**1812**

**On frequent communion[[1]](#footnote-1)**

102:XV in Oblate Writings

*Obligations flowing from frequent reception of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.*

Reflection

Saint Sulpice

[1812][[2]](#footnote-2)

Frequent reception of the sacred body and precious blood of J.C. imposes on me the following obligations:

1. To live as if on retreat, an interior retreat I mean, wholly taken up with the Spouse of my soul who deigns to make of it his permanent dwelling.

2. To recall frequently the enormous sins of my past life so as to cleanse myself of them ever more and more by an ever-growing hatred of them and offering them, rendered harmless by penance, to J.C. for him to see to their utter destruction and consume them forever in the burning brazier of his divine love whose seat is in his adorable Heart.

3. To avoid with scrupulous care every kind of voluntary fault, however small it might appear, for the sole reason that it saddens my God, my heart’s first love, who has done such great things in me and for me.

4. Not to be satisfied simply with fulfilling the principal and absolutely necessary duties of my state in life, but to embrace joyfully and eagerly every practice of virtue and penance that could assist me to make progress towards the perfection that I still fall so dreadfully short of, to tend in short towards that perfection as if towards my natural element, and to be really convinced therefore, that any action, or some practice, however small, futile, lowly, puerile or common it may seem, may be of service to me to help me advance even a step along this sacred road, I must never look upon it as beneath me, but on the contrary seize upon it with joy as a means that my God’s divine and fatherly Providence presents me with to escape from my state of tepidity and help me take wings towards him.

Am I to receive this immaculate Lamb into my heart, a victim offering himself for me, and who in an excess of love did pay in advance and with dreadful torments for the eternal death I have so often merited, to receive him only to subject him to injuries and scorn and think myself quit of every debt of honour, glory, love and gratitude simply because I stop short of dealing him the final blow in a fresh crucifixion? O lovable Saviour mine, adorable object of your heavenly Father’s love, before whom in the abyss of their nothingness countless legions of the most sublime angelic Spirits lie prostrate, you…

**Resolutions as director at the seminary of St. Sulpice.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

103:XV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene will stay on in the seminary as a director. Resolutions made to ensure that his deeds “will speak more loudly than my words”.*

Resolutions as seminary director

Saint Sulpice

[January 1812][[4]](#footnote-4)

As it seems to be the Lord’s will for me to stay on this year in the seminary and the purpose of my remaining on is to assist in maintaining in the house the spirit of piety that our Fathers sought assiduously to create, I will submit to what seems to be the design of Providence in my regard; and in order not to render unfruitful the ministry for which it destines me, I will strive to live in such a way that my deeds will speak more loudly than my words and suggestions.

With that in view, I will try with God’s help to renew myself in the spirit of the priesthood, and my first step will be to impress upon myself that the priesthood is a state of perfection, which demands of those who have the happiness to be invested with it a scrupulous fidelity to the least movements of the Holy Spirit, an extreme horror of sin, however venial it may appear, great purity of heart and intention, in everything seeking God alone, his glory, the salvation of souls and our progress in the ways of perfection.

I will neglect none of the means that the masters of the spiritual life suggest for us to arrive at this goal, the only goal to which I must aspire.

For this reason, I firmly resolve to fulfil to the full my every duty: 1. as a priest, 2. as director, since I must act as one.

As a priest, I have certain duties of piety, certain duties as to study, and I must likewise give the same attention to the fulfilment of these various obligations.

My duties of piety consist: 1. in oraison, 2. holy Mass, 3. divine office, spiritual reading, examination of conscience, prayer; the whole accompanied, preceded and followed by the holy practice of the presence of God.

1. As I know all too well that the major defect in my oraison comes from a failure to do sufficient preparation on the night before, from now on I will pay a lot of attention to changing my behaviour in this regard. My own experience should have convinced me of this over and above the constant teaching of the fathers of the spiritual life.

2. Immediately the lights have been lit, I will get up, rendering to God the things that are his in the way indicated in my personal programme. Then I will begin my preparations, still in my bedroom, for the holy sacrifice. After that I will take my place in the tribune and wait for 4:45 to sound to go down and get vested.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[5]](#footnote-5)**

104:XV in Oblate Writings

*Joy at celebrating Mass. When he returns to Aix, Eugene will say Mass for his mother and feed her with the sacred bread which alone can give life.*

L.J.C.

