

Malines, 28<sup>th</sup> November 1810

Theology student at the Seminary in Ghent.

My dear Nephew,

I was pleased to receive your letter, but I do not believe that we should think ourselves to be in a time of persecution as your letter supposes. We are not asked for our lives or our possessions, nor for our freedom if we do not renounce an article of our faith, of our morals or of the universal discipline of the Church. The best path we can take is to imitate the Saints who believed themselves to be unworthy of being persecuted and sanctified themselves by violent combat against their vices and passions.

These, my dear nephew, are our true persecutors, and those who believe themselves to have persecutors among men do not perhaps pay enough attention to them and, in spite of themselves, fall into suspicions, rash judgements and a thousand sins against christian charity. Avoid these obstacles if you wish to advance in virtue. All this fear of persecution troubles the peace of one's heart and prevents one from committing all those virtuous acts of which one is capable. The church is militant, as she has always been, and her true children must with perseverance and fervour raise their hands to the heavens to beg for effective help against so many enemies which fight against her. But they should have confidence and be calm about their fate. The church will always be triumphant, as she has always been and still is. Restrict yourself, my dear nephew, to your seminary occupations and leave public affairs to your superiors. I cannot tell you how happy many of my seminarians are and how, by following this route, they are making rapid progress along the double path of virtue and knowledge. At present the Lord asks only this of you.

You say nothing of my nephew Bernard about whom I am particularly concerned at the moment. Where is he? What is he doing? Have I by chance given you a binder full of little notebooks containing my conferences? I am looking for it in vain and I can only take consolation in thinking that you have it.

At the moment I have 71 seminarians and there are still a few to come. The 20 from Breda will probably come here also.

I have the honour of greeting you with a very particular affection and commend myself to your good prayers,

My dear nephew,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

*JG Huleu*