

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 Crombrughe

Ghent, 28th December 1839