leaving the world to obey their vocation, they have higher motives than promising themselves a sweet, easy life in the shadow of the cross; but that they entertain the generous determination to form themselves after the example of the crucified Jesus, so as to make known the heavenly Father, working for the salvation of souls and their own sanctification. There is no need for me to insist on the necessity for teaching your postulants what the Lord is expecting of them. You will fulfill your duties towards these young ladies, and put them on the way that will lead them to the happiness that is awaiting them here below, and being prepared for them in heaven.

I think I have informed Mme Superior General that I would not have the pleasure of myself giving the veil to your young Ladies. She will have the goodness to ask Fr. the Vicar General to replace me.

Here are a few remarks on the names to be given in your Institute. It is advisable in the choice of names to avoid:

- 1) Those that give rise to malice or embarrassing and even dangerous uses: Elizabeth - bete! (beast). I would prefer to say Eliza; Isabelle - belle! (beautiful) etc. etc.
- 2) Names made ridiculous, hateful, low or dishonest, whether in novels, the theater or by scandalous, tragic or comic events, etc.
- 3) Those that are disproportionately long, hard sounding, unpleasant, foreign, etc.

All the same, I do not want to carry things to scruples or minute details.

Please tell your postulants and especially Mlle Beyens, that I am making it my duty to pray for them. Among other things that I recommend to your attention, there is the handwriting of the novices. In our Institute this is an important matter. I wish you yourself my dear Lady to preach by example in this respect.

I always say with pleasure

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st January 1859

Please give my kind regards to Mme Superior General.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-116

Yes, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, I did receive your letter of the 15th of March. You gave me pleasure by reminding me of events that awaken sentiments of gratitude. Souvenirs of that kind are useful; the author of so many graces that have been accorded to us has the right to receive expressions of our gratitude and it must be sweet to pure hearts to experience the need to express what they feel for their Benefactor par excellence. So, render our good Jesus love for love, and prove to him that you understand his desires and ask only to be able to satisfy them. You are fortunate, my Child, in having to form privileged souls destined like yourself to serve the Church of God, to occupy distinguished places in the heart of Jesus Christ, to be instruments of his mercy, to become his Spouses!

In answer to your letter of the 29th of March, I will tell you that it will not be possible for me to receive the vows of my dear Children. I regret that, but tell them I will try and render them through my prayers all the services that depend on me. They will on that account let me know what they desire me to ask the Lord for each one of them.

I would need a few days in May to talk with Mme Superior General, with her councilors and the other Ladies, the Sisters, the novices and the postulants. I will try to settle the matter of the postulant you wrote to me about, in the way you suggest. You will have a very good subject in her, if I am not mistaken.

It is good for you to know that Mlle M Louise received from me, or rather her mama paid with the gift I made her for her daughter, what has been paid for her dowry at Coloma. Mlle M Louise knowing that it is because of some remarks of mine that she has not made her vows with her companions, might in time to come, harbor doubts about my attitude towards her. Profit by what I have just made known to you to reassure her as to my attitude which, in reality, is always full of charity towards her.

The cure of the novice of our Sisters of St Joseph at Ostend, which occurred on the feast of St Joseph, is being maintained. The premises of the Josephites in Brussels are sold for 566,000 francs, and several other favors obtained in the course of the month of our Holy Patron add to the obligations we are always under to St Joseph and our dear Mother Mary.

Many good wishes to Mme Superior General and to the dear Ladies her councilors.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd April 1859

Tell your Lady Novices that I recommend them to apply themselves with love to all that the Church reminds us of in this time of the penance of Our Lord.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-117

Madame Clothilde

I have not yet had the opportunity of addressing to you directly my congratulations on the post of confidence with which our divine Master has wished to charge you. It is a new means of making yourself useful to your neighbor and serving the Institute. I count on your generosity in discharging your duties with devotion, and in making light the burden you will carry cheerfully and charitably with your sisters.

I cannot stop myself talking to you about (name crossed out). All those who have been following her with attention, are all agreed that that pupil is going to lose, during this last school year, what she had gained during the previous year. Inclinations that are even disturbing have developed in her and what seemed to be ingeniousness could well be only the result of small combinations of her self-love, her vanity, and a little malice that I regard as dangerous. I found in her the elements of childishness, a desire to please, to be superior to the others, and to pay rather nasty tricks on the others. She evades supervision and does not worry using roundabout ways to gain her ends. An act of disobedience does not frighten her, etc. I will give explanations by word of mouth. As she is not in class, she will hardly do any work this year and will occupy herself with trifles. The inclination of (name crossed out) causes me a good deal of anxiety; it causes it to her father, far from rendering him service. Please deal with her and pray for her. I will help you as much as I can.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 13th October 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

18-118

I thank you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for the good news you asked Mme Superior General to communicate to me. That relative to Clara: May that niece assume a very different way of behavior from the one they found in her during the last school year that lowered her so much in my eyes.

I would be very pleased to receive, as has always happened, a letter from your postulants, and even from your novices, since they did not write to me as postulants.

Mlle Justine always keeps a distinguished place in my esteem. I dare to think that she always deserves it. A letter from her will always give me pleasure. Please remind her of that.

Although I cannot always answer them, that is the way I get to know my children and it reminds me to pray for them.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

22nd October 1859

L.S.J.M.J.

18-119

Your letter of last Sunday gave me great pleasure, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ. You remembered that I have difficulty reading fine writing, and I was able to reread your letter without tiring my eyes. I thank you for that attention. The visit of our Rev. Mother General produces the same good effect everywhere. One finds, in the procedures of that Mother, what in religion one has the right to expect as a religious and as an inferior. There is only one voice on that matter in the whole Institute. May God be praised for it! My health is improving. Thank the Lord.

Here are a few words in reply to your children. You will read them privately to each one of them.

To Mlle Lejeune. I congratulate that dear child on having borne with courage the difficulties aroused by nature and exaggerated by the devil who is jealous of what God is preparing for the friend of his choice. Stress that privilege of being chosen from among so many thousands and of being chosen by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, etc. I am making it my duty to help Maria to thank the Lord for his ineffable goodness, and to ask for the graces necessary to prepare oneself to put on the livery of our good Jesus, in a spirit of faith and of charity. I am very pleased with her letter.

To Mlle Apolline. Confidence and the desire to make oneself more and more capable of serving our good God in the state of perfection to which the Lord is deigning to call her, give me the certainty that this child will walk with a firm and generous step behind our good Jesus. I congratulate her on her good dispositions, and tell her that I am very pleased with her writing.

Mlle Adélaïde. The sentiments with which this dear novice is animated gives me the hope that in her we will have a useful, generous subject, who will form herself on the model of Jesus, the

most perfect of models. Let her above all learn from her model meekness and humility and progress of every kind will come and confirm my predictions.

Mlle Antoinette. Our good God is giving her the grace to understand that a vocation to the religious state is a special favor and of infinite value. Let her cherish that happy disposition with which our sweet Jesus deigns to adorn her. Prayer and a generous devotion to all that Holy obedience demands and to what the Sacred Heart of her future Spouse suggests to her; those are what will provide the nourishment our dear Antoinette will use specially to strengthen what grace has endowed her with. Tell her that her brother, Mr. Ignace is well and that, as the opportunity arises, I will give him news of his sister the novice.

I give you, as well as your novices and the dear postulants, my blessing.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(1859)

Lost/Missing

18-120

L.S.J.M.J.

18-121

Your remarks are correct, my dear daughter, we will try and do violence to Heaven to obtain that M.O. recognizes her state and that humility obtains for her the means of entering again into the heart of our good Master.

It is right for an account of Mme Marie Charlotte to be produced. The piety of that Lady deserves to be known by all the members of our religious family. She can be suggested as a model to be imitated by the Novices and the Religious. It is with just reason that a great many of your sisters have, in their pious affection, raised our good Lady Marie Charlotte to a high degree and worshipped her memory in a special way. I cannot however tell you positively yet how we will go about producing that account. Let us gather the materials, take some notes and little by little we will find the means of doing something useful for the Institute and glorifying the author of all good whose grace was so visibly active in our dear relative.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Not Dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-122

(Letter dictated)

Ghent, 12th February 1860

Madame Superior

Yesterday the 7th, I received the news of the sweet and consoling death of our dear Lady Theresa. Three letters came at the same time to inform me of it. One was from Mme Superior General, another from Mme Hélène and the third from Mme Marine. I offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass this morning for our pious deceased one. We may believe that she is already with her divine Spouse in Heaven. The whole life of that dear child has been exemplary.

Please tell Mme Superior General that I approve of the decision to put off the projected building at Alost. That also of your recreation room. I insist on repeating that I adopt the opinion put forward by Mr. Parot in regard to that room.

We could not do enough to show the Vicar General how touched we are by his conduct towards us. Let us seize every opportunity of showing him our lively and sincere gratitude.

Please be the interpreter of my sentiments, Rev Mother, to Mme Helene and my niece Clara. Writing is still a very difficult task for me. That is what compels me to have recourse to a strange hand, to do it myself as rarely as possible.

(The following is in the Founder's hand)

What follows is for Mme Flore as much as for you.

You will take care to look after the health of the Sisters during Lent and to follow my previous instructions. Neither Mme Superior General nor you will fast nor do more corporal penances than usual. The work of your office is ample enough for your strength. No fasting either for the mistresses of classes, etc.

Has your convent a separate place in the cemetery? Where are the lists of the deceased hanging in the convent?

What is done with the linen that was worn by our Ladies or even our Sisters who died of consumption or other contagious illness? What is done with the bed linen, blankets, habits they used during the last stages of their lives? At what period during their illnesses do you begin the precautions for avoiding contagion, and what are those precautions? What are the known or presumed causes of the illnesses in the Institute?

My eye trouble and the other miseries caused by the debility of the facial nerves remains almost in the same state, making the work of writing difficult for me. I have made the resolution to make a novena in honor of St Ignatius and our usual august Patrons, Mary and Joseph. I am also adding to these saints, St. Liévin, the patron and apostle of our district of Alost. It is thought that it was at the solemn celebrations of the jubilee of St Liévin that I contracted my infirmity. I would be very pleased to see my spiritual Children join me in asking for my cure, if it is not contrary to the merciful designs of our heavenly Father. We will begin the novena on Ash Wednesday so as to finish it on the eve of the month of our Holy Patron. During the whole of that month we will thank St Joseph and implore him to give thanks with us to our good God for all the benefits we have received; the cure just as much as the non-cure will merit acknowledgment and gratitude on our part. We know the goodness of the Lord in his gifts, even when they differ from what we are asking for; his refusal may be a great favor.

Your Rev Mother will kindly commit her children in the other convents to take part in this act of charity and filial piety.

Being deprived of conversing as much as I desire with my spiritual children, I recommend the Superiors and Mistresses of Novices to be the interpreter of my sentiments among their children. I insist above all on a point that I regard to be of the greatest importance: tell them and repeat it that Jesus Christ is the source, the origin of everything good, we are indebted to him for all we receive even from creatures. Let us accustom ourselves then to doing honor to our good Jesus for all the kindness and affection our superiors, equals and inferiors show us. Let us be convinced that they love us, that they esteem us, that they obey us for love of our divine Spouse. In fact has he not put us in his place, giving us the assurance that he would consider as done for himself all that is done for us? These principles will fortify us against the tendencies of self-love, against that wretched self-esteem; they will keep that ardor of charity alive in our hearts for our only true friend Jesus Christ. ... (End of letter?)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-123

Be so good, my very dear daughter, as to read the enclosed letter. It contains instructions you will be able to make use of for the good of your novices and even of your religious. You will then seal the letter and deliver it to its address.

I share the opinion of our dear Mother General. I will write to her before long, and meanwhile, I unite my prayers with hers and yours in asking for the lights and other graces necessary for fulfilling in all things the designs of our good Master Jesus Christ, and worthily honoring his Holy Mother whose Children we are on many accounts.

All is well at your Parents; that is truly a Christian family.

I hope to come and give you my blessing during the month of Mary. Meanwhile, count on my good will, very dear daughter.

Ghent, 29th November 1860

(Dictated Letter)

18-124

Observations

The temporary move of Mlle Justine has led me to reflect on the needs of the novices. Nothing profitably takes the place of the practices in common use in the novitiate. So, nothing can sanction the employment of the novices outside the novitiate in the first year of the novitiate. A very great need is required in the second year. In all cases the novices must correspond regularly and with complete freedom (which means that no one sees that correspondence) with the mistress of novices, and as far as possible, they spend the holidays at the novitiate.

It will be useful to ask Mme Adèle for clarification on these matters.

You have forgotten to inform the Rev Mother Superior of the Sisters of St Joseph of the death of Mme Apolline and perhaps also that of Mme Adélaïde.

(In the Founder's hand)

M (name crossed out) will tell you how much the novices are neglected at (place crossed out but one can read Schaerbeek). Nowhere are they given the care which they have a right to, when they are not in the novitiate.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-125

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

(Dictated)

I thank you very much for your long letter and although I had to tire my bad eye, I have had much satisfaction from what you said to me. This is to tell you that I approve of all the contents of your letter. (In the Founder's hand)

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

It is the Mistress of novices who has gone: charged with watching over the health of the Superior General. The latter must obey her with simplicity. In that way we will avoid having the ordinary religious occupying themselves with the health of the Superior General.

(Not Dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-126

Madame Superior

I think you can say that the studying of so many languages at the same time would slow down the progress of the pupil's in the French language, and that you will judge when it will be useful to allow her the study of other languages.

If necessary, later on, you could send her to the Ladies at Brussels, where the language, except perhaps Italian, are taught.

You know I am keenly interested in the girls from the Netherlands.

My eye trouble obliges me to finish. Hoping to have the pleasure of seeing you on Monday.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th September 1860

Lost/Missing

18-127

L.S.J.M.J.

18-128

Madame Superior

I have been very pleased with the visit of our pious and dear Lady Superior General. I have only one regret, that too short a stay made me omit many things that I would have liked to ask or recommend.

I would be pleased to receive from the postulants, before the end of this month, a letter of their own composition that they would not show anyone so that I would be certain that these letters contain the real sentiments of the young ladies (postulants). The novices may also write to me, if they so desire.

If time allows you to do so, please add a few short notes to each letter so that I can get to know the writer. All is well at your Parents.

I give you, very dear daughter in Jesus Christ, my fatherly blessing.

Your very devoted Uncle

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th November 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

18-129(1)

Madame Superior

While waiting for the letters from your postulants, my dear Lady, I am taking advantage of the fact that I am sending a letter to Mme Superior General, to tell you that Mlle Marie, the governess at cousin Henri's, will be coming to Coloma for the clothing ceremony on the 8th of December. She will be accompanied by Louise, Gabrielle and Julienne. They will arrive in the morning and will leave in the afternoon. They are not to have any privileged. (Name crossed out) seems to have announced to her cousin (name crossed out) that she (name crossed out) will work things so that her cousin can spend a few days at Coloma. Take care to refuse all exceptions for that young Lady who is very irresponsible. (Name crossed out) must not know I am writing to you about this matter. That (name crossed out) is so inconsiderate. She (half a line obliterated by fold of letter) her friends and relatives.

Receive my blessing, dear niece, and believe in my devotedness in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd November 1860

Tell my god-daughter, I beg you, that I do not forget her in the presence of the Lord. Please give me news of Victorine.

(Catalog Number 18-129 duplicated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-129(2)

Madame Superior

Your two letters respond perfectly to what I wanted from you, in the interests of your Postulants. Those young ladies have written to me, as you suppose in all confidence and naivety. They appreciate the favor that divine munificence is preparing for them.

