

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