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice,

January 9, 1812

I was anticipating, dearest, darling mama, writing you at greater length than will actually be possible, courtesy of dear Emile; but he came this morning and warned me he would be stopping by tomorrow to pick up my letters. And it happens to be a busier time than usual right now; which means I must restrict myself to a few words of thanks for your lovely prayers on Christmas Eve. What a wonderful way for us to be united, over a great distance though it be! You can well imagine how much you were there in my heart and how earnestly I prayed for so good a mother. But, not satisfied with these first prayers that I repeat every day in the holy Sacrifice, my 3rd Mass on Christmas Day itself was for you. I offered the second for our darling mama, as it was urgent to come to her aid, supposing her not to be already in glory. What a night, what a day! What days still to come every 24 hours! How long the time seems between one Mass and the next! Why can one not repeat this wonderful sacrifice more than once a day? The time will come, dear mama, when we will offer it together. What happiness! I who was once fed with your substance, your milk, will in my turn present you with a food prepared by my ministry for God’s children craving the sacred bread which alone can give life.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix. Dep. des Bouches-du-Rhone.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

105:XV in Oblate Writings

*When he returns to Aix, Eugene will be exclusively at the service of the Church. Nathalie’s Christian upbringing.*

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice,

April 22, 1812

It really gets me down to see the tiresome problems your business affairs involve you in. Aren’t you ever going to find a way out? But some solution will have to be found, for it is out of the question for you to go on being upset and worn out by them, and I myself will never be able to get involved, even if it means being reduced to eating nothing but stale bread. In the past I have already alerted you as to my intentions in this regard: they are simply the consequences of the obligations that my state of life lays upon me. Today’s priests are not like those of old; we are priests for the Church alone and so every moment of our time is hers. Thus, every moment not employed in prayer, study or the exercise of the holy ministry would be so much time robbed from Him to whose service we are wholly consecrated, taking into consideration the whole extent of the obligations we take on. This is why no one should entertain any idea that on my return I shall be entering into the round of visits, and the observance of the so-called social niceties, etc., etc. All that sort of thing is out. My whole way of life has been thought out in advance, and nothing will make me change it, for I don’t take a decision before thinking the matter out in God’s presence and coming to see its rightness; after that the matter is closed. People may say I am uncivilized, a scoundrel even if they like; it’s all the same to me, provided I am a good priest. Citing the examples of others, far from making me waver in my decision, will rather strengthen it. My conscience and God, these are my judges and the rule of my conduct ... Affectionate greetings to my darling little sister. I have meant to write her dozens of times but I have never been able to get around to it. I hope she won t find it in herself to be annoyed with me, knowing as she does how much she means to me; how I love her child and how often I have been consoled by her good Jesus.[[7]](#footnote-7) Take pains with that dear little soul’s upbringing; mothers have more influence than one imagines on their children’s eternal happiness through those first seeds they sow in their newborn hearts and by the example with which they accompany their lessons; I have some striking examples of this before my very eyes. I am so happy at all your happiness in this little one. I pray for her as for you all, every day of my life. Dear mama, with all my love.

**Retreat at Issy.[[8]](#footnote-8)**

106:XV in Oblate Writings

*Failure of holiday project to study English and Spanish, his need to discipline himself to grow in virtue. His lukewarmness. He would sooner die than be a bad priest. Humility, regard for the priesthood. Exemplary lives of his teachers and fellow-disciples.*

Retreat notes

Issy, near Paris,

August 1812

I was intending to use this holiday period to learn English and Spanish, with the idea that these two languages would be of use in my future ministry; but it looks as if this plan is doomed to failure. In any case, it is only the former of these two languages that I will be missing out on, as I think I can learn the other one very easily, as soon as I decide to get down to it, as it has great similarities to Italian.

So I must find some other way to fill this time usefully; and the better part for me to choose is to go along with the desire the Lord is giving me of devoting some thought to my progress in piety, for fear that while showing others the way, I will go miserably astray myself.