Please read what precedes to those young ladies; and add that I make it my duty to help them with my prayers to prepare themselves for the happy moment when they will have the signal favor of exchanging their lay clothes for the humble but holy livery of Jesus Christ, our good Master and divine Savior. Try Rev. Mother, to make the Postulants understand the very honorable and indeed sweet but very real obligation to imitate that adorable model and follow him in their conduct. Now, what meekness, what humility, what obedience, what zeal for the glory of his Father and the salvation of souls there is in Jesus Christ! So it is to form themselves in these virtues that the elite souls are called whom the Lord deigns to choose for Spouses. Convince them that, helped by grace from on high, your children will gradually get used to mortification of the eyes, of the tongue, of all the senses, of heart and of mind.

You will communicate privately to each one the liens that concern her alone.

I have written to Marie. But I have had to reflect on the subject of the name to give her. After mature reflection, I suggest to Mme Superior General and to you, that you give my niece the name Kostka. Her Jesuit uncle is called Stanislaus. Mlle Mahieu has happily triumphed in the struggle that the enemy, pressing on the weak side of the young lady, cleverly aroused. I thank our good Jesus. It is to his grace and the love he bears that young person that your dear Elise owes the happy ending of the combat. It is a warning that our postulant must take account of. She needs to discover without delay all the temptations of the devil. I tell her that out of that feeling of devotedness that I experience for her. Her letter gave me great pleasure. I hope that we will understand each other perfectly. I very much approve of her being given St. Theresa as a patron. Let her be named Teresa.

Mlle Defrenne whom I have already seen and I am very pleased to see among your postulants, will render service to the Institute by her piety, by her prayer and by her example. All our subjects do not have the same function to fulfill. Your dear Hortense, will acquit herself to the satisfaction of our good God, of the one that obedience gives her.

The motive that makes her desire the name Joanna is worthy of a good child. I prefer Joanna to Jeanne.

I have made the acquaintance of Mlle Flore de Myttenaere. I remember talking to her when she was a boarder with our Ladies at Mouscron. I am happy to see her among your Postulants. Her character and dispositions have remained very clearly in my memory. Her natural courage, perfected by grace, will cause her to triumph over the difficulties she may meet and the dispositions God has given her for the Holy state that she desires to embrace will make that young lady suitable for various positions. Let her study our great model Jesus Christ, and I predict success for her in the career which she enters. She may count on my devotedness to help her.

I do not like the name Laure. That of Augusta has nothing to do with St Augustine. It is simply the feminine of Augustus. What about Rénilde? Guislène? They are saints of our Belgium. The abbess Aldegonde? Emilienne? Julienne? You will want to choose and to decide.

Be convinced, Rev. Mother, that I am praying specially for your lady postulants and for your novices. On Saturday I will have offered the Holy Sacrifice for your children before the clothing ceremony. I am sorry I cannot come to Coloma.

I am happy to learn that Mlle (illegible) has triumphed in the end. I wish her to give herself the assurance that she will be entering.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 3rd December 1860

L.S.J.M.J.

18-130

Madame Superior

The more I weigh up what you wrote to me last, the more I think you will overcome the difficulties. They are in fact, more of a type of fearful apprehension than in real things. Perhaps it would be desirable that you, the Superior, be present at recreation with your religious. You would do well, I think, to speak to Mme Superior General about it. It seems to me she will understand that. As for the other points, you may believe that, it is forgetfulness or inadvertence on the part of your Rev Mother. I urge you to act with confidence, and sometimes ask for explanations with simplicity.

Do you have meals at the required time? How long do they last? Are the dishes for the religious well prepared and are they of good quality? Are they varied and always in sufficient quantity? I am not asking for an immediate answer.

The letters of my nieces Louise and Gabrielle gave me pleasure. Please thank those dear children for their attentiveness in giving me news of themselves. How is Teresa? Doesn't her uncle go to see her too often? Do not the visits do harm to the recollection that child needs in order to look into her vocation? How is Flore d'Halluin? and Mlle Van Wambeke, how is she? You may tell her I have asked for news of them and I am praying for them especially at Holy Mass.

As it is important for the affairs of Mouscron to be known as they really are, I urge you to read the enclosed letter. You may have full confidence in Mme Constance. You will then deliver this letter from Mme Constance to Mme Superior General giving her a definite assurance that I have the intimate conviction that Mme Constance is speaking sincerely and that one can believe what she asserts. I beg Mme Superior General to write to Mme Constance that being unable to do so myself, she will kindly write on my behalf to give her the definite assurance that our good God is the author of the peace the heart and soul of our dear daughter in Jesus Christ, Mme Constance is enjoying. I also authorize Mme Superior General to inform Mme Emerence of the letter of Mme Constance, as she must also know the real state of things.

Receive my blessing, my dear niece.

Your very devoted uncle and Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th December 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-131

Madame Superior

I am very pleased to have received the two letters, one from Mlle Justine whose health I prudently recommend to you, and the other from Mlle Apolline, the teacher of calligraphy whose writing seems too small to me, and of a kind that will not please everyone. However, before deciding to make any remarks to her about it, I will ask the advice of those more competent to judge it than I am.

Soon we will see Clara. May she fulfilled the promises she has made and lighten the burden of her father by reasonable and Christian behavior.

I like to think that Victorine understands her position better and has become diligent. She would have to be pitied if that was not so.

At your Parents all is well. At Henri's also I have been very pleased with the letter Mlle Kostka wrote to her sisters, in which she tells them things that are very proper about the sentiments they must have and to show to their mistresses at Doorzele. Give that dear niece kind regards on behalf of her uncle the Canon.

Also present my respects to Mme Superior General.

Before concluding, I will recommend to you the precautionary measures relating to the Lenten fast, that I have talked to our Superiors about in previous years.

Receive, my dear Lady Superior, for you and all your children, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th February 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

8-132

Madame Superior

The very numerous occupations of my nephew Henri, and a little displeasure at seeing proposals so often made, turned upside down, are the reasons why he does not answer the last letters of Clara. He has allowed me to inform you that nothing of what has been arranged will be changed, and that on the 10th of March, Clara will return to Ghent accompanied by the person who will have brought the other three young ladies, her sisters, to you.

I wish you in advance, my dear Lady Superior, and all your good Sisters, the graces that the Lord intends for you during the month of St Joseph.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th February 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-133

Madame Superior

Before Clara leaves your house, I am writing to urge you to give her, very prudently however, a few lessons on propriety and reserve, even towards her papa. That dear nephew has been complaining to me on several occasions about the childish expressions of affection his daughter shows him. He has more than once suffered to the point of blushing from the embraces she allowed herself, which he was not expecting and which, because of the presence of worthy people, he was unable to repress at once. To put order into these excessive demonstrations, Henri will give her, on her return from Malines, severe lessons on that subject, and he has begged me to help him by giving his daughter advice both on that subject and on others. So that the father and uncle may be understood by Clara it will be very useful for you to give your pupil instruction on the subject, and on the care she must have of her reputation and the respect a child owes her father.

It is absolutely essential to say nothing to Clara about what I have written above. So do not let her know anything about this step of mine nor about what her father and I propose to say to her

and to prescribe for her. You and Mme Superior General are the only persons I authorize to know anything about this letter.

I will also regulate the correspondence that will be allowed between Clara and her sisters, your pupils. We have firmly decided no longer to tolerate that wasting of time, that satisfying of dangerous curiosity, and those inventions of vanity and sensuality from which the character of Clara has suffered so much and that it would be a great pity if we were to see them transmitted to her sisters.

I have received a letter from your novice Apolline; I have answered it, without knowing that person. I will write to you later about the worth of her writing.

The novice Adélaïde has also written to me. As I do not know that young person either, you would do me a service by answering her on my behalf, saying that I will pray for her, etc. Always put the family name after the religious one, the first time after the taking of the habit for those subjects who are known to me but a little or not at all. It would be still better if you told me a little about the character or the needs of the novices who write to me; that makes things clear.

You can see by my writing that I have to conclude after offering you my excuses.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 22nd February 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-134

Madame Superior

Your letter, or rather your report satisfied my curiosity to the least detail. I thank you for it, and urge you follow courageously the path you have adopted; it seems to me, in general, to conform to reason and to your particular commitments. Age brings experience and makes reason mature and rid itself little by little of the exaggerated influence of the imagination and of prejudices. That applies to the government of a community and to the ordering of one's own life. That is my reply to the two parts of your letter.

You would do well to examine prudently what might be the causes that brought about so different a result from the accounts of last year, and those of previous years. Have you had any expenses that you do not regularly have, or else, have the ordinary household expenses been increased? If everything is noted down, it will be easy to find out the causes of the differences.

Please tell Mlle Kostka that the motives that led her to write and ask that the stay of Clara at Coloma be extended, are good. But I think that it is not right to take the matter up again. The decision seemed final to me and firmly stated.

Here is a remark that I beg you to weigh up, and if you think good to talk about with Mme Superior General. I think that my nieces take at midday, a glass of wine, to give a better tone to their stomachs. Now, I have learned some years ago from a good source that the wine at Coloma is not all of suitable quality to produce the effect that the parents had been promised. If that is still true today, tell me so quite simply. Under good pretexts, wine of undoubted quality, as regards purity, can be sent in.

I will talk about the matter of Teresa V.C. with her guardian. But I think an irrevocable decision has been taken. Let us be full of confidence in St Joseph. our needs are great; those of the (effaced by seal) call urgently for our prayers. So let us pray and we will experience that our Holy Patron is powerful.

I bless you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and wish you, as well as all your convent, a true and holy zeal for the honor of your Patron the blessed Spouse of Mary.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 28th February 1861

Be my interpreter to Mlle Adélaïde. My eyes prevent me from writing to her.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-135

Madame Superior

You last letter provided me with new and good proof that you are profiting by the lessons of experience. It is a good teacher, though rather a slow one. We must live by faith, when our good God refuses us the consolation of pious feelings.

I sent your letter to Annette. We will work together. Ask good St Joseph to help us in this work of charity.

It will not be necessary, for the moment, for me to touch on the question of the wine. Since what is given to the pupils is from your papa, I am at ease about the quality in relation to the health of my little nieces.

I cannot recommend you enough to keep those three children from the traditions that will remain in the convent, on the vanity, etc. of Clara. Talk to them of the beauty of modesty, of simplicity, etc. of the spirit of orderliness, of economy, of cleanliness. The youngest, Julienne, is the one who has the most of the defects and inclinations of Clara: vain, given to criticism, etc.

Gabrielle, on the contrary, is of a happy nature; she studies with zeal, and at play, at recreation, she is always good humored and placid; very pious and zealous about everything connected with the duties of religious, she already at this moment makes me hope for good things.

Louise is often unwell. Her character has acquired a certain amount of hardness as a result; and a vivacity. And as she is a little deaf on one side, she has developed a habit of speaking loudly. You will get everything from her by being gentle. She is also pious and simple in many respects.

It will be necessary to look at the letters from Clara before handing them on to her sisters. If need be, you could send back to me those that might be harmful or inform us of certain things it would be useful for us to know for the guidance of these children and of Clara herself.

I am pleased about the departure of Clara for the sake of Victorine. Her aunts are of my opinion. Victorine has not given any proofs of piety, during the holidays; it is even doubtful whether she has said her morning and night prayers. Without mentioning me, insist on that matter with that child who is already old enough to understand her duties towards God and her neighbor.

May St Joseph deign to help you, and to obtain for us the pupils whom we can bring to a knowledge of our good God, and to the practice of the duties of religion.

Receive also, very dear child, the blessing I give you very cordially.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th of the month of St Joseph, 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-136

My dear Niece

I rejoice at the thought that the number of your pupils has increased noticeably. God be praised! You will not fail to do what enlightened zeal inspires you with to bring your children to the knowledge of their duties towards the Creature and towards the Savior. I will make it a duty to pray for you, your dear Sisters and pupils. It is a sacred duty for all of us, my dear Superior, let us try and acquit ourselves of it with zeal.

Always count on the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th October 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-137

Madame Superior

I thank you for the news you have given me and the good wishes you offered me on the feast day of our Holy Patron. I can tell you also that I acquitted myself of my duties towards you, towards your Rev and beloved Mother Superior, towards your dear Sisters, your novices and your pupils.

The letter of Mlle Justine gave me great pleasure. Please tell her so and add that I will specially commend her to our good God, these days, and above all, on the day when she has the

happiness of consummating her sacrifice by abandoning all she has and all she is to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Among the motives for rejecting certain names, length is also to be included. One finds that four syllables or five pronounced as four like Olympiade, Marie Charlotte, are the longest that are acceptable. Marie Joséphine, Marie Henriette go beyond that limit and must not be allowed, unless there is some special reason for allowing an exception of this kind.

Since there is already Joséphine in your Institute, your novice might, if you think it good, receive the name of Josépha alone.

I am not for Marie Kostka, Marie Gonzague; nor Irene because of Siren (mermaid). Duplicating names must only be the exception.

Present my congratulations to Mlle Antoinette and tell her that I am also commending her, with zeal, to the Lord, during these holy days. I like to believe that she will think of me, at the moment of her profession.

Urge your postulants and novices to equip themselves with sentiments of generosity towards Jesus Christ, our Savior, in memory of what he has deigned to do and suffer for us.

Please, Madame Superior, tell Mlle (illegible) that her letter has given me great pleasure. I have understood the sentiments that animate that person. We will get on perfectly with each other. It is not easy for me to write to her, at this moment, any more than to the other young ladies. You will kindly be my interpreter to all of them. They may count on my prayers and devotedness, until we have the opportunity to talk to each other in person.

The Josephite novice, Mr. Ignace, will have the happiness of going to be edified at the profession of Mlle his sister. We are still very pleased with that novice.

The first impression Clara has made on the members of the family and on the governess is in her favor. May our good God make the future justify our good impressions.

The letter of Victorine also shows a change in favor of that niece. There are signs of more reflection and care in it. I am awaiting her report to give me a better basis for my judgment.

Your devoted Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 25th of the month of St Joseph 1861

18-138

(Beginning of letter missing) ...

If Clara repeats the performance, I will act in the interests of the family. The discouragement of the governess could produce deplorable effects. (The next sentence is completely crossed out)

You understand that all this is entirely confidential and that Mme superior General is the only person to whom I allow you to divulge any of it.

Please thank my good cousin Gabrielle for the letter she has written to me. I am very pleased with the sentiments she expresses; her style pleases me and everything proclaims that her letters will procure satisfaction, as her behavior has not ceased to do.

I would also like to write to my cousin Victorine now; the report that her uncle made known to me, furnishes proofs that for two months she has been making efforts and applying herself and that she at last understands that she has to persevere in doing violence to herself.

I have just received a letter from Sr. Gertrude from Mouscron. She is complaining greatly about the Mme Superior, towards her Sisters and towards the work people. She says they are talking about this last point a great deal in the district. I cannot remedy this evil, if it really exists. Please ask Mme Superior General to see whether she can do anything about it, without compromising anyone.

Present my regards to Mme Flore and tell her that I am longing to see her and talk with her about the matter of the approbation of our Constitutions and Rules.

Receive, Madame Superior, the blessing of
Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th November 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-139

Madame Superior

Please send on the enclosed letters and give an explanation, if you find it good, especially to Mme Victorine and to my cousin Victorine.

May the very holy and very good Mary Mother of God deign to bless, on the day of her triumph, your Institute, your house, your Superiors and

your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 12th August 1861

Clara told me that she is going to Malines on Saturday, to go on Sunday to Brussels where she will go to her papa.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-140

Madame Superior

(Dictated)

I am very pleased to learn that my nieces Louise, Gabrielle and Térésa are doing well, and that they are proposing to respond to my expectations. I will help them to ask our good God for the help of his grace so that they derive from the care of their worthy mistresses, the advantages they are promising themselves. It is already a blessing for them to appreciate the education that they are receiving.

I have been very consoled to learn of the good results the retreats has had on your pupils. I have already passed the remark that the writing lessons given by Mme Kostka have produced very good results. If they take care to suppress certain little decorations that they add to d, to g, etc. and that I call trimmings, they will have taken a great step on the way to perfecting their writing.

