

12th February 1808

Mr G Van Crombrugghe, Brewer in Grammont, Dept. Escaut
Montdidier, 12th February 1808.

Very dear Father and Mother

For a long time I have been waiting for your answer to my first letter. The happiness which the poor children of this city enjoy at Sister Julie's establishment makes me want the same thing for the poor children of Grammont. There would even be a more considerable advantage for these last in that that they would be always with their mistresses, an advantage that the Montdidier children don't have, being only day boys. But one way or another I leave it to Divine Providence to take care of this business; if it succeed or not I will still bless the Good Lord, He knows what is to His greater glory. Please, therefore, very dear Father, let me know as soon as possible what you think so that I can inform Sister Julie.

Here we have seen the Parish Priest of Plainval; in vain would I try to describe our joy at his arrival. Now more than ever we regard him as a man of the greatest merit, in a word, a saint. I do not believe that we are deceived in this. He has a sweetness, a humility which are very rare in this time of pride. Here is proof of it: he told me that it was with an inexpressible pleasure that he saw that the School was beginning to re-establish itself. What joy, my dear child, he added, it would be if I could see, the next time that I come here, that the Good Lord is loved in a house where he has been offended so much. Oh then, I could be made curate, a domestic servant, anything: I would agree gladly. Do not think, dear Parents, that it was just a figure of speech; no, I am persuaded that he if were to be made cook, or put into the most base, most humiliating job, he would be satisfied.

François and I are very well. It must be that the mode of life in this area matches my temperament, because I am more well than in Flanders and my eyes, which I am often obliged to tire, could not be better. I can say the same of François. But you will tell me that I am selfish, so I will finish this picture of our health! It would be better that I should enquire after your health; please let me know if this humid weather is more harmful to you than to us.

I give thanks to the Good Lord for the restoration of my cousin Albert's health: it is a particular favour for his lovely children. They are blessed in having as good a Christian as a father as he is. I am not surprised that he is a good Christian, he has too much common sense; he has too sensitive a heart not to give to God the worship and the love that are due Him.

He spoke of conscription; it seems that there will be little delay in the lottery and I would be happy if you would let me things turn out for me, if you have to write to His Eminence, and what he will do. For the rest I am not worried; I put it in the hands of Providence.

I would be very happy to learn how my uncle, the Regent, is, not only physically but, and even more especially, in relation to his moral standing. Ah! very dear Parents, let us not fail to commend him to the Lord through the intercession of St Joseph, that great saint. What glory could he not give to God, if he were to give himself entirely to Him, as befits a minister of God's altar, who is so good, so kind, and so generous towards those that want to serve Him in the simplicity of their souls.

Please tell my dear brother Jean that I do not fail to satisfy his wishes and to commend him to God in my poor prayers. He has too great a place in my heart, especially since I know his good feelings, for me to spend a single day without thinking of him. He is right to put himself in the hands of the Good Lord in such an important matter, in a matter on which largely depends man's only concern, I mean salvation; the one thing that indeed merits all our cares; all the rest is only vanity! "*Vanitas vanitatum est omnia vanitas praeter Deum amare est illi soli servire*".

Farewell, very dear Parents, please remember me in your prayers, I have much need of them. François asks you the same thing. He is working quite well, and if his successes do not live up to his effort then I believe that his application is not the cause. I have a very poor memory but I can see that his is the more so.

Please be the messenger of my feelings to my dear brother and my dear sisters. I embrace them cordially, and ask them not to forget a brother who feels how much it costs his nature not to be able to tell them face to face all that his heart feels. Please tell my dear sisters, of (one illegible word) that of all my possessions, the most pure, the most lasting and in short the only one of value, is the love of God, it is charity towards the suffering members of Jesus Christ who did not hesitate to give His blood for us.

Please also commend me to my Aunt Huleu, my Aunt De Backer and to all the family and all our friends.

Very dear Father and Mother

Your very devoted and obedient son

C Van Crombrugghe