The best way to achieve this goal is to meditate profoundly on God’s law and all the obligations my vocation imposes, and by frequent self-scrutiny examine every aspect of my conduct, past and present, to see how far I have wandered from the duties that are mine to fulfil. I must courageously carry the investigation into the most secret recesses of my heart, and tear up, destroy, mercilessly consign to the fire everything I find that seems to be of a disorderly nature. It is high time I responded to these continual promptings of grace, which ask, nay demand what, notwithstanding a certain good will and a very lively interior desire, I even so continually hold back. I drag myself along in a slothful tepidity, while the Lord asks of me what I promised him and what, clearly, he has a right to ask of every priest, and of me especially more than any. As these holidays come as well at the end of the period of time I am to spend in this holy house, I must arouse all my energies to gather all the graces granted me, the host of good examples, holy instructions, all the good in short I ought to have amassed but have alas dissipated. There is perhaps still time to salvage something from this ruin for which I am responsible to my own great detriment.

The Church has all too much to lament in the numerous priests who bring down harm on her by their lack of awareness of the evils she suffers, who are themselves in a state of torpor and dampen down all the flames of divine love which they should be lavishing among the faithful, for whom they are the Lord’s organs and instruments of his mercy. Is it my purpose to increase their number? God preserve me from such a fate. Better to die right now as I write these words.

But as it is clear, as experience shows all too well that I would lose gradually the good dispositions in which it pleases the Lord to keep me, if my resolutions were not established on a solid foundation, I am convinced above all that the house of my salvation must be built on humility, as the Lord wishes to build on nothingness; after that I will concentrate on heightening the esteem I should have for the sublime dignity to which, albeit all unworthily, I have been elevated, and for the awesome obligations my sacerdotal character lays upon me.

These two points will be like the two hinges on which everything else must hang: what I am, what God had done for me, here is matter for meditation not only for the whole of my life but for all eternity.

The more I have been and remain a great sinner, the more must I strive to love God and bring others to love him, since notwithstanding my profound unworthiness God has not ceased to pour out on me some of the greatest graces it was in his power to confer, and I can show my gratitude for so many blessings, such great mercy only by doing all in my power to love him to the limits of my capacity, and in reparation for the glory and honour I have taken from him by my most serious fault, I must use all my strength, every means at my disposal and all my inner resources to bring others to love him.

A powerful means of persevering in these dispositions will be the memory of all the priestly virtues I saw practiced with such perseverance before my very eyes over the four years I have had the happiness of living in this seminary. M. Emery, M. Duclaux, the saint-like M. Duclaux, and all his other helpers, and the vast majority of their pupils, my dear fellow-disciples, will be all my life each one a helper, an invisible excitator, restraining me from demeaning myself, encouraging me to make progress. God, what virtues! How wretched I judge myself by comparison with all these holy clerics! Tharin, and Teysseyrre, and Gosselin, with whom I was associated in the direction of this seminary when our Fathers were taken from us, all younger than I in years, but how far behind them I am in virtue. But we were students together, we grew up in the shadow of the same protecting wings, received the same instructions, shared the same advantages and examples; but as well as being more innocent than I and therefore more ready to receive the impressions of grace, how much more benefit they drew than I from the spiritual abundance in the midst of which we lived.

**Rule of life for his return to Aix.[[9]](#footnote-9)**

107:XV in Oblate Writings

*A priest’s duties are many but it is also obligatory to take at least 6 hours sleep. Rule: an energetic rise, oraison, Mass in a church in the town, study and breviary during the day.*

Rule of life for his return to Aix

Saint Sulpice

[August - September 1812][[10]](#footnote-10)

The duties of a priest have so multiplied; there are so many things to learn, things to do that the day is not long enough to do them justice; how nice it would be if only a priest could do without sleep, but since it has pleased God to impose on him, as on the rest of mankind, the necessity of restoring his strength in sleep, he must submit to that decree of the Creator in a spirit of penance and make an offering of that state of vacuity that takes up so large a part of his life, like a person convinced in his heart of his own incapacity and seeing merit only in the blind execution of the will of the Master for whom he will never be anything but an unprofitable servant, whether his service be taking his rest or the working of miracles.