Please tell Madame Superior General that I thank her for what she wrote to me in her last two letters. I will take advantage before long of the kind offer she made me. It is useless for her to do the Ceremonial. Present to her my kind regards.

(In the Founder's hand)

Receive, my dear Lady Superior, the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th November 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-141

Madame Superior

Please send these letters on to their respective addresses.

(Name crossed out, but one can read Clara) will profit this time by the lesson her childish acts have taught her. Your sister Annette is a great help to her now. Your other good sisters are also equally devoted to her. I like to think that Louise and her sisters do not know what happened to Clara.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd December 1861

L.S.J.M.J.

18-142

Madame Superior

I thank you with all my heart for the wishes you sent me for the New Year. Above all I appreciate all the prayers you offered for me during the great and consoling solemnities we have been celebrating. It is, indeed, in a double relationship that we help each other. From your infancy, I have shown the way to Heaven in the visits I made to you at the convent of Nouveau Bois, as your uncle; and for many years it has been in a more elevated capacity, it is as a Father in Jesus Christ

that I find myself connected with you. Be convinced, my dear niece, that I will always try to help you as a relative and, above all, my dear daughter in God, count also on always having in me a devoted Father.

Your letter gave me great pleasure whatever the feelings it seems to have inspired you with because of the carelessness in style that you had noticed in it. Be certain that I always recognize the heart that has dictated what you wrote to me.

Please, be the interpreter of my sentiments to my nieces. Give them all some praise and encouragement, according to the good you were able to tell me about them in your last letter.

They will understand that, my eye requiring precautions, it is not possible for me to write directly to each of my nieces and then in addition to my nephews at Grammont and Melle.

I give you, my dear daughter and all my nieces at Coloma, my blessing, and I pray Jesus Christ our Savior to add his to it.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

20th January 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-143

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am taking advantage of the journey Clara is making to Coloma to converse with you for a few moments. First of all, I will tell you that it seems to me that, since the incidents of which you have been informed, Clara is getting on much better.

At your Parents, all is well, and getting better and better. I have received a letter from Anna Stack. That child is a subject of consolation to me. She recognizes the blessings of God, and the instruments the heavenly Father has used. She speaks to me of you and the Ladies of Mary with affection. She is so happy to receive news of you. Her sister Marie is a servant according to recent letters, and useful in the cause of Jesus Christ our good Savior.

I enclose a letter for Térésa, in answer to the news she sent me of her reception as a Child of Mary. She tells me of that good fortune in a charming and edifying way.

Receive, with my good wishes for the day, the blessing given you with all his heart by
your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th April 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-144

Madame Superior

I would like to tell you of all the sentiments my heart contains that are capable of leading you to confidence as a religious. My eyes refuse to grant me that satisfaction. I am limiting myself to saying to you what your divine Spouse used to say to his disciples: You believe in God, believe also in me. Have faith, have confidence in Jesus Christ, everything is there: truth, way, life.

I count on seeing you before long. Others of your children are waiting for answers. I will have the pleasure of giving them to you in person in a fortnight, if it pleases God.

It will not be possible for me to render to Mme Van Ouwenhuizen the service she is asking for one of her sons.

All yours in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd of our Mother Mary's month 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-145

Madame Superior

This morning, at 4 o'clock, I was getting ready to come and see you. But before 5 o'clock, the time for departure, a slight indisposition caused me to give up the project, which has been appealing to me for some time. I cannot tell you what day I will have the pleasure of beginning my

preparations for the journey again. I want it to be soon, one day in the near future, for example, if possible.

Meanwhile, let us with zeal occupy ourselves with the means of procuring the good of souls, through the exercises of the month of Mary our good Mother.

You know how devoted I am to my children in Jesus Christ.

Your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th of Mary's month 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-146

Madame Superior

I had promised Mr. De (Illegible) of Antwerp to speak about the matter of his daughter to Mme Superior General. As my journey did not take place, I am obliged to put off doing so until I come to Malines. That will not be until Monday, a week to-morrow, according to all appearances. The whole question amounts to knowing whether you find enough natural abilities in that young Lady, to reduce the sum to be asked. Please put off the decision until I come.

Excuse my terseness and bad writing.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 11th May 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-147

Madame Superior

As I have not been able, because of the sentiments of filial piety the Josephites show me, to refuse to allow my portrait to be made, the existing one apparently not possessing the required qualities, I beg you to send me at once, at Grammont, the little daguerreotype portrait you possess at your convent.

I still hope to see you next Monday.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th May 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-148

The good wishes you sent me, my dear daughter, gave me great pleasure. I appreciate the source from which they spring. I pray our good God to reward you for the generous sentiments you nourish towards your Superiors.

The trials that are taxing your heart are painful, but as God is sending them, do not worry about them. In the designs of the Heavenly Father, they are means to bring you to the perfection he expects of you. Do not be too preoccupied about the means, look at the ends to which they are destined.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th July 1862

Say on my behalf all that your heart suggests as being most capable of encouraging your novices to prepare themselves for their holy profession, and your postulants to leave this world and its vanities in order to enlist in the army of Jesus Christ.

Be also the interpreter of my feelings to my four nieces. You know how much I love them in God and how much I desire to see them good Christians in all respects.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-149

(Dictated letter)

Madame Superior

I thank you for giving me some explanations relative to the movements of Mme Kostka.

I have been very pleased with my niece T  r  se, and with Gabrielle, Louise and Julienne. I think you will have occasion to be entirely satisfied with young Mlle Flore d'Halluin. God has designs on that subject.

I think I must repeat the recommendation I have made about putting your gardens more in harmony with the requirements of your rules. Several places are open; the religious as well as the pupils are not sheltered from the sight of passers-by. You will have to find a remedy for that by doing some planting before the winter comes. It is also necessary for evergreen plants to be placed behind the statue at the back of the large lawn.

(In the Founder's hand)

Having forgotten something in the short letter I sent to Mme Justine at Mouscron, and not having any reason at the moment to write to that convent, I beg you to ask Mme Superior General to forward the enclosed to that Lady, in an envelope in her handwriting.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th October 1862

Lost/Missing

18-150

L.S.J.M.J.

18-151

Madame Superior

My letters being still unanswered, I again ask you to what cause your silence has to be attributed. Is it because you did not receive the two letters to which I am referring? Are my nieces less well, or have you some other motive for refraining from communicating with me?

My nephew Am  d  e is coming to Malines, on Sunday, please prepare a letter answering all my questions, and add everything that may interest me. But write in rather big letters. If you prefer, it may be as safe to send me your letter by post as by this chance occasion.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th November 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

18-152

Madame Superior

From the depth of my heart, I thanked out good Savior yesterday for the graces he has just granted us. It was the happy day on which the Church celebrates the feast of the august name, at which every knee bows in Heaven, on earth and even in hell. It is in the name of Jesus that we are working and that our work is accepted by the Heavenly Father. It is the virtue of that name that accomplishes the good and crowns our efforts. To him then be all honor and glory now and through the ages of ages! Amen. Do you not think so?

Immediately after receiving the letter that our dear Superior General sent me by way of Alost, I wrote to Mme Marine, recommending to her that prudence the dictates of which we sometimes lose sight of, and to ask her to submit to me all offers relating to the house, vis-  -vis the Church, the halls, etc.

Mr. Vermissen will soon be acquainted with the intentions of our Ladies, if proposals to sell, etc., are being dealt with and he will conclude that we are thinking of acquiring his premises. Please thank Mme Superior for informing me of the good news with such promptitude.

At Mouscron they must be informed that the grounds for our convent are vast enough for them no longer to be obliged to take the pupils out for a walk. The Ladies of Mary cannot conduct establishments where that would be necessary. I hope they will also avoid sites offering other drawbacks, such as neighborhood views, the nature of the ground, etc., incompatible with what our various needs require.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ the blessing given to you as well as to all the community by

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th January 1863

If I have not thanked my dear nieces enough for the signs of affection they have addressed to me, I beg you to make up for my inadequacy. They are very pleased with Clara.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-153

Madame Superior

I imagined, probably wrongly, that the explanations to get rid of my fear that your plan would destroy the lovely effect your avenue produces, a (illegible) had not been successful, and that you had promised me further proofs. That is what made me write the remark that you are answering.

If then my apprehensions are not founded, all is said, I do not insist. I pray that the Lord will deign to approve of your efforts to add to your premises everything that can make them more suitable to attract pupils and form them in virtue.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 31st January 1863

There is a book that, it seems to me, gives explanations about the state of the religious communities of our period. It is Treatise on the religious state, or notions on the nature of that state, etc. by Rev Fr. Gaudélet, S.J., 2V in 12, Paris 1846.

18-154

Here, my dear Superior is an answer I am sending to Mme Angele. I permit her to give it to her Superior to read.

You are receiving here the 20 francs you advanced: 10 to Flore and 10 to Teresa.

Without informing her that the recommendation comes from me, make Flore feel that she must take more care with her writing in her letters and that those liberties of abridging words are in bad taste, for example, ns, vs., etc. She tells her aunt she is writing a letter to Mme Olympiade; allow her to write that letter, without saying anything about it, but let that letter also go through me.

I have tried to fulfill my duties towards Sister Albertine and the change of place (illegible) in the cases of Mme Marie Charlotte and Mme Angèle has been the occasion for praying for those dear Children again.

When the opportunity arises, send me all the weekly numbers of the families that you have in duplicate.

Enclosed is a 20 franc note, the balance of what you gave to Flore and Teresa.

I am pleased to learn that everyone is happy that Coloma will at last have a recreation hall for the pupils.

The Lady Superior will also, I hope, have an office for her use, as a result of the alterations being made to the building.

May we spend a holy Lenten season! Let us unite in spirit with the whole Church and its head, Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that our prayers may be acceptable to God and we may satisfy his justice.

Your dear papa did not feel any bad effects from his trip to Coloma. He is very satisfied with it. All is well at your Parents. I have had the pleasure of paying them a visit today, after dinner.

I thank my niece Térèsa for the letter she wrote to me and please tell her I will pray, in accordance with her wishes, during the month of St Joseph. I will also take care to commend my other nieces to the great Patron. You, my dear niece Clothilde, no less than your dear sisters, may certainly count on not being forgotten.

Please, tell Mme Marcelline I am entirely of her opinion and will write to her before long. Meanwhile I thank that Lady for her remarks and the enlightened zeal with which she is carrying out her duties.

I give you my blessing, Madame Superior, and sign myself

your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th February 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

18-155

Madame Superior

I am most obliged to you for the prayers you have offered up for me during these days of preparation for the feast day of our Holy Patron. I too acquitted myself of my duty towards you and your pupils, especially my dear nieces. Please tell the latter so and add to Teresa that I understand the importance of the favor she is soliciting through the intercession of St Joseph (that of knowing her vocation), for earthly happiness and eternal salvation, and that I am taking care to unite my prayers to those of that dear great-niece, so that she may come to that knowledge. A picture, a souvenir of her Lady of Mary aunt, having fallen into my hands by chance, I think that this souvenir may be useful to the niece. But let that be and remain between and us alone.

Since I have the opportunity, I will remind you of the duty in conscience of each of the members of the council of the Rev. Lady Superior General to be prudent and to weigh their opinions carefully, when it is a question of the use of the property of the Institute and of the convents. Now that they are building at Coloma and are going to do so at Alost and Mouscron, it will be doubly necessary to avoid all excess, for fear of exposing the Institute to some catastrophe.

Let us pray St Joseph goes on giving us his fatherly help and to lead us through the difficulties of life to the abode of the blessed, where it is no longer possible to make mistakes.

I give you, my dear daughter, in Jesus Christ, my fatherly blessing.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 17th of the month of St Joseph 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

18-156

Madame Superior

I thank you very cordially for the good wishes as well as the sentiments that you manifested towards me in your last letter. I know the sincerity of your heart and appreciate what you write.

You will, please, make Mlle Flore understand that one must take pains with one's writing when one writes letters, that one does not use abbreviations, vs, ns, etc., for "vous, nous" in writing of this sort. But do not let the young lady know that these remarks come from me. I am sending you the envelope that the letter of Flore was in when you sent it to me. You will see that it was opened in the post. I took the letter out of the envelope without opening the envelope. You can see that. The letter had already been taken out from the side and put back in the same way. They must have thought, I suppose, that the reports were financial documents.

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, with my good wishes for a happy Easter, my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness,

Your Father in Our Lord

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 4th April 1863

L.S.J.M.J.

18-157

(Dictated letter)

Madame Superior

Here are a few notes you will be kind enough to pass on to their respective addresses. I do not know whether the Ladies of Mary are taking advantage of the good opportunities that present themselves for distributing their prospectus. I know that at Grammont a Lady was unable to obtain the prospectus for Alost where she wanted to place her daughter. This matter deserves to attract the attention of the Superior General.

Where is the new recreation hall on which they have been working for a few months? Are you hoping that that building will answer the needs of your house? And will they now find an office for the use of the Superior? Do you think that at the end of May or in the first fortnight of June it

will be far enough advanced for me to be able to judge all these alterations? If our good God lets me come to Coloma again about that time?

Please, Madame Superior, give me your opinion of Mlle d'Halluin. Have her good qualities developed as we had hoped they would on her arrival at your boarding school?

I would be very pleased to learn of the recovery of the lay sisters who were unwell a fortnight ago. Will the lay postulant adapt herself to the tiring work of her new state? I have learned with great satisfaction that the novice (name left blank) has had the happiness of pronouncing her vows. I thank God for it and beg you, Madame, to be my interpreter for your new sister by making know to her the keen satisfaction I experienced on learning of the favor she has just obtained from divine goodness.

Please also thank my niece Térèsa for the letter she has just written to me. I found in it the same sentiments of thoughtfulness and gratitude that I have always noticed in dealings with that young relative.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 16th October 1863

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-158

Madame Superior

I read your last letter with keen interest. I am very pleased first of all to know that you are restored to health, and then that the building works are nearly finished and the inseparable difficulties and those additional occupations are gradually going to be taken from you to let you get on with your ordinary duties.

I am very pleased to learn that all the young Ladies in whom I have a special interest, are giving you satisfaction. Please tell them so when you have the opportunity.

(In the Founder's hand)

As for your personal dispositions, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ be without anxiety. Our good God tries us in various ways. Be generous; do not stop at little things. Go on nobly in accordance with faith and in accordance with reason. Fulfill your duties without troubling too much about judgments or signs of approval. I am of your opinion as regards what should be avoided in the project of the convent for Alost. I will speak in that vein. May the Lord enlighten us and make us prudent!

I do not know if I have answered Mme Angelique. Please tell her that if her visit to Ghent did her good, she has been a subject of true consolation for me. I had nothing on my conscience against that Lady. She can be sure of that. So we are on terms of mutual confidence as we were at the time of that letter, I sent her in the past and that the rain had unsealed. She will understand that. My eyes trouble me very much when I write.

Receive, dear daughter in Jesus Christ, the blessing of

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th May 1863

Please tell Mlle d'Halluin that you alone and Mme Superior General are aware that I am praying for her. That detail concerns us alone in the Institute.

Since you are pleased with my nieces, tell them that I am so happy to be able to ask you to bear witness to them of my satisfaction.

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-159

Madame Superior

My niece Louise had informed me during the short visit I paid you recently that she had not yet decided to ask her papa for an extension of her stay at Coloma after the long vacation. I confess to you that I felt inclined, in view of her poor health, to persuade her papa to take her home for good when the holidays began. However, notwithstanding my decision to which my nephew

subjected his final decision in regard to his daughter Louise, your letter and that of my great-niece have made me change my opinion and, since her father makes me the judge of the course to be taken, your pupil will come back again in October. Say a few words to Louise about this and promise her a few lines from me in the near future.

