

12<sup>th</sup> April 1808

To Mr G Van Crombrugghe, Brewer in Grammont, Dept of the Escaut  
Montdidier, 12<sup>th</sup> April 1808

Very dear Father and very dear Mother

Referring to my previous letters, I take the opportunity of a devout and laudable custom to write to you for the great feast that we are going to celebrate. May we all, very dear Parents, be revived on this day with our adorable Saviour; this is probably the main wish that you have, as it is also the most ardent of my heart. May the Almighty grant it according to merits of His dear son! Today is the triumph of our holy Religion, ah! this feast must be dear to all Christians! Is it not a pity that all men do not want to take part in it? By what privilege therefore did the Good Lord make known this divine Religion that we have the happiness of practising in preference to so many others? How much it is to be wished that those who have been seduced by unfounded prejudices against her may have their eyes opened today, and may recognise the kindness that God did to the world in making this Religion known here! Indeed, dear Parents, is it not this Religion that brings society closer together by attaching the rich to the poor by charity, and the poor to the rich in gratitude? Is it not she who rushes to comfort to the grief stricken or who defends the orphan and the widow? Is it not this Religion that raised up these numerous buildings where the sick go to look for the help that they do not find anywhere else, where the indigent old find rest after their work and spend painful days in peace, where the abandoned child receives the milk that his Mother refuses him? Who could find, except in this Religion, men generous enough to risk at every instant contagion and death. Would one find among the Philosophers, those fine arguers who do all through their speeches, men who would sacrifice their cares, their tiredness, their very life, to relieve their equals? Ah no, it is only Religion that can promise them a reward worthy of their labour, therefore she alone can form these generous souls. If only one could imagine a society where the precept of brotherly charity would be observed in all its extent; the time did exist where this happy idea was achieved. In the first century of the church the faithful only had one heart and one mind, all was held in common, the good and the bad, pain and pleasure. It is not necessary to go so far back to find this happy time, this lucky age; the Paragai<sup>1</sup> offered us the same sight a few years ago; the enemies of Religion themselves were not able to stop themselves from giving this witness. And one finds today men who do not love this religion; this I find extraordinary, this is the greatest wonder imaginable. Oh! my dear Parents, how happy we are to see clearly in this century of darkness; God be praised that it is to Him that we owe this inestimable kindness. I want and pray to the Good Lord that this letter might inspire in my dear sisters a love for our Religion. The time will come when they will need it to keep themselves from corruption. They should not forget God's kindness towards them. I commend myself as well as François to your holy prayers and to those of my dear sisters so that, delivered one day from everything that stops us from knowing and perfectly loving the Good Lord, we will see ourselves in Heaven, our real homeland, to know Him and to love Him for all the eternity.

I end, very dear Parents, in asking you to accept my good wishes and those of my dear brother François; he continues to go on his little way, but I hope that your answer to my previous letter will put him in a position to be able to make you fully satisfied with him. For myself, with God's grace, I will take all possible care of him and will gladly give him albeit only a quarter hour a day to make him understand through Flemish the meaning of French words. This is absolutely what he needs; he only knows French by rote and without rules.

My good wishes also to my brother Jean, my Aunts Huleu and De Backer and to all the family. I pray you to be my messenger to them.

I call myself with the greatest respect, forever

Your very devoted and submissive son

*C Van Crombrugghe*



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