

Malines, 24th March 1807,

Pupil at Fr Sellier's boarding school in Montdidier.

My dear Nephew,

Our letters crossed in the post and, as it seems to me that I more or less answered in mine what you asked in yours I have waited until now to tell you the sweet consolation I experienced in reading of the joy you had in making a retreat; I am not surprised to learn that you experienced both distress and the goodness of God towards you. Yes, my dear nephew, it is through this holy exercise that one knows one's self and one knows God, a double knowledge which leads to every virtue and the greatest perfection. Grow, then, in this knowledge and pray often with Saint Augustine: due noverim me, noverim te¹. I see that this knowledge already makes you groan, that you are so ungrateful, that your me always returns, ah well! From this I conclude that you have already made some progress along this holy path: the more you advance the more you will discover the goodness of God towards you and your ingratitude towards him. The first of these will make you love Him more; the second will make you less proud of yourself and will destroy, if it is possible, this wretched me, our most dangerous enemy. Have no fear of opening your heart to Him, whatever wickedness and wretchedness it may contain. He will never reject a humble and contrite heart: it is He Himself who inspires these dispositions and He loves to crown His works.

Remember, my dear nephew, that your retreat only begins when the days of retreat have passed: during those days you make resolutions, but afterwards the time for putting them into practice begins. You must, then, often bring to mind these holy resolutions and immediately ask the Good Lord who inspired them for the grace to accomplish them faithfully. I willingly join my poor prayers to yours for a successful outcome, and I will go so far as to assure you that if you make a good retreat every year you will become a true servant of God and an instrument in His hands for Him to use for His glory and for the good of your neighbour.

I ask for your prayers and I ask you give my greetings to your teachers and to your brother for whom I wish the same graces and the same progress.

I have the honour to be, with esteem and affection,

My dear nephew,

Your very humble servant,

— JG Huleu

¹ Let me know myself, let me know you.