According to the letter I have just received from Mme Superior General, Msgr. Lauwers seems about to express the wish that the clergy attending the Congress should be lodged in the annex at Coloma during the sessions. I do not think there is any reason to prevent you from accepting that honor; please inform Mme Superior.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th July 1863

(Dictated)

Here is a remedy that we found in the newspaper:

Remedy for a whitlow: You crush some snails with their shells, in a very homogeneous pulp, with which you cover the finger; a dry bandage is used to keep it in place. Three hours after, at the latest, the pain has entirely stopped; the paste completely dry. You take it off twenty hours after, by plunging the finger into hot water and replace it with a fresh application. You continue like this for 3, 4, 5 days, at the end of which time the whitlow has disappeared.

L.S.J.M.J.

18-160(1)

I thank you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, for the pious wishes you have sent me. I am very touched also by the good wishes you offered me on behalf of my beloved great-nieces. I offered the august sacrifice of the Mass today in thanksgiving for the help our good God grants me through so many fervent prayers addressed to him on my behalf. I then, in my turn, recommended to our very merciful Jesus all of you, my dear Children, and all those pupils who have had the charity to pray for me.

You will please, be the interpreter of my feelings to your worthy Sisters and my beloved relatives. I rejoice at the thought that we will soon have the pleasure of seeing each other at Ghent. The embarrassment that will necessarily be caused by the presence of the individuals about whom you wrote to me, will be rewarded by the sentiments you inspire, and the blessings our good Master Jesus Christ will shower on the Institute in view of the act of charity and devotion to the cause of religion that you will have performed.

I give you, my dear daughter, your worthy Sisters and my nieces, my blessing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th July 1863

Here are 100 francs: Balance of account 1. of Mlle d'Halluin..... 93,50
2. to be given the same..... 6,50

frs 100,00

As before long, Mme Superior General will be coming to Ghent, I will give her the 100 francs mentioned above.

(Catalog Number 18-160 duplicated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-160(2)

Madame Superior

I have paid the bill of Flore and Mme Superior General has settled it. I will do your errand. Be tranquil. Your letter of yesterday came in time.

Receive my blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

12th October 1863

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-161

Madame Superior

As I needed to go to the doctor this morning, I took advantage of the fact to ask him for some explanations about the health of Mme Superior General. This is what he prescribed for your Rev. Mother: take cod liver oil after supper rather than in the morning; infuse half an ounce of Icelandic lichen in a pint and a half of water reduced to one pint and take half a pint a day; then put a plaster of Burgundy pitch between the shoulders; in short Mme Superior cannot afford to neglect those symptoms of ill-health. So, please tell her that I add my recommendations to that of the doctor. I thank you, my dear niece, for the congratulations you offered me on the occasion of my new dignity. Be kind enough please, to be my interpreter to my dear nieces, telling them of my feelings of gratitude for the sentiments so full of cordiality that they wrote to me on the same occasion. They will forgive me for not writing to them directly, my eyes still need great caution.

Receive, Madame Superior, my blessing with the assurance that I pray for you every day, and for your very interesting house.

Ghent, 7th November 1863

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

L.S.J.M.J.

18-162

My dear daughter

It seems to me that Mme Marie Charlotte is becoming more reasonable, I will say even generous and the kind of Lady of Mary that I desire.

I thought I must write to Mme Marie Louise and Mme Leontine. The hearts of these young Ladies have received a few blows that must not be overlooked, but they must be guided with great prudence like all the children who come from Mouscron, if they come from there.

You received my letters, I hope, a short one for you and one for my nieces.

Please tell Flore d'Halluin that I am very satisfied with her letter.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

22nd November 1863

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-163

Madame Superior

The reflections you submitted to me deserve your attention and mine. We cannot neglect anything. However, at the present moment, I am not in a position to write anything useful to you. See yourself what it is useful to say to your councilors.

(In the Founder's hand)

All yours in Our Lord Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

2nd December 1863

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-164

Madame Superior

Receive my sincere thanks for the lines that you added to the letter of Louise, and that contain the expression of your feelings of devotedness towards me. Be very sure that you are not forgotten in my prayers.

I see with great satisfaction that the reports of my dear nieces Louise and Gabrielle are very satisfactory and that of Julienne gives evidence of greater efforts than usual on her part.

Please, thank Mme Cécile for the care she lavishes on my great-nieces.

All your relatives in this town are enjoying good health, thanks be to our good God. On Sunday, I will have my two nephews Joseph and Théophile and their sister Maria to dinner. It is to prove to them the satisfaction I feel with their behavior and diligence and to reward them for the good wishes they offered me, on New Year's Day, in the presence of the whole family.

I learned with pleasure that Mme Josephine is recovering gradually. Please tell Mme Louise that I like to think she is thanking our Holy Patrons with me for that recovery.

(In the Founder's hand)

Also tell your novices that I urge them to study well the sweet mystery of the Child Jesus. In it they will get an understanding of many things that your explanations would not render as evident as the suffering Son of God, humiliated but always patient and submissive. Why and for whom is Jesus reduced to that state?

Receive, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ for yourself and all your dear Sisters, the blessing of

Your devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th January 1864

L.S.J.M.J.

18-165

My dear Niece

(Dictated letter)

I repeat to you with real pleasure that I am very edified by the sentiments with which your pious mother and your brothers and sisters have borne this trial to which our good God has subjected the family. This very Christian submission is already beginning to bear fruit. The union, the courage and the wisdom of the steps taken that one observes among your brothers and sisters are visible blessings with which the Lord is rewarding their generous abandonment to his adorable will.

Please make my excuses to Mme Superior General for my delay in giving her information about the matter she had entrusted to me. The success of the steps I am taking is becoming more and more uncertain. It will be 10 or 15 days before I will write to her the decision. I think it necessary to tell her that I have not delivered the letter she sent me.

My health is gradually improving.

I will try and acquit myself with zeal, of my duty of commending to St Joseph, next month, Mme Superior, all the Sisters and the pupils of her whole Institute; it goes without saying, my dear niece, that you will not be forgotten in my prayers nor will my great-nieces.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your very devoted uncle in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th February 1864

L.S.J.M.J.

18-166

(Dictated letter)

Madame Superior

In reply to your last letters, I have the pleasure of repeating to you the consoling things you have learned since the visit of Charles and Pauline. Everything continues as one would wish it to do at the house of your mama and her children. It is really consoling to see the wisdom of the mother and the submission of your brothers and sisters. Your two nephews have prepared themselves very carefully for their First Communion. That great act will leave a profound impression on the minds and hearts of those good children.

Be kind enough to tell your Mme Superior that none of the names she suggests for the postulant Flore pleases me. I want you to choose one of the following: Léonie, Justine, Pauline, Julienne, Adrienne, Victorine.

Receive, my dear daughter, the wishes I offer for you, all your dear Sisters and my three nieces for the month of St Joseph and the solemnity of Easter. Ask Mme superior General to accept the same wishes that I address to her through you.
(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd March 1864

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-167

Madame Superior

I wish to thank you for the lovely letter you sent me announcing the death of your dear Sister Mathilde. It is both religious and motherly in tone. I am sorry I did not think of showing it to your Superior on Saturday.

Please, tell my great-niece Leonie that I thank her for giving me good news of you as well as of her little sisters and her good mistresses, especially Mme Elizabeth.

Give my kind regards to dear Lady Julie. I understand and appreciate the sentiments animating her. She may count on my zeal in accomplishing her pious wishes, as well as those of good Pharaïlde.

My niece Louise is making her debut very successfully, by all accounts. Her health is improving considerably with the change in diet our doctor has prescribed for her. Please speak of that to Mme Superior General, to whom I have already said a few words.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th November 1864

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-168

Madame Superior

I am sending you a few printed papers presenting reflections on eternity. You can have them distributed as rewards on St Nicholas day or for the New Year, among the children of your two free schools, especially to those who are of an age to profit by them, or whose parents would benefit from these serious considerations. Stuck on very ordinary card, these sheets would make little pictures for the homes of the lower middle class.

Receive, Madame Superior, my good wishes for Advent.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th November 1864

Please ask Mme Superior General what her opinion is about the use the day pupils at Coloma are to make of the convent chapel.

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-169

Madame Superior

Your two letters and the three reports gave me great pleasure. I thank our good God for the graces he is deigning to shower down on you; I congratulate you on the consolations you are experiencing and I charge you to tell my nieces that their papa, brothers and sisters and I are very satisfied with the accounts you have had the satisfaction of giving us of these three good pupils. I thank you and I thank your cousins and Mme Flore for the good wishes you sent me. For my part, I am asking the Lord to shower his most abundant blessings on you and all your house.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 3rd January 1865

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-170

Madame Superior

I am taking advantage of the opportunity offered by my niece Louise to send you 35,50 francs with the request that you have them passed on to Mme Emerence who was kind enough to pay the subscription for the Brussels newspaper, 30 frs, and 5,50 for the historical resumes.

My niece will tell you I was very satisfied with the reports of her three sisters, your pupils, and that I am also very pleased with her sister Christine at Ghent. We could not thank our good God enough for the consolations he is deigning to grant us on the part of the children of cousin Henri and those of your dear sister Louise, (in the Founder's hand) my goddaughter.

(Dictated)

Receive, Mme Superior, my fatherly blessing

(In the Founder's hand)

I am sending you this little volume that will be useful to you for preparing your pupils for the First Communion, and even for inculcating the principles of perfection in your novices. In the use that will be made of this collection, precautions must be taken not to lose the pictures.

Please tell Mme Superior General that I refrained from answering the last letter Mme Angèle sent me, because the subject matter in it cannot be dealt with in a letter, and the treatise on interior peace, about which I have written to that Lady, contains all the replies to the difficulties that arise in the practice of the Christian life.

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st January 1865

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-171

Madame Superior (in the Founder's hand) Clothilde

Our cousin Louise will give you the little book and the 35,50 frs. mentioned in the letter I sent you last Monday.

Ask Mme Flore to be my interpreter to Mme Justine and to urge her from me to confide like a generous Spouse in the very holy and very merciful will of our Lord. For my part, I am praying our good Savior to preserve that young worker for us and keep her capable of still rendering great and long service. However, my desires are, as they must be, subordinate to the desires of the divine Master.

As I am expecting, when Louise returns, a few words from Mme Superior General in response to my last letter, I would be very pleased if she would kindly inform me whether our convents in the Malines diocese are insured against the danger of fire; if the answer is in the affirmative, with what companies and at what rates, are they. I am dealing with this matter for Alost and the houses of the Institute of St Joseph.

It has occurred to me that tea, supper or dinner, is sometimes served to one or other of your pupils, in the parlor, in the presence of a brother or male relative of that pupil. If what I am told is correct, I could no longer approve of that custom. It would be simpler to call your pupil to the refectory to take her meal there in the ordinary way.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th January 1865

L.S.J.M.J.
(Dictated letter)

18-172-1

Madame Superior

Being only very imperfectly informed of the motives for criticism about the meals taken by pupils, with their mothers or parents, in the presence of their brother, who, according to your Rule, could not and did not benefit from that meal, I could not explain myself clearly. However, the event you tell me about explains the whole of that matter to me and reminds me of a similar case that happened to the sons of Madame Beckaert, who could not share in a meal at the Ladies of Mary convent, that his Van Crombrugghe cousins were taking with his sister. In that family, that action on the part of the Ladies of Mary was greatly criticized. Then, as on this occasion, they did wrong to criticize your customs which are very wise ones, in spite of the disapproval of people who are incapable of appreciating the propriety of it.

The conclusion to be drawn from these small events, seems to me to be that means must be found to avoid opportunities for malevolent criticism, to say the least of it. Please discuss the matter with Mme Superior General.

Ghent, 6th February 1865

(Number 18-172 duplicated)

L.S.J.M.J.

18-172(2)

Same as letter # 4-376

L.S.J.M.J.

18-173

(Dictated letter)

Madame Superior

I thank you for the details you sent me about my niece Louise. I hope that dear child will be faithful to grace and will walk generously along the way the Lord Jesus Christ has just opened up to her. That way has its harshness at the beginning, but gradually faith makes it practicable and charity ends by making it sweet, as you are careful to explain to your children.

Tell her I am pleased with her letter and make it my pleasure to give her papa and Clara the news I have received from the dear postulant.

I have been very satisfied to see the good things you tell me about your novices. I beg our good God to grant them perseverance and give all of you my fatherly blessing.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th June 1865

(Dictated)

P.S. Be kind enough to read to Louise what I have written to you about her and add that her letter gave me great pleasure. I will write her a few lines at another time.

(In the Founder's hand)

Mme Superior General has announced to me the imminent arrival of a postulant, Mlle (name illegible) but she has forgotten to tell me whether she is educated.

I greatly praise the project of preparing in our convents for each First Friday, by a novena to the Sacred Heart, with the objective of asking for docile pupils and for the graces for the mistresses to guide those pupils well.

Today, the first Saturday of the month, I beg the very holy Heart of Mary to thank the Lord on our behalf for the graces he deigned to grant us during the month of St Joseph, the month of Mary and that of the Sacred Heart which we have just celebrated.

Know that I applaud this wise resolution with all my heart.

(Letter 18-? seems to be incorrectly placed. The reference to the death of Mme Aloyse would put this letter in 1838. It may have been written to Mme Clothilde Minne (Letters # 17).

Mme Clothilde Minne died in 1842. Mme Clothilde Van Wymelbeke was professed in 1845)

Praise be J.M.J.

18- ?

Reverend Mother

When I received your letter, you had the consolation of having with you the Rev. Mother of Alost, whom for a long time, you had hoped to have. I myself was delighted about it and your joy increased mine. You will have learned of the interesting details of the illness and death of our dear Sister Aloÿse. One so much likes to interest oneself in that model of perfection, that it seems to me that this inclination is a grace from Heaven, and will result in spreading in our Institute the simplicity, unlimited confidence in Jesus Christ, loving cheerfulness that shone so brilliantly in our angelic Sister. As for me, I willingly acknowledge that the thought of that saint child encourages me, cheers me and hardly ever leaves me. Let us often, my dear Reverend Mother, consider the great reward attached to generous confidence and submission, and we will find perfection much easier.

I think that, instead of a glass of water, in the morning, one would do better to take a cup of tea, that warms one up and prepares one better for mental work. You will add a piece of bread as you have been doing. I like to think that the swelling in your legs will not have unfortunate consequences; it is sometimes a necessary evil. May Sister (name crossed out) remain reasonable! She must have passed her time of childhood by now. Our dear (name crossed out) is going to lose all she gained at Malines, if she listens to her melancholy ideas. She will go backward and her divine Spouse will no longer be as pleased with her as he has been for some time.

The spirit of the Holy Rule is opposed to all unnecessary correspondence. One must have one's heart and mind in the Institute, and only busy oneself with outsiders even if they were relatives, as little as possible. Your prospectus is good now. May it bring you a good number of pupils.

It would give me pleasure to see that divine Providence has obtained premises for you. What you tell me of that matter points to a good beginning and gives me true reasons for hope. I will try and come and see you as soon as I can. But the profession on the feast of St Joseph and the Lenten fast will make that journey difficult for me.

... (Second page missing)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO VARIOUS RELIGIOUS

6 Letters addressed to Madame Emélie Lecroart (1831-1839)

Born Jan. 6, 1801; Professed Aug. 23, 1831; Died Jan. 28, 1852

L.S.J.M.J.

19-1

To Madame Emélie

My good child

I am touched by the good sentiments you express to me; I congratulate you on understanding your happiness more and more and I thank the Lord for giving you these fresh graces. Persevere with courage and confidence; the difficulties of the road of perfection will be leveled out by the love of Jesus Christ, and you will feel how light is the yoke of the Lord, as you detach yourself from all that is created in order to attach yourself to the Creator alone.

