

6th January 1808

Mr G Van Crombrugghe, Brewer in Grammont, Dept. Escaut
Montdidier, 6th January 1808
L.J.C.

Very dear Father and Mother

I arrived safely in Montdidier last Monday when I should have arrived on Saturday; in Gent I was delayed one day and in Amiens another. I wanted to tell Mr Langevin that my brother would be worried and other things inspired by the desire that I had to be in School, but it was useless as he didn't want me to leave the same day. During the day I went to see Mr De Sambucy and told him about the good success of my affairs. I told him that I was leaving the following day for Montdidier; fortunately Fr Cottu (Vicar General) was also going and offered me a place in his carriage and I accepted it gladly. I have spoken to you before about Sister Julie, who has been miraculously healed of a paralysis that had taken the use of her legs for twenty-two years. I admired God's power while reflecting that this person, already quite aged, now walked with so much ease, and four years previously could not even move a leg. You will easily guess, dear Parents, what was the topic of conversation between these two respectable people. While speaking of the different houses of Sister Julie's order, the thought came to me that there is in Grammont the house of orphans that is now in a good state through the care of Mrs Myer, but that there is the fear that after her this house could lose a lot of the beautiful order that reigns there today. It is also a real fear that Mrs Myer will not be able to take care of it much longer. I spoke to the Sister about the good that would result if she could send two of her Flemish sisters there. She liked this proposition a great deal, as did Fr Cottu, especially as there is a question of establishing a Convent in Gent through the good offices of the venerable Prelate whom the Good Lord in His mercy gave to the Diocese of Gent. She even asked me to write to you, dear Father, to ask what you think of my proposition (which I had put, in truth, without thinking that it might be effected so quickly). I hasten therefore, dear Father, to satisfy her desires on this topic; please let me know how it seems to you as well as to Mrs Myer. If you judge it good, Sister Julie will come to Grammont; God, she said to me, gave me back the use of my legs, it is right that I should use them in His service. The establishments of this Sister Julie are approved by the Government. As for me, it seems to me that it would be the only way to make so useful a school for indigent youth last forever. Further, it would become better if at all times one were able perfect it: because the Sisters formed by one so holy are indeed uniquely qualified to educate children. Please, therefore, dear Father, think on it and let me know what you and Mrs Myer think about it; what happiness it would be, dear Father, if the Good Lord were to use us as the first instruments for so beautiful a work. If you believe it necessary that she should address herself to the Mayor or any other person please tell me.

The year that has just begun is a time when I particularly address my wishes to the All Powerful to obtain for you the necessary graces to spend it in God's friendship, that is to say in the accomplishment of His holy will so that this year will be the beginning of a purer happiness than that of previous years. This, dear Parents, is the first of the wishes that I most especially form for you on this day customarily dedicated to this topic.

The prayers that I address to the Good Lord for my dear sisters are that they should be always virtuous, always friends of (one illegible word), still dear to their Parents and all the family; in a word that they should grow in virtue as in years. This is the most ardent desire of my heart and I ask them to accept it while receiving my tender embraces.

I have the same prayers for our dear Aunt Huleu, and our loving Aunt De Backer and her family.

My dear brother Jean should believe that I have not forgotten him, but that present circumstances make me particularly pray for him, and my most sincere desire for his happiness both temporal and eternal would not permit me to forget him for one instant. I ask him to tell Mr Van Haevebeke that I found the book about which he spoke to me; a beautiful edition. I will write to him as soon as I know the price, which should not be too high.

Very dear Parents, I have the honour to be forever

Your very devoted son

C Van Crombrugghe

PS: The number of boarders has declined sharply, but perhaps that is necessary to put the School on a firmer footing. Today Fr Sellier preached to us as a good Father, and in such a way as to call back to

the straight and narrow those that are the least well disposed. François is well; he is now placed next to me in the study. Farewell, dear Parents; only ten days ago I was close to you and now I am so distant: we could not be less closer in the heart of Our Lord. Please embrace my dear sisters, and tell my brother Jean that I will write to him shortly. As for his business in Gent I do not doubt at all that it will go well if he puts himself entirely between God's hands. What I found out after his departure makes me think this way.

