

Malines, 5th December 1809

At the Diocesan Seminary in Ghent

My very dear Nephew,

I am delighted that you have received the books and are happy with them. As you saw, I didn't have the time to enclose a letter. I can only write you a few lines today.

You have followed St John's lesson by refusing to trust that apostle without charity who wanted to convert you.¹ Nolite omni Spiritui credere, it is this Apostle of charity, sed probate Spiritus si ex Deo sunt.²

According to the same passage, where there is no charity truth becomes at least suspect. Passion hides the lack of this queen of virtues in this class of new teachers. I am delighted that you have been forbidden to speak of these things. I have followed this example and done the same thing here. At the same time one must believe that the Church is in a terrible crisis³ and that we must redouble our fervour in prayer so that the Holy Spirit will enlighten those who govern us in the spiritual and temporal domains so that they will come to an understanding and spare the Spouse of Jesus Christ from a new schism.

I hope that our cousin Van Den Hende will be happy with his change of home and occupation. I would like him to write to me honestly about it. I am really happy to learn that you have met a true friend in Fr Riquart and that you are happy with the President.⁴ They are very valuable so you should cultivate in your heart feelings of esteem for and trust in them. I am no less delighted that you have become a catechist. The preface of my first volume⁵ will show you how much I esteem this work, and my work will become more useful to you as your zeal for this holy work grows in your heart. It is the Holy Spirit who forms catechists.

My holy daughters pray for you and I ask your prayers for them, but especially for their worthy superior who is very ill as a result of her charity towards the soldiers in our town's hospital.

I pray for you, my dear nephew; pray also for me who am, for all time,

My very dear nephew,

Your very humble servant and affectionate uncle,

JG Huleu

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² "Not every spirit is to be trusted, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." 1 John 4:1

³ Napoleon and Pius VII. France occupied and annexed the Papal States in 1809 and took Pius as their prisoner, exiling him to Savona. This exile ended only with Pius' signing the Concordat of Fontainebleau in 1813.

⁴ Of the Seminary, Fr Van Hemme.

⁵ See footnote 30. Published in 1794.