Do not neglect anything in order to educate yourself more and more so as to render yourself more capable of being useful to the order to which you are called to work in conformity with the designs of our Holy Mother the Church.

Receive also the assurance of my fatherly devotedness and the blessing I give you with a good heart.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th April 1831

19-2

Madame Emélie

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I was very pleased to see the sentiments of gratitude that animate you for the favors our good God is lavishing upon you, and for the sentiments that you recognize in me and that God has given me for your perfection. Let us praise the Lord, my Child, and glorify him with all the powers of our souls; it is true that you are one of those privileged creatures called to be the Spouse of the Lamb and to be an instrument of divine mercy in the Church militant. Savor your happiness by always maintaining yourself in a sweet peace founded on submission to the will of God in everything. Never allow sadness to enter your heart; carefully watch over yourself so that everyone may understand that you are happy to be under the holy yoke of the Lord.

As for meditation, you will make progress in it by yielding to the invitation of your divine Spouse who tells you to learn of him that he is meek and humble of heart, and it will no longer be only in meditation, but in all the practices of religious life that you will advance through meekness and humility.

I have been very satisfied to see that the children of the Congregation and the Sisters of the 2nd order have profited by the words of encouragement that I gave them. Assure them that I bear them all in my heart and that I pray frequently for their happiness. I am also expecting some little prayer on their part so that I may become a priest according to the heart of God.

It seems to me that you have taken up a good method for examining the books that appears right; in the case of those you would not be in any way acquainted with, you will have to examine them from one end to the other.

Receive, my dear Child, with these counsels, my paternal blessing and the assurance of my sincere devotedness.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 18th October 1831

19-3

To Madame Emélie

Receive, my dear Sister, my thanks for the wishes you formed for my happiness and the prayers you addressed to our good God for the same intention. I hope you will be answered, and the prayers I offer daily for you will draw greater strength from the graces you have obtained for me. May it please the Lord to make us experience the effects of his tender love and animate us more and more with his spirit so that we may become objects worthy of his special affection and, as such, good instruments of his mercy.

The dispositions you brought to confession were not such as you feared them to be. So, hand over to the Lord Jesus Christ who has become your Spouse, all the interests of your conscience; and I for my part, I forbid you for the good of your soul, to examine your past. So try, my Child, to love that divine Spouse a little more and to show him more confidence. Imitate his meekness and humility and do not torment yourself any more with gloomy ideas or with looking over your past life. On the contrary, be cheerful and bear with courage the various crosses that God sends you and that will purify your soul. For the rest, you have been profiting since... (Rest of the page is cut off)

In the margin, there are 4 lines half of each line has been cut off with the letter:

It would be difficult for me to ... you ... on learning of the zeal of your pupils for... I congratulate them on their efforts and that I ... on the Mass of the 2nd of the next month.

(Not dated)

To Madame Emélie
Praise be J.M.J.

19-4

You can, my Child, pray mentally and also say vocal prayers in the case you tell me about. It is the recitation of the office that I think incompatible with the function of the supervisor. Then, there is supervision and supervision; that of study is very different from that of recreation, for example.

Receive my sincere thanks for the communion you received for me on the day of St. Francis de Sales. I pray that good Saint who so well knew what true piety is, to obtain for you that sweet confidence that the love of your divine Spouse must inspire. It would be misjudging the love of Jesus Christ not to rely on him to obtain mercy and pardon for your sins. So look upon your divine Spouse as burning with love for you and wanting your salvation which he has prepared at the price of his blood. My poor Child, let go of your sad, frightening thoughts in order to take hold of sentiments worthy of your vocation. Jesus Christ is more honored by confidence than by fear and indeed deserves our confidence. What should he have done for it that he has not done?

Read the treatise on joy by the author of the treatise on interior peace, Father Lombez. That book is at your convent. If it were not there, I promise you I should ask them to buy it.

Be cheerful, be courageous as befits a religious who must prove to all those who see her that Jesus Christ makes his Spouses happy and that the yoke of the Lord is light. It is an obligation for religious to give such ideas of religion and of the Lord Jesus Christ who is to be blessed for ever and ever.

(Not dated)

To Madame Emélie

19-5

Praise be the Child Jesus in his love for us!

Your good wishes and all that you sent me on your part, my dear Child, have pleased me very much. I thank you for all that you have done for me; I hope the prayers you have taken to the good Jesus in my regard will not prove fruitless: would Jesus refuse the requests made to him by his faithful Spouse, for the spiritual good of the one he has established to direct you? Count also on my sentiments, they are those of a Father who loves his Child sincerely. So then, may Jesus live in our hearts!

Concerning the exemption that you talked to me about: I think it would be necessary to agree with you, if you do not have time to prepare yourself for your classes. But seeing that it would be necessary to change some other supervision which you would have to discharge, you will understand that it would be imprudently questioning, as well as burdening myself at such a distance, with such detailed interior direction. It is necessary therefore, to talk to the Mistress general, Sister Adelaide, or to the Rev. Mother, if she seems to be in a better position than Sister Adelaide. In any case, my dear Child, submit yourself in God to the dispositions of holy obedience. Imitate Jesus who always did the will of his heavenly Father.

I am very sincerely

You devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 6th January 1832

To Madame Emélie

19-6

My dear Sister

I hasten to thank you for your good wishes and I promise you I shall commend you specially to our good God. Be courageous, be cheerful, be humble, but never distrustful. Love your divine Spouse profoundly without getting worried about the dryness you experience in your pious exercises. Faith, that is your compass; obedience, that is your sure guide.

I am pleased with the information you gave me; I shall profit by it.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th January 1839

6 Letters addressed to Madame Raphaëlle Hennion (1835-1838)

Born April 28, 1811; Professed May 6, 1835; Died Oct. 21, 1839

Praise be J.M.J.

19-7

Dear Madame Raphaëlle

Accept my thanks for the prayers you have addressed to our good God on my behalf. I can tell you that I did not forget you either during the touching solemnities we have just celebrated. Every day I ask our good God to deign to enlighten your mind and purify your heart so that you may go constantly forward in the way of perfection to which God is calling you. The odd ridiculous thoughts that torment you ought not to worry you. Do not be afraid of them, do not linger over them; they are not worth worrying yourself about them. Look simply and humbly at the woes of your soul but never get discouraged by them. Count on the assistance of grace and your triumph will be assured.

Take care never to lose holy cheerfulness willingly. Let it be seen that you have faith in the promises of Jesus Christ and show in all things an exterior that may edify those who see you. Avoid sadness and sad thoughts and never cease to hope in Jesus, your divine Savior. That is what you are told by one who loves you in God and wishes to become your spiritual father irrevocably.

Take care of your writing, your spelling and do not cease giving everything to our good God. Courage in all things.

Ghent, 19th January 1835

L.S.J.M.J.

19-8

To Madame Raphaëlle

I think, my dear child, it will be suffice to add to an ordinary confession, a few faults or sins of your past life, those that worry you on some basis. You will limit yourself to that, and remain calm in the presence of your divine Spouse.

I thank you, my dear daughter, for your good wishes. I will commend you too, during these great solemnities, to the distributor of graces.

Receive the blessing of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Date cut off)

Praise be J.M.J.

19-9

Dear Madame Raphaëlle

After the Holy Mass that I had the honor of offering to our good God through the intercession of the Holy Archangel your Patron, whose feast we are celebrating today, I prayed specially for you, and it seems to me that your divine Spouse will cause the powers of your heart and mind to expand so that you may become more useful to the family of Mary and Joseph. Respond, my Child, with great generosity, to the designs of your Spouse and render yourself as competent as it rests on you to be. Talk about this to Madame Marie-Anne; she will understand what I mean. You will write to me when you the leisure and tell me all you have been doing from morning to evening, as regards your ordinary occupations. No one may help you to compose your letter and you must not communicate it to anyone.

Be courageous, dear child, and do not torment yourself any more without reason, through fears and that timidity you have not entirely rid yourself of.

Pray also for your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 24th October 1837

Praise be J.M.J.

19-10

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I have begun the novena with you, and I have begun it with confidence. Yes, our good Mother Mary will help us; we can rely on it. So, rely on it, my dear Child; cast yourself into the arms of that tender Mother and do not worry. Nothing can harm you; no evil could reach you, if you are with Mary, if you abandon yourself without reserve to her motherly care. It seems to me that I already hear you declaring to me that you have more courage, more strength and above all more confidence. I hope it is so; I am even asking it with you, of our Holy and powerful Patrons and I shall specially ask it at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. How happy one is, my Child, to be a daughter of Mary and the Spouse of Jesus Christ! Forget all your woes in order to think at your ease of these great privileges.

I hope to see you again in a few weeks and to praise our good God with you for the graces you will have received through the mediation of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Joseph.

You know how sincerely I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

17th August 1838

L.S.J.M.J.

19-11

A few words to my dear daughter Raphaëlle. I feel pleased to learn that our good God is strengthening you and your divine Spouse is purifying you more and more. How happy one is, dear Child, to see oneself in this way and an object of continual attentions of Jesus Christ!

Put yourself entirely into the hands of your beloved; be confident, set aside every sad thought and live happily in a state so noble and so full of opportunities of meriting heaven. I am praying specially for you, my dear Child, pray also for me by offering to your divine Spouse the good wishes your heart forms for me.

You know I am always

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 29th October 1838

To Madame Raphaëlle

19-12

Praise be J.M.J.

My very dear daughter in Jesus Christ

May the will of God be done. That is what your heart must repeat often, and in imitation of that Fiat pronounced by your august Mother Mary, and of the one repeated later by Jesus Christ our Savior, son of Mary and your heavenly Spouse. Yes, very dear Child, the only sacrifice God is still asking of you is that of that natural attachment to your will, to yourself, in short to this life. For some time yet, and then all your ills will be forgotten; a happiness surpassing all that we know will take the place of the state of anxiety that pursues us in this valley of tears. How happy you will be to be with your dear sisters, with the Saints and the Angels, above all with the Queen of Heaven, with God himself who will be your reward! May the thought of that happiness encourage you in the

trials your failing health will make you suffer. May the image of your divine Spouse expiring for you on an infamous piece of wood, reassure you and enkindle the fire of your love until the happy moment comes when you will be forever united with that merciful Jesus, whom you have loved, and have made known and loved by your dear children. We are praying for you, dear Child, we shall go on praying and we shall in our turn have a large share of the prayers you will address to the Lord in the abode where you receive his rewards.

I give you my fatherly blessing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

(Date added) November 1838

1 Letter addressed to Madame Clémentine Rhenin (1837)

Born June 7, 1820; Professed May 2, 1844; Died November 1, 1889

To Madame Clémentine
L.S.J.M.J.

19-13

Dear Sister

You zeal for study is unfailing and in this respect you are making yourself very useful to the Institute if you take care to practice the virtues of a good mistress as well as acquire the learning that benefits her.

You are right, my Child, never get discouraged. Humiliate yourself promptly; but discouragement is often the frustration of pride. Be simple, that is to say, straightforward, without deviations before God, and candid before your Superiors. Then be cheerful in spite of corrupt nature and, to this end, read and reread the treatise on Christian joy by Fr. Lombez, the author of Interior Peace. I think that is the shortest way to reach that perfection about which we have talked several times, and that happiness, even temporal, that your heart is seeking but does not find in the possession of knowledge alone and deprived of those other qualities of which we have just been talking.

I am pleased with your style, though it still has something to gain, as regards ease and cheerfulness. Mme Sévigne and Fénelon in their informal letters will give you the models you need.

Also go on practicing your writing. I think that the way I write must make you want to avoid my faults in this respect.

I am also praying for you, my Child. I am very sincerely

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

9th October 1837

2 Letters addressed to Madame Colette Wouters (1838)

Born Feb. 25, 1818; Professed Oct. 14, 1835; Died Feb. 22, 1839

(Historical Note: Sr. Colette was considered a saintly person)

Praise be J.M.J.

19-14

My dear Sister Colette

Would your memory be happy enough to direct your brush and make it sketch the features of our dear saintly Aloysé? I would like to see again that angel full of life and expressing that meek cheerfulness, that expansive cordiality, that innocence, and purity of her lovely soul. Try, dear Child,

our good God will perhaps deign to inspire you and grant you the consolation that would be so dear to me, of giving us the help that the faithful picture of our dear Aloyse would offer to all the daughters of Mary and Joseph.

Set to work, and make us the portrait radiant with happiness of that sister whom you knew so well and whose features are so present to all our memories.

Why am I not a painter myself, Oh! with what delight I should reproduce that countenance that the grace of the Savior had beautified and raised to something more than natural! What I cannot do, you will do, my good sister; the wish to do what your Father in Jesus Christ asks you to do will give inspiration to your fingers, and we shall soon have the portrait of the living Madame Aloyse. Fiat, fiat!

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th of Mary's month 1838

To Madame Colette
L.S.J.M.J.

19-15

My dear Sister

I have just learned that you have not fully recovered your health. Are you taking the necessary precautions? Do you avoid that which tires your chest? If you have not been doing all I advised you to do, begin for good and all and be generously docile. For the rest, I count on your submission to all that your divine Spouse wishes. Be meek and peaceful, be courageous with prudence and ask for health so as to use it in the service of the family of Mary and Joseph.

I am praying for you, pray also for

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

29th October 1838

2 Letters addressed to Madame Séraphine de Troch (1839)

(Letters # 19-16 and 19-35)

Born Feb. 21, 1812; Professed Sept. 25, 1838; Died June 18, 1851

To Madame Séraphine
Praise be J.M.J.

19-16

I rejoice with you, my dear Child, at the signal graces your divine Spouse has been pleased to bestow on you, since the happy time when you generously consecrated yourself to his holy love. Yes, one must experience, to understand, that mystery of the love of God. Oh! how happy you are to have been faithful and not yielded to the instigations of nature nor to those of the devil who was jealous of the favors Heaven was preparing for you! Our good Jesus never lets himself be outdone in generosity; he returns a hundredfold what we give him. Well then! dear child, since you have found the secret of being at peace, of being cheerful and of being happy, make use of it constantly. Always give to your divine Spouse and you will always receive from him. Let nothing discourage you, do not let the crosses disturb you any more; Jesus has sanctified them, Jesus has taken all the bitterness out of them, he has turned them into delights. If the crosses are delightful, what could still disturb your happiness? So, accept with courage all that happens to you; see everywhere the adorable will of your heavenly Spouse and you will be a powerful instrument in his hands to work for the good that the family of the Children of Mary and Joseph is called upon to do in the Holy Church.

That is what is said to you with a full heart by the one who sincerely wants to be

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
G. C. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd of St. Joseph's month 1839

I am pleased with your writing. There is a marked improvement. Take care also with your spelling, in which you have also made progress.

3 Letters addressed to Madame Julia Loix (1840-1844)

Born June 28, 1822; Professed May 7, 1842; Died May 25, 1854

L.S.J.M.J.

19-17

Mademoiselle Julie

Although you have many things to learn, you must not be frightened; with great courage and great confidence in God, you are in a position to overcome many difficulties. Be cheerful and generous; love to be corrected. Take no notice of your timidity and bestir yourself.

Never let your mind dwell on discouraging thoughts, but, in all your difficulties, go to Mary and Joseph.

Never have a woeful appearance; that disfigures you, and makes you less capable of being useful to the children.

Pray with confidence and be open with your Superiors.

I will help you with my prayers; but you must also help me with yours.

Your devoted Servant

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

6th November 1840

To Mademoiselle Julie

19-18

L.S.J.M.J.

You are right, my dear daughter, there is nothing wiser to do than to use the time the Lord gives us, to amass merits by the practice of the virtues your holy state requires of you. It is not prudent to dwell too much on the past. Let us leave it to the infinite mercy of God to take care of what it is no longer in our power to do; let us rely on that same mercy for the future and make use of the present time with confidence. That is how you will form yourself according to the designs of your Institute, the wishes of your Superiors and your own best interests. Love your divine Spouse and form yourself in the sight of that living friend to all that interior and exterior perfection requires in your happy position. For my part, I commend you every day to God in my prayers and at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Pray also for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th September 1842

To Madame Julie

19-19

Praise be J.M.J.

