

Malines, 21st January 1812

No address.

My very dear Nephew,

I am a bit late in offering you my good wishes for the New Year, as you did to me in your last letter. My wishes are nevertheless no less warm or heartfelt. You know in what esteem I hold you and it grows as you advance in Holy Orders and, I am sure, in the virtue and knowledge proper to your state. I hope that the Lord will shower you with His blessings and will make you go forward in holy simplicity along the path that He has revealed to you. His holy grace does not recognise difficulties, but rather it helps those who put their trust in it to know only the holy will of God who, in all times, tests those who love Him who, in proportion to their filial, total and courageous trust, makes all difficulties disappear. And why should I not have the joy of seeing realised the hopes which have inspired me: I can't think of any reason not to. Here we live on a clearer plane than you¹; we breathe a calmer air and, in adoring all the decrees of Divine Providence we place ourselves in His arms and sleep in peace.

The winter weather is not good for me with my age and infirmities, my dear nephew, nevertheless I find myself in weather similar to that which you describe in your letter and few winters have been as good to me as this one.

My niece M. Van Crombrughe also wrote to me on the 1st January: please thank her on my behalf for her good wishes and for remembering me and encourage her in virtue and diligence and tell her that her progress in her double career will only increase my consideration for her.

I have the honour of being, with affectionate devotion,

My dear nephew,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

JG Huleu

¹ Fr Adolphe Desmet CJ notes that “in Gent there was resistance to the dictates of Paris; in Malines they were, alas, more servile.”