

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?)