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

You have always seemed to me so docile and so submissive to your Superiors that your present state of trials would not cause me to be over concerned. I had not been mistaken, since the letter from your Rev. Mother General has rid you of your anxiety. I thank the good God for that and congratulate you on it, my dear Child; and I urge you to be more and more convinced that you must let yourself be led blindly. If you refused to submit to holy religious obedience, you would soon be the sorry plaything of your melancholy. Now, you know how tyrannical that black passion is, the

seed of which you bear in your character. Always drive sad thoughts away pitilessly; nothing could do more harm to you than what feelings of anxiety arouse in you. Occupy your mind and heart with the thought of the blessings of Jesus Christ. Have you not already received great proofs of the loving solicitude your divine Spouse has for you? And would you not offend his heart by doubting its love for you? Render to Jesus Christ love for love, dear Child, and run joyfully along the way he has deigned to assign to you.

Also love Mary, the august Mother of the God Savior; she is willing to be your mother too. Spend with zeal the lovely month of St. Joseph, and you will no longer have to fear the efforts of your baser instincts. Try to prove by generous conduct and cheerfulness worthy of a daughter of Mary and Joseph that you have understood what I have just said.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 27th February 1844

Give my compliments to your Superior and tell her that I shall pray with confidence for her and all her house during the month of St. Joseph.

1 Letter addressed to Mademoiselle Sophie Dubus (Madame Hélène)

Born Feb. 8, 1811; Professed March 19, 1849; Died Jan. 16, 1868

To Mademoiselle S. Dubus

19-20

Mademoiselle

I congratulate you on at last reaching the happy moment, when, freed from all those temporal cares you have been complaining about for so long, you will be able to give yourself without reserve to the practice of religious perfection.

Your heart is about to find that happiness for which it is sighing; your whole soul is going to experience that well-being God grants to children of predilection and devotion. May the Lord be blessed! May St. Joseph obtain for you abundant blessings so that you may become an active member, generous and devoted of that happy family of which he is the Father and Mary deigns to be the tender Mother. Come, Mademoiselle, come and taste how good the Lord is towards those who seek him sincerely.

Your devoted servant in Our Lord Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th March 1847

3 Letters addressed to Mme Félicité Van Crombrugghe (1848-1850)

Niece of C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Born Dec. 15, 1827; Professed Aug. 2, 1848; Died April 25, 1853

To Madame Félicité

19-21

Praise be J.M.J.

I congratulate you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, on the signal favor your divine Spouse has deigned to grant you. He was pleased to make you sigh for a long time after the ineffable distinction you were seeking from his infinite goodness. It was perhaps to make you better appreciate that grace, and grant you more time to prepare that heart in which he wished to reign alone forever, and to better adorn that soul that he is destining for something so great. However that may be, you have seen that lovely day; you have made your offering; you no longer belong to yourself; you belong to Jesus Christ for ever! Happy abandonment, happy bonds, happy slavery that assures you of true freedom, that grants you the hundredfold of what you have left and guarantees you eternal life!

In order to preserve yourself in the fine dispositions in which the grace of your divine Spouse has put in you, watch constantly over yourself, not in a despondent manner, but with an indulgent disposition that prevents you from troubling yourself if you commit a fault and leads you towards Jesus Christ in all that may happen to you. Go forward therefore with an assured step in the presence of God; think often of your good Mother Mary, of St. Joseph, of your Holy Angel, and count on help from on high. You can be sure of it. I will continue also to pray for you.

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 9th August 1848

To Madame Fêlicité 19-22
L.S.J.M.J.

No longer having had the pleasure of seeing you since you changed convents, my dear Niece, I am addressing you a few lines here to tell you that my desire to see you respond to the merciful designs of God makes me wish, you would inform me with simplicity, of what your feelings are towards Jesus, that divine Spouse of your soul; towards the Rule that you have embraced; towards the children who are entrusted to your solicitude.

I urge you, my dear daughter, to profit by the touching lessons the Savior gives you in his childhood. May his destitution make you love poverty; may his tears render easy for you the practice of penance; may his silence make you understand the advantages of a life withdrawn and hidden in God; may his patience make you patient; may his meekness inspire you with sentiments worthy of his kind heart, etc.

Be convinced that I am praying for you and I will continue doing so with zeal. I count on your doing that also for

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

23rd December 1845

To Madame Felicite 19-23
Praise be J.M.J.

I have kept you waiting for a long time for an answer, my dear daughter, but you must not let that upset you. You have not been forgotten in my prayers and our good God must have enlightened and encouraged you, or at least prepared you for the remedies he destines for you through my ministry.

The chief cause of your woes is, I think, an ingrained melancholy and involuntary cowardice. It is against these dispositions whether natural or acquired by repeated acts that you must direct your attacks, your particular examens, your prayers. You will triumph over them, my dear child; you will establish in your soul the opposite virtues by the practice above all of acts of courage, of generosity, of meek and charitable cheerfulness. Go often in spirit to the foot of the crib, admire the courage of the child Jesus; see and understand. Who is that child? For whom is he there? What are the sentiments that animate him in regard to me? Frequently offer him some acts of generosity; of charity and promise him to often offer some during the time the Church speaks to you of the consoling mystery of the birth of the Son of the eternal Father.

I promise you, my dear daughter, that you will feel the effects of these practices, and that you will work with courage, with cheerfulness since you will be doing so in the sight of Jesus Christ and assisted by his example and his grace.

I will continue to help you with my prayers and counsels. Count on that, dear and ever beloved niece and child.

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd December 1850

1 Letter addressed to Sister Albertine Oden (1854)

Born March 16, 1818; Professed July 18, 1841; Died April 2, 1855

To Sister Albertine
Praise be J.M.J.

19-24

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I like to think that you will persevere in the sentiments of that humble submission to the Holy will of God, which was making more bearable for you the state of suffering in which I found you on my last visits. I am making it a duty of mine to pray specially for you so that grace may soften and render meritorious the tediousness, the vexation and all the afflictions of your illness.

May this mark of my true zeal for your happiness prove to you, my dear daughter, that you occupy a distinguished place in the esteem and affection of your Father in Jesus Christ; may it encourage you to thank the Lord for belonging to him in a special way and in a family in which there reigns the bond of charity of the friends of God, the Children of Mary and Joseph. Pray also, my Child, for the whole Institute and especially for

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th November 1854

3 Letters addressed to Madame Apolline Delbeque (1857-1859)

Born Feb. 20, 1836; Professed April 25, 1859; Died July 7, 1859

To Mademoiselle Delbeque
L.S.J.M.J.

19-25

The happiness you are enjoying, Mademoiselle, is explained by this truth, that God never lets himself be outdone in generosity. You have sacrificed to the Lord the advantages, the goods you possessed through his liberality. Without even waiting for the time when he will reward you, he is making you enjoy a happiness that could not be procured for you by objects however dear to your heart, that you have left in order to obey his divine voice. You have a commencement of the proof of those words of the Lord, that by leaving all for his sake, you will receive here below the hundredfold of what you sacrificed, and eternal life in the future life.

Attach yourself more and more to Jesus, Mademoiselle, and you will obtain a better and better understanding of how good he is and worthy of possessing you completely without restriction.

I shall help you in your holy career through my counsels and prayers.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th April 1857

To Mademoiselle Apolline (Delbeque)
L.S.J.M.J.

19-26

I am pleased with your letter, my dear Mademoiselle. In it I find the proof that you will not go the wrong way. You have only to follow humbly and submissively the way on which you are on, and very certainly you will arrive where the Lord is calling you. Jesus is calling you. Jesus is watching over you. Show him complete confidence. Offer him your natural dislikes; promise him not to be

stopped in the face of any difficulty, not to seek yourself in anything, but solely to ask to do his will in everything. I promise you, Mademoiselle, that with such sentiments you will never go astray.

Always count also on my sincere devotedness.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th November 1837

To Mademoiselle Apolline
L.S.J.M.J.

19-27

I have learned from Malines and with the most keen satisfaction, my dear Mademoiselle, the good news you sent me. I have given sincere thanks to God for the excellent result that is about to crown your efforts, your fidelity to grace, and, I shall say it candidly, the confidence you have had in my counsels. You will remember with what conviction, on your very first visit, I declared to you that I thought you were called to serve your Creator in the Institute of the Ladies of Mary. The memory of that is still as clear to me as if that interview took place only a few weeks ago. So may our good God be blessed for the graces he is bestowing on you so liberally. And for you, my Child, generously make use of all you have received in order to do homage to your loving friend Jesus, who has deigned to cast his eyes on you, and give you such a distinguished place in his divine heart. You will promise him complete devotedness, fidelity at every moment, a confidence that will always be the basis of all the obligations you take. Your heavenly Spouse will not let himself be surpassed in generosity, and you will have the signal happiness of being a powerful instrument of mercy in the family of the Children of his holy Mother Mary and his blessed foster Father, St. Joseph. You will contribute towards leading a large number of children to the happiness that our Savior Jesus Christ has prepared for them. Accept, Mademoiselle, this heartfelt expression of the sentiments towards you of the one our good God destines to be your spiritual Father.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th April 1859

2 Letters addressed to Madame Justine Beyser (1858)

Born Nov. 26, 1839; Professed April 2, 1861; Died April 20, 1865

To Mademoiselle Beyser

19-28

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me pleasure. The sentiments our good God has put into your heart, make me understand that the good Father we have in Heaven has designs of great mercy on you. Carefully nourish these precious seeds. They are fruits of the passion of our Savior Jesus Christ. So sincerely love that friend who has sacrificed himself for you. Try to accustom yourself to thinking a great deal about him, occupying yourself with him, talking of him, acting for him. Soon your heart will be an object of predilection for him in which the first place is consecrated to him.

I give you, my Child, my blessing. Continue to pray for your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 26th of Mary's Month 1858

Always take care with your writing.

To Mademoiselle Beyser
L.S.J.M.J.

19-29

You see, my dear Child, that grace is leading you gradually, and that the knowledge of the things of God is developing little by little in you mind and in you heart. Lend an attentive ear to what the Holy Spirit will suggest to you through the medium of your Rev. Mother Mistress and

through the Holy Rule. Your heart will yield with the requirements of religious truths, and your soul will form itself for the sublime destiny that the infinite goodness is preparing for you. So go forward with confidence and love. God who is calling you will give you all that is needed for obeying his voice, and Mary, our tender Mother, will keep an eye on you so as to protect you from all snares.

These, my daughter, are the counsels of your devoted Father who is praying for you.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th November 1858

3 Letters addressed to Madame Adele Delacroix (1858-1859)

Mistress General of the Institute

Born Jan. 11, 1834; Professed April 25, 1859; Died Nov. 25, 1903

To Mademoiselle Adele

19-30

L.S.J.M.J.

It is possible, Mademoiselle, that Mme Superior General gave you the hope of spending the holidays at the novitiate. In ordinary times, nothing could have opposed that plan. This year, the thing is not possible. But I hope you will have more than that, and more than would have been in the plans of Mme Superior General. You will, I hope, spend the entire year at the novitiate, and after the distribution of the prizes, you will be called to the convent of the Holy Angels for a change of air, etc. Keep these confidences to yourself. Place yourself anew in the hands of the very Blessed Virgin and offer yourself completely to the Lord and entreat him to prepare you himself for the sublime state which he is deigning to destine you. I will unite my prayers with yours, my Child, to obtain what I am urging you to ask for with confidence.

Count on the devotedness I have for you in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th August 1858

To Mademoiselle Adele, novice

19-31

L.S.J.M.J.

I am happy to see that you understand the paternal care that our good God is lavishing on you, my dear Child. After the severe trial, has come a time of consolation, and a combination of means for forming yourself to perfection is granted to you with a generosity that must arouse and does arouse in your heart a sentiment of deep gratitude. The objective you have proposed, in asking to reenter the novitiate, was very well known to me and it has only added to the affection I bore you in Jesus Christ.

Admittedly, my child, you will never of yourself be worthy of the favor our good God is preparing for you, it is in the Sacred Heart of the Savior that you will find the origin of the distinction that is awaiting you. Yes, it is Jesus who is choosing you! It will also be Jesus who will give you what he wants to find in you. Listen to what that tender friend will say to your soul; receive with gratitude the graces he will offer you; be confident, be generous, be meek and humble. The rest will come to you without effort.

I will make it a duty of mine, Mademoiselle, to commend you to the Lord so that you will become a true Child of Mary and Joseph, a worthy Spouse of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th November 1858

To Mademoiselle Adele, novice
L.S.J.M.J.

19-32

Mademoiselle

I share your sentiments of wonder and gratitude in view of the special favors our good God is granting you. It is therefore with heartfelt pleasure that I see the generous dispositions in which your soul is on eve of consecrating yourself wholly and irrevocably to the service of God and his Church. Carefully nourish these dispositions which the love of God inspires in you. May the study of his heart, aflame with the fire of divine charity, sustain and render unceasingly more ardent, the transports and the efforts of your zeal to procure under its impulses, the glory of the triune God, and the salvation of souls. I shall make it a duty of mine, to help you with my prayers and counsels to become an instrument of mercy in the hands of your divine Spouse, the Savior of the world, my good and generous Master.

I am counting on your sentiments of gratitude, and I think it is needless to recommend to you the Institute, its Superiors and all our pupils, at the moment of the sacrifice you will be making of yourself on the altar of love. You will not forget either, Mademoiselle, the one who wishes, as you know, to be in Our Lord Jesus Christ

Your very devoted Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 20th April 1859

1 Letter addressed for Flore de Myttenaere, Postulant (1861)

(Mme Emilienne. Sister of Rev. Mother General Andree)

L.S.J.M.J.

19-33

Your letter, my dear Child, gave me the greatest pleasure. It furnishes me with the proof that you understand your position as far as I am concerned, and want to follow the voice of the grace of the Lord, whatever that may cost nature. I have come to bring fire on the earth, Jesus Christ says to us. That fire of charity, it is the zeal for our perfection. And this is what I wish, adds our good Savior, that it be kindled, by the acquisition of virtues which render us pleasing to God, and useful to our neighbor, according to our vocation.

Already grace has made you understand that sacrifices are necessary to kindle in us that sacred fire that Jesus Christ is offering to us. Render with me, my Child, sincere thanks to that generous benefactor. Then, promise him you will go on making him the sacrifice of what he will deign to ask of you so as to feed that divine fire that his mercy has put into your heart. Even make the firm resolution to renew, every first Friday or first Sunday of each month, after Holy Communion, that firm purpose of not stopping on the way of the love of Jesus Christ.

You ask me whether your letter is not too long; my daughter, your letter is just what I want you to write to me every month. The interest I have in your perfection renders necessary the details you have entered into with me.

Mme Eleonore will be kind enough also to render you the services that depend on her. Tell her so on my behalf; she will understand what I mean.

Receive my blessing, dear Flore, and the assurance of my devotedness.

Canon Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 4th October 1861

1 Letter addressed to Madame Flavie Serrais (1842)

Born April 12, 1821; Professed Nov. 16, 1843; Died Nov. 27, 1850

To Madame Flavie Serrais

19-34

I am pleased with the dispositions you have received during the retreat. Realize more and more in your mind and heart what the good Lord is inviting you to leave in order to be for him alone. You have already found the happiness of renouncing yourself for the love of Jesus Christ. Taste with humility the sweetness of the cross of our Savior and be generous in following the voice that calls you, even though you do not always find in yourself the same readiness. I shall see with pleasure the moment arriving when you can give yourself irrevocably to the Lord. I grant you very willingly the help of my prayers which you desire.