I stress this thought as I do have to reproach myself with not having up to the present given anything like enough time to sleep and I believe it is my duty at this point to call to mind Dr. Leynech’s prescription[[11]](#footnote-11) who fixed at least 7 hours as the amount of rest I ought to give my body, and his warning that I would soon become incapable of applying myself, and quite unfit for study if I did not submit to this iron law.

Toning down a little, but not without prudence, this harsh sentence which I have observed so badly up to the present, I will take six hours sleep.

As soon as I am awoken, I will make the sign of the cross as I give my heart to God and instantly, with not a minute’s delay, I will jump out of bed so as not to begin the day with an act of sloth. I must remember that the second stroke of the bell never found St. Vincent de Paul in the same position as he was in at the first, and that he was punctilious in this obedience until the day he died.

It costs something, it is true, to leave one’s bed so promptly, but it is precisely in that that its merit lies.

I will get dressed with due modesty occupying my mind with some holy thought or with the topic of my oraison, or with a consideration of the way Our Lord felt on waking, etc., with some shame as I reflect that these garments are a reminder to me that I have lost my innocence, etc.

I will put on my soutane in preference to any other form of dress, after kissing it out of respect, grateful to the Lord for the signal grace he has given in granting me the privilege of wearing his Church’s holy livery. I must have such love for this form of dress that is distinctive of my state in life that I will never put it aside, even to go on a journey, unless the journey is an exceptionally long one and renders it impossible.

Once fully dressed I will proceed to my oratory and stay there for the holy exercise of oraison which I will begin with the vocal prayer taken from M. Olier’s works.

In the conviction that the only way a priest can sanctify himself is by prayer, every day I will spend at least an hour at this holy exercise.

If by chance it happens that I cannot get it all in in the morning, I will faithfully make it up during the day.

I will make it my practice to do my oraison immediately prior to Mass, thus during winter or faced with the parochial custom of not opening the churches until shortly before six, I will begin oraison only at 5 so that I can proceed without any interval from oraison to the altar, and then, after vocal prayer, I will say matins and lauds and read some chapters of Holy Scripture.

On my way to the Church to celebrate the sacred Mysteries, I will take great care to remain totally recollected so that it can really be said that my prayer has not been interrupted.

Once arrived at the Church, I will pause in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament to make acts of love, thanksgiving, devotion, offering, sacrifice; in short, I will recapitulate the good thoughts and more important resolutions from my oraison, but in a summary manner as I should be sufficiently prepared for the Sacred Mysteries by oraison, towards the end of which I must dwell on the most holy Sacrifice that Jesus Christ will offer his Father through my ministry.

On my return home I will say Prime, reading the Martyrology at the appointed place, then read Holy Scripture for half-an-hour.

I will follow this, until lunch, with literary studies.

Before going down for that meal, I will say Terce.

After lunch, I will go back up and study theology. Before beginning, I will say Sext.

At two o’clock, None; at half-past-four, I lay aside my theology and Church history studies to say Vespers, followed by particular examen.

Dinner at five o’clock; compline at seven o’clock, then visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Until nine, light and instructive reading. During the summer, Matins and Lauds.

At nine, spiritual reading for half-an-hour in the family circle, then evening prayer.

At ten, I withdraw to go to bed.

I will not neglect to say the rosary every day, but will make use for this purpose of the time spent in the streets going from one place to another, beginning in the morning when I return from Church after Mass.

**To Madame de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, near Place St. Honoré, in Aix, Bouches-du-Rhone.[[12]](#footnote-12)**

108:XV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene will live with his mother in Aix but will follow a rule that will require him to spend all his time at studies and seeking his neighbour’s spiritual good.*

L.J.C.

