

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 Crombrughe

Ghent, 19th December 1839