

Malines, 19th July 1808

Pupil at the boarding school in Montdidier.

My very dear Nephew,

It's already a week or ten days since I received your letter. I should have liked to have replied immediately but I did not have the time. I read that you are worried about your brother Jean, and you ask me how you should go about writing to him. I would have wished that you would in all simplicity have followed your dear Mother's advice, trusting totally in divine Providence which admirably directs any enterprise undertaken with the advice of those persons whom He has put in place to guide us. It seems to me that you have an unduly cautious and timid spirit: you should have more trust in God and not speculate too much about dangers which are often imaginary. This whole business has been a great trial to me and I cannot really see how things will work out satisfactorily if Jean remains. For that he should take on a more supple character, patient and docile; this can only come from the Lord who changes hearts and characters. He must understand his father now or he will never understand him; why doesn't he try to delight him in everything by pretending not to see his faults?¹

I am delighted that your sister Rosalie is in a good boarding school near yours. You can help her and console her by writing to her, but I am annoyed that this will not last as a result of the failure of your school.²

I would love to see you during the holidays but I doubt if it will be in Flanders; I think I will have to stay here in view of the changes which are about to happen because of the departure of our worthy Archbishop. We don't know exactly when this will be as he asked the Pope for permission to retire three months ago and he has not yet had an answer. It could happen any day which is why I need to be here even during the holidays. It will be as pleases divine Providence; the delay means that we will have our Archbishop longer and all the diocesan Bishops are fearful of his departure.

Give my good wishes to your brother François. Pray a lot for me and for my holy daughters (who have bought the buildings of the former poor school which will allow their establishment to grow and improve). We also pray for you and all that concerns you.

I am, with the most affectionate sentiments,

My dear nephew,

Your very humble servant,

JG Huleu

¹ Meaning unclear. Who is "he" and "him"?

² The Fathers of the Faith were expelled from the Collège de Montdidier in 1807 and it seems that during 1808 Van Crombrughe left and did his Rhetoric whilst living with Fr Sambucy in Amiens.