Mazenod Madame de

Issy,

September 24, 1812

... Before I finish off I want to give you advance warning that, by virtue of my very state in life, I am obliged to seek perfection, and in consequence to employ every means there is to achieve it, so it is essential I do not encounter any obstacles while living with you; to have the consolation of being beside a tenderly-loved mother will already be quite sufficient consolation for this nature of ours that seeks itself in everything; and so other than that I must be left to follow the rule I lay down for myself in line with my duties and obligations as I see them, both in respect of my relations with third parties, and the use I make of my time, the time I get up, how and what I eat, but especially I have to be as free from entanglement in temporal matters as if we did not have any lands or houses; this last stipulation is so important I would rather forsake everything than surrender it. After the first week or fortnight, nothing else can claim my time but my studies and my neighbour’s spiritual good. Were I to come up against any obstacles to these two things, I would be obliged in conscience to flee even the family home, the diocese, the country, the very empire, and keep on running in a word until I found a place where I might freely exercise these two capital points of my vocation; I wanted to tell you something of this before my arrival so you will not be too surprised to see me taking up a way of life and following exercises that are not very common in these days of laxity and lukewarmness; now I have run out of space and wish you a most affectionate farewell; I have said the holy Mass for the happy couple.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Rule drawn up on my retreat in Aix, December 1812.[[14]](#footnote-14)**

109:XV in Oblate Writings

*Importance of a rule. Piety Duties towards God: spirit of penance, prayer, Mass, divine office, presence of God, ejaculatory prayer; oraison, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, examination of conscience, confession.*

Rule drawn up during retreat

Aix

December 1812[[15]](#footnote-15)

*Si vis aliquid proflcere noli esse nimis liber; sed sub disciplina cohibe omnes sensus tuos.* (Th. a Kemp. 1.I, c.21).

*Ne igitur hodie asperam ducas vitam, et cras mollem et delicatam, sed canonem unum retine, sicut etiam sancti fecerunt Patres qui ad quinquaginta et ultra annos suum non mutarunt canonem ac regulam* (St. Ephrem).

It has always been recognized in the Church, and by people wishing to reach perfection, that if one would reach and maintain oneself in it, one must submit to a fixed and invariable rule which, in its ceaseless subjugation of the disorders of the senses and the inconstancy that is native to the human will, was like a strict and rigorous Pedagogue who in his unbending strictness never permits his disciple to depart on frivolous pretexts from the rules that an enlightened wisdom has dictated to him.

It is as it were a compass of the soul’s dispositions. From the greater or lesser fidelity with which one keeps it, it is easy to deduce whether it is fervour or tepidity that predominates, and one will never, if one makes use of this faithful monitor, if only one conserves some good will and desire to sanctify oneself, never, I say, will one go far astray, never will one entirely lose sight of the sole end to which we must all tend.

A rule of life is for every Christian like the witness and guarantor of holy resolutions and promises made to the Lord during the blessed time of a retreat, when more moved by the dangers to which it is continually exposed in the world, by the necessity of providing efficaciously for its salvation, despite the efforts of all around it, and no less again by the excessive mercies of its God, the soul in the profound consciousness of its gratitude made an oath of eternal fidelity to him.

But these promises and oaths will vanish without trace if one takes no pains to keep their precious memory alive in a rule in which they will be set out to serve as a monument to the solemn pact which was made between the soul and its God. Experience has demonstrated it all too well: without a rule, the fervour of the holiest of retreats is but a flaring flame that has existence for a mere moment; it blazes up and immediately vanishes.

Whereas, on the contrary, if in the spirit of resolution that possesses me to serve God all my life and in the way that I have discerned to be the most in conformity with his plans for me, I write down the conditions of this; then each time I glance over this document, and this should be several times in the course of the year, I will truly be able to say: here are the dispositions I had during that retreat when, separated from the whole world, one-to-one with God, in the allure of the flame of his grace, I penetrated the depths of my heart, visited its every recess, sounded out its every inclination: here is the fruit of the sound reflections I was able to make in those profound meditations, those serious and reflected considerations when, free of all illusion, every alien affection, every dissipation of the senses, every worldly attraction, I acknowledged where my true and only real interest lay. That was the time I made a sane judgment on things. Everything was weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, reason, religion, piety, these alone were the voices heard, the laws that they uttered were drawn from the bosom of the very Wisdom of God: so let them be inviolable, and let nothing in the world be able to make me neglect their least article.

After these reflections, here now is the rule that I prescribe for myself and will observe all the days of my life, with God’s help, - with those changes only that may be necessitated by changes in my situation or circumstances, - for the ordering of the various exercises.

