

Malines, 27th October 1808

At Fr de Sambucy's house, 1, Petite Rue des Augustins, Amiens.

My very dear Nephew,

I received your last letter during the main retreat at the Seminary and, that having now ended, I find myself loaded with so much business that I scarcely know where to start. I have had my pen in my hand to write to you but the duties of my situation have soon made me put it down. I am starting again and this time hope to finish. I start by wishing you a happy year¹ and everything you wish for in your progress in spirit and in studies. As for your spirit I beg you to become even less disheartened by that base nature which is in your heart and mind than becoming irritated with yourself. When the least thing annoys you, deal with yourself as you would deal with children who cry easily; caress your poor heart and mind and give them joy in the hope of the Lord's grace who gives us the victory over base nature.

Saint Francis de Sales, from whom these instructions come, says that in becoming annoyed with oneself over nothing one is disposing oneself to become annoyed again by the slightest thing instead of treating oneself with gentleness and resolving to do better with the help of grace which so admirably strengthens us against failure. Still less should you be disheartened by aridity and numbness in your Communion and other pious exercises. This state augurs well if we bear such things with patience, gentleness towards oneself and constancy in the practice of these exercises however imperfect they may be. It is the Lord's touchstone; it is the furnace in which gold and silver are purified. If you are constant, as your name suggests, you will come out of this rid of all self-seeking in your devotions.

My holy daughters pray for you. There are six of them now and all six are taking giant steps in the path to holiness.

When you can, please go and see the Franel, father and son, and ask them how they are; it's not necessary that they write to me as you can let me know how the old man and the priest are.

If this is a brief letter, my dear nephew, it is because I am short of time. Pray for your dear uncle as he prays daily for you and he is always with consideration and affection,

Your very humble servant,

JG Huleu

¹ Academic.