

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