In the first place, persuaded as I am that the life of a priest should be a life whose every day is full in the Lord’s sight, I will do my very best to fulfil this strict and indispensable obligation as perfectly as is possible. Consequently, I will take pains to avoid anything that could distract me from this task. To succeed in it I will isolate myself completely from the world, and I will let this decision I have taken be clearly known so that no one will be offended when I set aside all so-called social protocol, etc.; in short, I will seek out those who are members of that society only when God’s glory or the salvation of souls requires it of me, and my door will be firmly closed to everyone to whom I can be of no service *quid nobis cum alienis domibus? Illi potius ad nos veniant qui nos requirunt…Ministerium altaribus Christi, non obsequium hominibus deferendum recepimus.* (De libro Aeneo, Paris. Epist. adversus Graecos ex Sto Ambrosio).

And should, eventually, I come to see that on pretext of utility or edification, someone is visiting me too frequently or for over-lengthy visits, I will reduce to an hour a day the time I devote to receiving visitors apart from the case of pressing business, etc.

Secondly, the obligations of a priest being a collection of duties towards God whose holiness he must depict in the eyes of men, towards neighbour for whose salvation he must continually work, and towards the Church whose minister he is, there is due an extreme vigilance to be faithful at every point of so redoubtable a charge.

That is why I must really grasp the sublimity of my ministry and of the holiness it requires of me, and that I be really convinced that it is piety alone, and the most extensive piety that can help me to reach my end. Without piety all will be sterile in me; piety on the contrary will give life to all my actions, will fertilize everything: *Pietas ... ad omnia utilis est* (I ad Timoth. c.4, v.8). Saint Ambrose rightly sees it as the basis of all the virtues, *cum pietas virtutum omnium fundamentum sit* (Serm. 18. in Ps. 118). And St. Paul too said when he wrote to Timothy: *Exerce autem teipsum adpietatem* (I ad Tim. c.4, v.7), persuaded that a pious minister fulfills all his other duties with exactitude.

So I will ask the Lord insistently for this grace. Then, without criticizing anyone (unless my duty requires me to correct, *increpa*, etc.) I will go straight ahead without troubling whether my conduct is an implied condemnation of the practice of the lukewarm, and without fearing either people’s sarcastic remarks and murmurings which the regularity I am going to strive to achieve might draw down upon me.

*Duties towards God*

My duties towards God consist principally in love, adoration, prayer, dependence on his holy will, and fidelity in keeping his commandments, etc.

I give myself no other rule with regard to these various heads except to be always ready to acknowledge that I am very far from arriving at the point I must arrive at.

I will take as model of this worship that I owe God, his adorable Son Jesus Christ our lovable Saviour, for whom I will try to have the tenderest of devotions and the most ardent love, having in my mind and even more so in my heart the memory of his generosity. And recognizing too that I am as incapable as I am unworthy of loving him, I will ask him this grace every day in the holy Sacrifice and one hundred times each day with this ejaculatory prayer: My Jesus, give me your love. Ah! The battle will be won if I have this devotion to J.C., one that should be par excellence that of a priest.

I will meditate on Jesus my love in his incarnation, his hidden life, his mission, his passion and death; but especially in his Sacrament and Sacrifice. My chief occupation will be to love him, my chief concern to make him loved. To this I will bend all my efforts, time, strength, and when after much toil I have succeeded in winning but a single act of love towards so good a Master, I will rightly consider myself very well paid.

I will continually recommend my soul to this good Saviour that he may preserve it from all sin, and I will so press my attentions on him during the time he sees fit to make himself accessible and so to speak dependent on me, that I may have grounds for hope that he will be favourable to me on that terrible day when he is my judge.