Pray also for me so that I will always be to you very devoted in Our Lord.
Ghent, 29th September 1842

To Madame Séraphine De Troch

19-35

I thank the good God for your good sentiments, my dear Child, and I congratulate you warmly, for having become an object of so much love on the part of the divine Spouse. Who would have thought it a few years ago? You are destined to be the Spouse of Jesus Christ and a child of Mary and Joseph! Nourish then the grace that you have received and you will have the signal happiness of becoming an instrument of divine mercy. Preserve peace of soul, do not trouble yourself anymore; allow Providence to lead you in the path of perfection. That which you have already received is a guarantee of the favors which still await you. May your loving Jesus always find it his delight to adorn you with his gifts! This, dear Child, is what I wish you in return for the wishes which you have addressed me.

Your devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Ghent, 30th July 1839

(This is second of 2 letters mentioned in 19-16)

5 Letters addressed to Madame P (*) (1831-1837)

From: "COLLECTION OF LETTERS addressed by the Very Reverend Founder of the Ladies of Mary", pages 30 -32. As in Letters 02, sections of original letters are omitted. In the Catalogue of sisters, which omits the names of those who left the Institute, there is no sister to whom the letter "P" could be applied to between 1831-1837. In several letters addressed to Mme Olympiade, the founder refers to a Mme Pauline as one with whom he (and Olympiade) had difficulties.

To Madame P.

19-36

Your letter, my dear Child, has given me very great pleasure. I see that the good God has put into your heart a very pronounced desire for the religious life and for evangelical perfection. I congratulate you on this favor. I can tell to you that it is the grace above all others. The only thing that I have to say to you at this moment is that you nourish this grace through humility and through prayer, through obedience and through courage. On my part, I will pray the Lord to continue his goodness and his supernatural gifts to you. I will assist you with my counsels and by every possible means.

Receive, my child, my blessing and believe me

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrughe

Brussels, 22nd January 1831

To Madame P.

19-37

It is not necessary, my dear child, to search for new phrases to tell me how much you feel about what I have done for you. I easily believe that you have too great a heart, that you should ever be ungrateful. No, I do not doubt that you hold for me feelings worthy of you and of my desire to see you happy. You will find, I hope, that I shall never cease to be your Father and benefactor. However, let us not stop at the instruments: my all to him who gives these good thoughts. It is to God you are indebted for all I have done for you. Thank God, and love to prove your gratitude to him by putting much zeal in the meticulous carrying out of your duties. Love the, your divine Spouse and all will go well for you, for us, and for all those who will be entrusted to your care. Always take care of your writing.

Good-bye, I am all for you in Our Lord

Your devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 20th June 1834

To Madame P.

19-38

I have been delighted to learn, my dear child, that your health is improving, and that the merciful Lord Jesus allows you to work once more at your perfection by working for the good of souls. I congratulate you on this new favor of God. Show him your gratitude. Offer to the divine justice the pains of illness in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Be involved lovingly with the passion of our Savior, Jesus Christ and learn from that school to live for God alone, and to die to all the rest. Finally, my dear child, do not be content praying for yourself, pray also for the pupils, pray also for your dear Sisters and for your Superiors. That being so, I shall not be forgotten, also that it will be easy for you, I think, to grant this help to him whom you know to be sincerely

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd April 1835

To Madame P.

19-39

I do not wish, my dear daughter that you remain any longer in that imaginary fear of having lost my good graces. If you have been deprived of a letter from me for a long time, you must attribute it only to my little amount of leisure and to God allowing it by testing you through love. I love you more than ever because I see that you work diligently at the work of your perfection. The little moment of discouragement which you felt, caused me pain, but I do not show less affection to a child who is experiencing her weakness. I thank our good Master for having given to his Spouse, that peace, that courage, that zeal, that can never abandon these privileged souls whom he has kept close to himself by blessings so sweet and so precious. Then, always be for Jesus Christ, in the darkness as in the light, and may Jesus Christ find your heart always as he desires it and as he has a right to expect it, without variations at all moments. I pray the Lord to give you what you need, to be without interruption, gentle, courageous and with true affection for your divine Spouse.

Pray also my child, for

Your devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 22nd July 1836

To Madame P.

19-40

I thank you, my dear daughter, for the wishes you have send me on the occasion of my patronal feast. I know that you express sincerely those feelings which animate you; also, I am sensitive to your thoughtfulness and well satisfied with what you have tried to do for a long time to

prove your gratitude. I am pleased to recommend you to the good God, especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

You could not believe how difficult the position of _____, has been in relation to the matter of which you spoke in your letter. I had to admire her courage and prudence in more than one circumstance. I think that if she had reasons for not communicating this matter to me in detail, she also had some to refrain from telling you all that she had heard on this subject.

For your peace of mind and in order not to cause any pain to your divine Spouse, who wants to have your whole heart and who wishes it to be calm and peaceful, I invite you not to occupy yourself with this matter except in prayer in order to recommend it to the mercy of God.

Receive, dear Child, the blessing of

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 30th July 1837

2 Letters addressed to Madame Stéphanie de Jaegher (1838-1839)

Born May 13, 1820; Professed Sept. 25, 1838; Died March 27, 1840

19-41

To Madame Stéphanie de Jaegher

It is true, my dear child, that one must have Jesus as Spouse in order to form a true idea of him. You have had the happy experience and your happiness will always increase if you are faithful to the inspirations of so tender and generous a Spouse. Be especially careful to preserve in peace, that heart which Jesus Christ has chosen for his dwelling place. May nothing be able to upset it in spite of your own weakness. With grace you can do what all others have been able to do. This grace is as strong in you as in any other. The trails are useful; they show us who we are, and they prove that we can do all things in him who strengthens us. The favors, which you have already received, make you aware that nothing is impossible with God and that you must not have any anxiety. I know, my dear child, that you want what your heavenly Spouse wants. Very well! you do not have to fear that you lack the strength to do good. Is not Jesus Christ all-powerful? Go then with courage; you will triumph over all obstacles no matter where they come from. I am myself helped by you being weak. This weakness, will bring about humility, that fundamental virtue which I know to be more and more necessary, in order to please him who wishes that we learn from him, that he is meek and humble of heart.

Your good friend, Madame N. will not fail to recommend you to Jesus, to Mary, to St. Joseph, and to the Holy Angels. Think often of this dear friend because I remember very well that she has a special consideration for you.

Your very devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 20th April 1838

19-42

To Madame Stéphanie de Jaegher

The good sentiments which the good God has given to your heart, my dear child, arouse in me an ardent gratitude and I willingly join with you to give thanks to the author of all good. How admirable is the love of the divine Spouse! Of ourselves we only have weakness, troubles and very often sins, and however, the Lord wants to think of us, to help us and to give us touching signs of a constant and disinterested love. Let us pay him in return for this generosity, my dear child. Let us love generously such a sincere friend; let us work with courage at the task which he deigns to give us. Let us be attached to that Rule which he has given us as the means of becoming in all circumstances what he expects of us. Cultivate the good that grace places in you and become also a

powerful instrument in the hands of his mercy. Timidity should not frighten you; it will give way before the goodwill and the efforts you will make to master it.

Receive, my dear child, my thanks for the good wishes you sent me and for which I give you my blessing from the depth of my heart.

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 30th July 1839

2 Letters addressed to Madame Leocadie Muller (1837, 1840)

Born Feb. 27, 1808; Professed Sept. 27, 1838; Died Oct. 5, 1840

To Madame Leocadie Mullier

19-43

I am truly pleased to see that you understand better and better that the yoke of the Lord is sweet to carry when one has a generous will. 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 (mind) and of heart! Empty, empty, dear child this heart and this spirit (mind) of all earthly affection and Jesus will place himself there, and with Jesus, happiness will remain in your soul. Be careful not to do this yourself. Go with confidence, with simplicity. Mary and Joseph will help you, as well as your Holy Angel and all our other Patrons.

I am happy with your letter. The style and the spelling make me hope that you will arrive at being capable of teaching with success. Apply yourself with courage and take care of your writing.

Good bye, my child, run in the road of perfection. You must make two years alone, seeing the age you have reached. I willingly give you my blessing and I assure you that you can count on the sentiments of

Your devoted Father in Jesus Christ

Ghent, 23rd October 1837

To Madame Leocadie Mullier

19-44

My dear child, be courageous, more fearless, more for Jesus and less for you. Fear timidity, little 'me' keeps you in the swaddling clothes of childhood and prevents you from developing according to the views of God. Nevertheless, you have improved but not as much as I wish. Go forward without looking back, without being frightened of shadows, and you will arrive at the end much faster than by all the imaginary fantasies. If needed, Madame N. will explain to you what I want to say.

Your devoted spiritual Father

Ghent, 23rd July 1840

19-45

To Melle. Justine Beyser

L.S.J.M.J.

No, my dear child, your letter is not too long. It has not tired me. In every sentence I find reasons to thank the good God. Indeed, this Father whom we have in heaven is granting you big graces. He is leading you with very special care; he is inspiring you with thoughts; he is giving you sentiments so conformed to what the good Jesus thinks and feels, that I cannot see it without experiencing deep feelings of gratitude for the author of these gifts, and of joy for you, dear child, the object of such great favors. These are the fruits of the love of God, the Savior. Preserve them with care. Be grateful and give glory to him who deserves it. On this point you must be very precise; but without scruple, acting with simplicity and confidence in Him who grants you these graces, and in the service of whom you wish to use them. It is, my dear child, all your desire, your will, is it not? All for God! Yes, all for God.

Receive the blessing of

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd November 1859

(This is the third of 3 letters mentioned in 19-28)

LETTERS ADDRESSED TO UNKNOWN RELIGIOUS

(39 Letters dated 1833 to 1864: Some undated. This set contains Letters 20-1 through 20-22. The translation of Letters 20-23 through 20-39 were not received from the English Province where the original letters were translated from French to English)

L.S.J.M.J.

20-1

Here are a few words for you, my poor little Stanislaus (*). It is useless explaining to you why I think you less imperfect than you were a year ago. Try to be more and more meek, humble, mortified and polite even with delicacy. Your state requires that of you, and besides I require it of you too, and for your divine Spouse. You will not refuse us the efforts to become what I have said above.

The Rule permits, but does not oblige the Sisters, to address the Mistress of Novices. So you will be able to have recourse to Sr. Lucie and to use the means that the Rev. Mother General has indicated to you.

The desire to converse with your divine Spouse, in recollection and retreat, is an excellent thing. It is a disposition coming from God. Great good will come out of it for that soul that is so dear to me and that I am longing to see perfect, as God requires it to be.

Love the functions that have been given to you and use all the means you can to make God loved.

Farewell, dear child, count on all that can be done for you by

Your very devoted spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

25th November 1833

Do not forget Sr. Ursule

Praise be J.M.J.

20-2

Your letter, my dear Child, is not too familiar; it is just what I ask you to write to me often. The word Superior is not the one that pleases me most; you have had enough proofs of my feelings towards you, and would be wrong not to be at ease with me. I repeat to you again, it is a playful, easy and modest tone that is pleasing and edifying; try to acquire that tone, it will suit you well for the glory of your divine Spouse. One can see that Jesus Christ is lovable and renders happy those who give themselves to him, without reserve.

I am neither surprised nor saddened by what you tell me about the consequences of your retreat. No, my dear Child, the retreat does not make us faultless; it often makes us worse in our own eyes, because in it God gives us knowledge that enlightens us about our state; that is why you find in yourself miseries you had not discovered although they were really there before you noticed them. Set your hand to the work and try to rid yourself of the faults with courage and above all

with humility. Have confidence in your divine Spouse and form yourself in the knowledge proper to your state, while training yourself in the virtues Jesus Christ requires of you.

Count also on the complete devotedness of the one you like to call your Father and who gladly calls you his Child in Jesus Christ.

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th October 1835

Praise be J.M.J.

20-3

The last talk I had with you, my dear Sister, suggested to me the idea of giving you a few rules on the very important subject of the affections you must have and want to have for your Superiors, your Sisters, and your pupils.

The basis of your love for creatures must be the love of God. Now, my Child, by the grace of our Savior, divine love reigns in your heart. Yes, Jesus Christ possesses your soul and it is in him that you want to love; so let divine love regulate all the love you have for creatures. If it were not so, if you loved them otherwise, you would be seeking your interest, your liking, in a word, self-love and not the good God nor your neighbor.

The means of loving reasonably and even in a holy way is to love according to God; that is to love God in all we love. God wants us to love our Superiors, our Sisters, and the children confided to our care. So let us love in them, first of all God, then the relationships he has established between these persons and ourselves, and the good qualities he has bestowed on them; but let us also bear, through submission to God, the privation of what he has not given them. When one loves only in reference to oneself, our self-love (word or phrase effaced by fold) full of exigencies we mistrust the very object of our affection; it soon notices the imperfections of the creature, gets worried, takes offense, is suspicious and sometimes even ends in aversion, because its passion finds itself deceived in its little calculations of self-seeking.

When on the contrary, one loves according to God and without this petty reference to oneself, one patiently loves the creature in spite of its imperfection. Absolute perfection is not found but in God alone, we cannot require it of any creature, but we must love in each of them, the degree of goodness or perfection that it has received. To claim more would be to offend God, the author of these gifts who distributes them as he pleases and to whom he pleases. Finally, we must love each creature in accordance with the difference of the bonds more or less narrow (limited) that God has established between them and us. According to this principle you owe, my dear Sister, very much love to your Superiors than to a mere Sister, more to a Sister than to a pupil, but more to that one whom God has established in a closer relationship with you than you have with any other person. So, if you love God for himself, and if for love of him you love all that includes his gifts, all that represents him more or less directly, and finally all that he wants you to love, your affections will be pure and sweet, they will be holy; your love will be unchangeable like its origin which is God; his gifts or his ever lovable will; he will make you triumph over the aversions of nature as well as its loves, for he corrects likings as well as dislikes; and from the depths of his heart as from a heart where divine love purifies everything, he pours out even on the senses an indefinable something that makes the practice of charity easy and brings it about not by a demonstration of propriety, but by the abundance of a soul loving as much as it is lovable.

That is the manner of loving that I wish you to have and I ask for all of us of the one who is love itself and whose most ardent desire is to see our hearts burning with his divine flames.

It is in this God of love that I want to be

Your very devoted Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 28th December 1836

Praise be J.M.J.

20-4

It is the spirit of our Institute, my dear daughter, that you should be simple, naive, reasonable, humble, docile and concise in your confessions; that you should respect your confessors sincerely and never be familiar with them; that you should not discuss with them outside the confessional and even at that tribunal never deal with other matters than those of your conscience. Each one must take her burden there and be very careful not to take upon herself those of other people. By acting otherwise, you would expose yourself to reaping trouble and the sin that it causes, in place of the peace of soul and the charity that it produces and preserves. One must indeed fear self-seeking, the amusement, the waste of time, even in the use of the most holy things; but also, it happens only too often as a consequence, that instead of consolation, one finds only anxiety; God wants to make it known that he alone is our true comforter: he is rightly a Spouse jealous of our souls. It is to your Superiors that he has confided the custody and the direction of those domains that belong to him, and it is according to your Rule that he wants to see them governed and administered. So, make use of confession and everything connected with it, with sentiments of faith, with wisdom, lest, as St. Francis de Sales says, "the holy freedom established for the good, for the greater purity and consolation of our souls, be converted into upsetting the heart, in anxiety of the mind, in seeking the satisfactions of self-love and vain human inclinations."

