

Malines, 9th February 1809.

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

My dear Nephew,

My last letter and your next to last letter crossed in the post and as I think that I had already more or less answered what you seemed to be asking I have not hurried to write to you and, besides, I have not had the time. You asked for that little pamphlet on humility which I read to you in my room; but my holy daughters (who greet you and who pray for you) tell me that I have included it in my *Théophile Book III* ... where you can find it where I deal with humility through charity.

You say that for a year you have been in a state of aridity; you should not wish to come out of it before the Lord decides you have been there long enough. Ah! It is the happiest state for beginners. It is the crucible of which David speaks: argentum igne examinatum, prodatum terrae, (id est separatum a gloria a terra) purgatum septuplum.¹

Indeed, my dear nephew, all virtue has to pass through the crucible in order to be purified of every bad intention, all self-esteem, all vanity, vain complacency etc... Let the Good Lord do as He wills, and exercise much patience, resignation and humility; cherish this state as it comes from God, but fight unceasingly against any melancholy and make a constant effort to be cheerful for the love of others.

It would be useful for your meditation to read Chapter 9 of Book II of Francis de Sales' introduction. Chapters 16, 50 and 51 of the *Imitation* are also excellent. Imitate the cheerfulness and affability of Fr Sambacci², and become a child with the children he teaches. All this can be done without disgrace if it is done for the love of God and for one's neighbour, and if one avoids that attachment which is nothing to fear when one is indifferent to it, that is to say when one can support this neglect and leave it without suffering.

As for the three options for you, do not dream of a nolite solliciti esse in crastinum, crastinus enim dies sollicitus erit sibi.³ Do you think that your heavenly Father does not already know if you are staying there, going to Ghent or coming here? Can you alter His decisions one iota? What does He ask of you save that you should be indifferent to all this and choose what He has already chosen from these three options, and do not wish to know His choice before He gives you the signs which you should follow with faithfulness and prudence. Ah! Before that happens there could be all sorts of things which will destabilise whatever plans you make and will show that instead of one of these three options the Lord might wish for a fourth which has not yet occurred to you.

The appointment of Cardinal Fesch⁴ can only be of interest to those who are seriously interested in religion. We still do not know when our new Archbishop will arrive here: we think he does not have his Bull.⁵ With all this your uncle is still weighed down by the administration of the Diocese. He commends himself to your holy prayers and will always be, with total devotion,

Your very humble servant,

JG Huleu

PS My good wishes to Charlotte: I am delighted that things are going well.

¹ "Natural silver which comes from the earth seven times refined." Ps. 12:7

² Perhaps a badly spelled reference to Fr de Sambucy?

³ Do not be anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself.

⁴ Napoleon's uncle, Archbishop of Lyon, appointed Archbishop of Paris by Napoleon. Fesch refused the appointment.

⁵ Papal letter of appointment.