To try to obtain that the Lord will hear my prayers, I will join to the most exact observance of his Law the practice of mortification in such wise that it flows through all my actions, and into every circumstance of my life, reminding me that the whole life of Jesus my model was a perpetual cross and a continual martyrdom: *Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium* (LI1., c. 12, v.7). In the light of that how could I wish to seek out my ease and rest, *et tu*, adds the author of the Imitation, *et tu quaeris requiem et gaudium*. Besides, as the same author also says, following all the Fathers of the spiritual life, it is well established that the more one subjugates the flesh, the more one subjects it to the spirit through penance, then too the more efficacious is grace in its effects in souls, and the more it strengthens them with interior consolations: *et quanto caro magis per afflictionem atteritu, tanto spiritus amplius per internam gratiam roboratur*

So I will embrace that salutary penance with joy, and although it may be impossible for me to do it in proportion to the number and enormity of my crimes (as today the most secret documents, ones which should command the highest respect, are at risk to be rifled, read and published by the myrmidons of the police, I feel I should add this note for these Gentlemen, in something I am writing for own eyes only: namely, that when I speak of my crimes, this is to be taken to mean grave faults which I acknowledge I had the misfortune to commit against God in the secrecy of my conscience, so that, although it can be said in all truth that before God I am a very great sinner, I could nevertheless maintain when faced by persons for whom this language has no meaning, if I thought as they do, that I am a better man than they are, for not only have I never been guilty of theft, of murder, nor done anything in anyway wrong or harmful to anybody at all in the whole wide world, not only have I never taken anyone’s wife, something at which really decent people in the world would draw the line, but in addition I have always based my beliefs and actions on this principle, that both reason and religion categorically require one to abstain from coveting what belongs to another, and never to consent to do anything with anybody at all which they could be sorry for later: in short, that I have never given any scandal of any kind nor at any period of my life. I call upon all those who have known me in every country where I have lived to confirm this). Let us go back to myself: Though it be impossible for me to do penance in proportion with the number and enormity of my sins, I will act in such a way that this spirit of penance be so impressed on my soul, that I seize with joy every occasion of practicing it. It must flow into everything, both exterior and interior. Interiorly, by making me renounce my own mind, by subjecting my will and my tastes, by holding me continually in humility, by patience in contradictions and by joy in being despised. Exteriorly, by holding captive my senses and punishing my body, both by privation of the things that it likes most, and by chastisement of its rebellions, and lastly by restraint, sobriety, modesty, vigilance, paying no attention to its pretended needs unless prudence require it, in short by reducing this slave to the most absolute servitude by a hard life and by work.

And so I must take a little sleep, eat soberly, work hard and without complaint, I must moreover be of exemplary regularity in my dress and personal effects, no silk stockings, no silk cinctures, no wavy hair styles, a get-up that is as ridiculous as it is uncanonical; my hair on the contrary will be always well smoothed-down, and at the most I will apply from time to time a little powder for cleanliness sake, a cleanliness I will always be careful about, without being over-fussy, both in my own person and in my surroundings.

I must learn to put up with a little cold, provided it does not harm my health, and does not stop me from studying; the same goes for the heat. I must also learn to swallow things I do not like and to neatly avoid choice titbits without anyone knowing; not to be too preoccupied about an awkward posture, a small thing to suffer, that I must not fail to offer up to God whose pleasure it is to be grateful for the intention when one would be ready to suffer more, and to be happy with little, when it is given with good grace.

And since these occasions of suffering for God in expiation of one’s faults come but rarely, one must make up for them with fasts, bracelets, iron chains and the discipline; all this in a sentiment of the deepest humility, in union with the sufferings, passion and death of O.L.J.C., not looking on all these practices, which were employed by all the saints, as being any more than means for arriving at perfection, and certainly not as a proof that one has reached it.

When I have freedom of choice as to the number and quality of the dishes of my meals, I should choose the commonest and coarsest kind. A piece of boiled or roasted meat, some vegetables or eggs. Soup and two courses, unless one is enough, as I have for that matter already experienced without any harm done, seems to me a quite acceptable daily fare, with the addition, on some days, of some fruit, on account of the heat of my blood, taken in the same spirit as the wine spoken of by the apostle Saint Paul to his disciple Timothy: *Noli adhuc aquam bibere, sed modico vino utere, propter stomachum tuum* (I ad Tim., c.5, v.23).

Almost all my life I have drunk water, so I do not need wine, and liqueurs even less. When I am with my mother, it will be impossible to follow the regime I have just outlined, then I must at least not lose sight of it altogether; this will be a stimulus to me to be ingenious in mortifying my tastes in the very midst of abundance.