So it is not without reason that such care is taken to inculcate in you the need to deal with holy things in a holy way. Alas! my Child, we bear in ourselves so dangerous a depth of corruption and so violent a tendency to satisfy ourselves, that everything becomes a trap as soon as we abandon ourselves to our natural tastes. The experience of nearly twenty-five years, strengthens me more and more in the opinion that the sole direction exempt from the dangers of illusion is that which is in accordance with your Rule, and for that reason that is where you find what God wants of you, and that it is the way his Providence has traced out for you to attain perfection. So follow that way without ever turning away from it. Make use of these means, and do not employ any that are contrary to them, whatever the apparent perfection may be that you were to think you saw in them. That, my dear Child in Jesus Christ, is that zeal for your perfection and that fatherly love I have for you in God, have urged me to write to you. You know how profound is the sentiment with which I am

Your very devoted Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 15th October 1838

Praise be J.M.J.

20-5

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I am very glad to see you zealous in the way of perfection our good God is making known to you by revealing to you the mystery of his Holy humility. I thank the Lord for that signal favor and I urge you to follow generously that attraction with constancy. It is really in the destruction of the remains of the old man that this battle consists to which Jesus Christ incites us by his example and by his teaching, and by his grace. All the same, my dear Child, do not lose sight of the fact that in order to succeed in this spiritual warfare, one must preserve peace of heart. That is an indispensable condition without which we shall work in vain; your divine Spouse does not live in turmoil; peace is the quality required for him to establish his dwelling in one's soul. So carefully preserve the method of looking without anxiety at your weaknesses and refer to God the glory he deigns to accomplish through your ministry. The first of those dispositions will preserve you in humility, and the other will make you merit to be an instrument in the hands of mercy for the

happiness of people. Seeing with calm that which is bad in us makes us wisely take the means of correcting ourselves or preventing ourselves from going forward too much by ourselves; and it renders to the author of good what comes from him is being just and in the disposition to merit more and more the confidence that is so honorable and useful to us.

You will still have the retreat for the pupils and the sodality members; it will be towards the end of July. I was not counting on it any more, but the Jesuit Fathers have informed me that you will not be thwarted in your expectations, although you have waited for a long time.

Receive with my blessing, dear Child, the assurance of that sincere devotedness that I have been proving I had for a very long time and with the help of God shall maintain all my life and thereafter.

Your Father in Jesus Christ
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 22nd July 1840
Give my respects to your Mme Superior

Praise be J.M.J.

20-6

Mademoiselle (name effaced)

I am pleased to see that you are working and praying our good God to bless your efforts, and to open the eyes of your mind and those of your heart so as to become capable as our Institute requires. I think you will manage to overcome your timidity, your slowness and your poor posture. Be generous with our good God and you will experience the effects of his power and his mercy.

Never be afraid of making yourself known to your Superiors who are your true friends. Trample underfoot that timidity that stops you on the way on which you are placed to arrive at perfection; but for that, one must always go forward; even try to run along it a little and to assume a good form.

I shall commend you also to the Lord, but on condition that you pray for me.

Your devoted servant
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 5th November 1840

20-7

I willingly join you, my dear daughter, in asking our good God for the conversion of the two persons whose fate rightly interests you. Do not worry however; let your divine Spouse always find your heart devoted to his love, and your mind submissive to his adorable will. Try to please Jesus Christ by all that you do; all that happens to you, your thoughts and your affections. Do not however get anxious easily, remind yourself that when the will is good you must have confidence and count on the mercy of the Lord.

Count also on the devotedness of

Your spiritual Father
C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 8th of our Holy Patron's month 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

20-8

Mademoiselle (name effaced)

I see with pleasure that you are gaining in way of confidence and that you are overcoming the difficulties occasioned by your timidity. Be generous; that is my chief recommendation. Generosity will make you triumph over all obstacles; your mind, your heart, your body and your soul will all equally find advantages in a humble courage that the love of God inspires and that you will get as soon as you sincerely wish to have it. Let nothing stop you; even your faults will be come

useful to you, when you profit by them to become humble and they make you have recourse with faith and confidence to the one who alone can help you effectively.

Receive, Mademoiselle, my blessing and the assurance of my devotedness.

Your very humble servant

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 10th of St. Joseph's month 1841

Praise be J.M.J.

20-9

Mademoiselle (name effaced)

I am delighted to see that our good God has deigned to put calm into that heart that you are preparing for him. He is par excellence a God of peace and of mercy. So you are right to pay him homage by forming for him a peaceful heart, and a mind convinced of his infinite goodness and by training your whole body in that meekness he has so recommended to you.

I am also happy to see you zealous for the salvation of your pupils; they are the price of the blood of Jesus Christ. But do not be easily discouraged, if your efforts sometimes seem unsuccessful for their spiritual good; the moment of the visit of the Lord does not belong to you. Let us always sow; the harvest time will show the fruits of our efforts and our desires. That is the essential thing since God will be pleased.

Be convinced, my dear Mademoiselle, that I am making it a sweet duty of mine to commend your frequently to Jesus Christ especially at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. May you become a true daughter of Mary and Joseph.

Your very humble servant

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 19th January 1842

L.S.J.M.J.

20-10

Mademoiselle

Your letter gave me great pleasure. I was informed that your entry into religious had been put off for good reasons; but I am pleased to learn from you yourself that in making that decision, as in all else concerning your vocation, you are consulting only the good pleasure of the Lord. So I approve that you have delayed until next February, going where the voice of grace is calling you. Without doubt, Mademoiselle, the designs of the Creator sometimes require of the creature great sacrifices that nature finds painful. But grace makes us understand the rights of God over us, and in adding the power of these lights, renders possible and often easy for us what is not so in itself. Then charity, that supernatural love, takes action and produces in the faithful soul generous sentiments that astonish and delight the friends of God. So do not worry, Mademoiselle; the hand of Jesus our tender Master, will lead you and you will find sweet the paths that it causes you to traverse.

The sentiments you have found in me are and will be, I hope, always the same; count on them in all circumstances.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 23rd November 1856

L.S.J.M.J.

20-11

Your letter, my dear Mademoiselle, brought me very sweet satisfaction. I understand all you tell me perfectly well. Remember the remarks I made to you at Alost on my last visit, and you will have the conviction that I appreciate matters at their true value. I told you that your faults, less real than one might have judged them to be, would be useful to you on more than one account,

and that they took nothing away from the devotedness I have for you in our good Jesus, who has designs of great mercy on you.

Remain very faithful to grace and profit by the lessons of experience; keep me informed of what takes place in you, and count on my sincere devotedness in our divine Savior.

I hope to see you at the beginning of October.

Canon Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 18th September 1862

L.S.J.M.J.

20-12

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

My replies to your letters require that they be written in my own hand; the result is that I cannot do them for you as promptly as I do for others to whom I often address responses written under my dictation. My eye trouble obliges me to have recourse to the latter means.

I read your last letters attentively. I shall make use of them prudently and as circumstances allow. As for your dispositions, they seem to me to be in conformity with what divine Providence is asking of you. Keep calm, and humble submission will assure you of enlightenment, of consolations and the merits that will lead you often to give well-felt thanks in the midst of trials that are even painful to nature.

What you tell me about the dispositions of the pupils towards you give me great pleasure and confirms me in the opinion that you will render good services to the Institute through teaching.

I do not foresee that my eyes will allow me for a long time from now to take advantage of your offer. So do not go to a lot of trouble, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ to get the collections together as you suggested to me.

Be very much convinced that I am praying for you and shall never neglect that duty.

Receive my blessing and always count on the devotedness of

Your Father in Jesus Christ

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 14th November 1862

Please give my compliments to Mme Superior

L.S.J.M.J.

20-13

(Dictated Letter)

My dear daughter in Jesus Christ

I know from your letter and from reports from your Superior, that your health is still very weak, but that your good will leaves nothing to be desired in the sight of our good God and your Superiors. This happy disposition of your religious heart, eases your sufferings and the pains that your illness causes us. Continue, my dear daughter, to go forward courageously in the way of trials, in the footsteps of our divine Master Jesus Christ. I am trying to help you with my prayers, and I give you very cordially my fatherly blessing.

(In the Founder's hand)

Your very devoted spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 21st September 1864

Praise be J.M.J.

20-14

Generosity, openness of heart, confidence in your Superiors; these, Mademoiselle, are what I specially wish you. Then, many practices of exterior humility overcome your natural timidity.

Detach yourself from all that would deprive you of calm, or diminish your filial confidence in God that you will always have need of. Such are the means I prescribe for you at the moment; put your hand to the work and you will go far in your new career.

I am all yours in Jesus Christ

(Not dated)

L.S.J.M.J.

20-15

Your letters, my dear Sister, always bring me true consolation; in them I find fresh proofs of the great mercy of God towards you; and you know that I am too keenly interested in all that concerns you not to be sensitive to your happiness. Yes, my Child, God loves you with a love of predilection; he is choosing you from the daughters of Adam to become his Spouse, to remain united with him throughout eternity! You are quite right in thinking you have not deserved such an exalted vocation. It is a free gift of God and not a reward for your virtues; accept it with joy and gratitude and call on Mary and Joseph to deign to help you to thank the Lord and prepare your soul for its high destiny. Empty your heart of all human attachments, renounce your own will daily so as to become accustomed to that voluntary sacrifice you will make of your will on the day of your profession.

So then, do not be afraid any longer but have much confidence, much love and much mistrust of yourself and a great desire to avenge on yourself the rights of the justice of God that you neglected when you let yourself go to sin.

Count also on my desire to help you all the rest of your life and on that fatherly affection that will always render me what I do for my children. ...(End of letter missing)

(Not dated)

Praise be J.M.J.

20-16

My dear Sister

May our good God be merciful towards you, my dear Child! That good Father wants to have you without reserve and, as he sometimes finds you rather recalcitrant, he humiliates and confuses you. The faults you have committed are, I agree, humiliating; but they can be a means of binding you more particularly to your duties, if you draw from them the advantages the Lord wants to see you derive from them. I thank that tender Father for the courage he has given you to recognize yourself and make the admission you have just made, and that has consoled me. No, the enemy will never deceive you for long, if you listen to that disposition of heart that takes you towards your Superiors and causes you to reveal everything without reserve.

So love your divine Spouse a little more and you will find you are stronger against the enemy and you will make it your happiness to fulfill the duties your holy state imposes on you. Apply yourself more to study and prayer; you will leave the demon fewer opportunities for tormenting you. I can see from your style that you do not read the good authors attentively enough and that you do not adorn your memory with well-written passages. You must cultivate your memory and must not on that account neglect manual work. In work, you will be able to repeat what you have learned by heart. That is the way to please Jesus and leave no opening for your enemy.

You will say a prayer to St. Joseph every day, until his next feast day, to obtain pardon for your faults; I shall say a Miserere for the same intention and commend you during Holy Mass. Have courage, dear Sister, have confidence in God who is so good and he loves you so much that he deserves your whole heart. ... (End of Letter missing)

(Not dated)

My very dear Sister (name effaced)

The time when I shall have the pleasure of chatting with you face to face, is not yet fixed; meanwhile we shall do it in writing, for I see we have a mutual need to satisfy that desire that God has put into our hearts of better helping each other. Your letter, my dear daughter, is a new proof to me that you will triumph over the enemy and your heart will soon belong exclusively to the one who alone has the right to possess it. Yes, I repeat, the heart of my dear (name effaced) will belong to Jesus, my lovable Master, her holy Spouse. The efforts of the devil who is so jealous of your happiness are in vain, they will even hasten that victory if you are on your guard against yourself and put that confidence in Jesus Christ that he deserves on so many accounts. The first fault that you accuse yourself of and that you had already committed proves always that you speak without thinking (line unfinished) a lack of mortification, an inclination towards sensuality that you are not fighting against hard enough. The second, which has been the subject of your worries, comes from the same source and must be punished in much the same way. Avoidance of the occasions and mortification of the senses constitutes all that is required for avoiding new faults. So watch over yourself, take flight at the approach of the enemy, and you will spare yourself the regrets about infidelity to your obligations.

You must control your mind which is always a little thoughtless, by applying it as regards the study of what your state requires of you; so prepare your lessons, take pains with your manual work, and carefully write a few pages every week; for your writing proves that you do not have a practiced hand, and your spelling also indicates that you are not in the habit of writing.

Consult the mistress of novices frequently; you will receive admonishments that you will make good use of and you will ask for ways of mortifying your senses. You will take care to ask me ... (End of letter missing)
(Not dated)

20-18

I thank you my dear daughter for the good wishes which you, and also all your community have sent me for the Feast of all Saints. Without doubt we have found an increase of the zeal which we already have in our hearts in order to arrive at perfection, and at our eternal happiness. Let us then accomplish the tasks of our state with good courage, and without doubt we shall be triumphant with the Saints in heaven. We shall not fail to address our prayers to God to assist the souls in purgatory so that they may be carried on high to the God of mercy. The consideration of the pains of purgatory should arouse in us a great exactitude in accomplishing all the good that is asked of us, and we must purify our souls during this life by the fire of love so that we shall not enter purgatory after our death. Let us continue on our way, my very dear daughter, with confidence and love, and all will go well in the Lord.

Receive my blessing, my very dear daughter and be convinced that I am really your spiritual Father

C. G. Van Crombrugghe

Ghent, 2nd November 1833

19-19

I like to think, my dear child, that for you to preserve tranquility of heart and to continue to act for love of your celestial Spouse is the least that I wish and that I ask for you from the good God. On your visitations do not omit to say to the sisters that they must be polite and kind; that they cannot have nor ask to consider persons from the outside if it is not according to the Holy Rule. That they must not speak of their relatives, without some kind of necessity. That the Mothers must write often to you and to me especially when in doubt. That the sisters never communicate their

temptations to the other sisters, nor communicate their spirit of complaining if the devil disturbs them that way, but they must speak of it with the Rev. Mother or with the Mistress of novices.

Good-bye Rev. Mother. Without ceasing, I pray the good Jesus for all of us that we may respond to his mercy.

Your.....

Ghent, 9th July 1834

(* NOTE: This letter, referring to what must be said to the Sisters during visitations, appears to be addressed to Madame Julie, Superior General before the separation in 1838.)

20-20

Your letters of the 19th gave me great satisfaction because I know by it that you are searching to do the will of the Lord with sincerity and simplicity. Truly, dear daughter, the good God is so good that he well deserves our heart, that we deserve to be punished if we want to take a part of it from him. I rejoice with you and for you, for the good dispositions which I perceive in you. Continue thus and the work of the God will be done and the blessing of the Lord will follow us.

Your very devoted Father

Ghent 23rd July 1834

Fragment

20-21

June 21. I have just asked the good God, through the intercession of St. Louis Gonzague, for all our brothers and all our sisters, honored with our task of raising and of instructing youth, for gentleness, patience, wise firmness moderated by modesty and above all union with Jesus Christ. May we obtain these graces for which you know the cost (prize), and may we enable them to grow in us without ceasing through humble correspondence! Then we can be certain that our Institute will be useful to the Church, because it will raise, it will form true Christians. I shall frequently renew this prayer today. I am sure, very reverend Mother that you will take on the sweet task of joining your wishes with mine.

Fragment

20-22

Charged by the family, to offer you congratulations on the favor which God prepares for you, I beg you, my dear cousin, to accept the naive expression of my feelings in welcoming this bouquet of flowers, natural symbols of the whiteness of the soul which you are preparing to offer to the Lord, as well as that purity and sweetness of the desire of those who love you.

Religion teaches us to venerate those privileged souls who, like you have no other cares here below, than the sweet care of loving God alone and of doing good, far from the dangers of vanity of the world. We are told that a great saint calls Virgins consecrated to the Lord, the fragrant flowers of the Church; the ornament of nature, the image where the sanctity of the Savior is reflected. Very well! allow, very dear cousin, that I who have the honor to be here as the mouth-piece of a family that believes in the teaching of Religion, that I may address you with the wish that you may flourish like a lily, that you may shine modestly like the flowers who are unaware of their beauty, and that you may shed the odor of virtue on the venerable companions who will admit you into their holy society and that this perfume may reach as far as us who will remain eternally united by the goodness of the most tender friendship.