*Prayer*

Prayer being a principal part of the cult of adoration that is due to the sovereign Majesty of God, I must apply myself with an altogether special concern to fulfil this duty with all the conditions required to satisfy it. Woe to me if, as St. Augustine warned himself, I become more guilty through that very thing that should make me more holy! And who will justify me before God, I might say with this Doctor and Saint, if my own prayers serve to condemn me.

*Mass*

Mass is unquestionably the most excellent of all the prayers which can be offered to God whether on earth or in heaven itself, that is why I must have for this holy Sacrifice the tenderest of devotions, and say it always with the dispositions, and in the sentiments of a heart imbued with a sense of the greatness of the action, and of the frightful poverty of the minister deputed to do it.

For the time I must spend at the holy sacrifice, I will continue to do as I have done since I had the happiness to become a priest, namely, I will never be less than half-an-hour, and I will try not to take longer, unless I am alone with my server and can without causing inconvenience yield a little more to my devotion.

And on this subject I will let them backbite who will without bothering myself about what these critics may say or think, be they even priests of the Lord or doctors in Israel.

I will always observe the rubrics with scrupulous exactitude, remembering that there is not a single one in the holy Sacrifice, however trivial it may seem, which is not of precept and does not oblige therefore on pain of sin; and I will act in such a way as to be able to maintain that there is not in the catholic universe a single priest who says the Mass more in conformity with the rules than myself.

I will never forget during the Sacrifice, when O.L. is on the altar, to ask with inward groaning for great sorrow for my past sins, the grace of committing no more in the future, a love of God and his Son, my adorable Saviour, capable of withstanding anything and above everything, and lastly to be a priest according to his heart, for everything is contained in that one word. I will add, as I have done daily so far, with all the fervour I can muster, the request for the grace, so little deserved, of final perseverance. and as the punishment due to my sins is so great and frightening, I will persevere in the most insistent request to satisfy by martyrdom or at least by death in service to my neighbour, the enormous debt I have contracted towards the divine Justice.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Until such time as someone proves that there exists in this world an action that gives more glory to God, is more advantageous to souls, to the sanctification of the priest, the comforting of our brothers who are suffering in purgatory, I will say Mass every day, and twice a day if it can be done, and would to God that all my life might be spent at this sublime ministry. I would convert more souls by my assiduous service at the altar than by all the sermons I could give. Happy was the great pontiff St. Leo who offered the holy Sacrifice up to seven times a day, without the business of the Church which was in his care being any the worse for that.

Given that it is impossible for me to satisfy this my heart’s desire because of the current discipline of the Church, I will limit myself to saying the holy Mass every day, but I will make up with the most lively and ardent desires of my soul for this impotence that the rigorous law of the Church imposes on me, by uniting myself fervently with all the masses that are said throughout Christendom.

It is in this perspective that I will never let slip the opportunity of being able to binate, cost what it may by way of suffering and inconvenience.

But as it is not enough to say Mass, one must also say it well, I will do my utmost to bring to it, with God’s grace, the most perfect dispositions. For this reason my way of life will be of a kind so in conformity with the Law and even the evangelical Counsels, that all the actions of my day may be so many preparatory acts, or thanksgivings; always making my meditation precede by way of proximate preparation and a half-hour’s private thanksgiving follow on it.

This thanksgiving must not be done in the sacristy, but at the foot of the altar, and if possible I should be dressed in surplice.

I will take care, after laying aside the priestly vestments with the same recollection and interior spirit I had in putting them on, to leave the sacristy without saying a word to anybody, be they who they may. And if someone does not understand, from my bearing, that I do not want to be disturbed, and is so indiscreet as to speak to me, I will answer in laconic fashion and thus avoid with a kind of scruple entering into a conversation which would be wholly out of place and even a source of scandal.

Why should it be a problem to me to say politely that I would be more ready and free to chat after my thanksgiving?

*Divine Office*

After the Sacrifice of the altar the divine office is one of the most important functions of my ministry. In making me responsible for this office, the Church wishes that several times a day her minister be present before the throne of his God’s mercies to draw down heavenly blessings on her children, and turn away from above their heads the scourges that the multitude of sins committed on earth call out for all too strongly. She wishes that I perform in her name, and in the name of the Christian people, that I take part here below in what employs the blessed spirits in heaven: *Divinum officium, imitatio coelestis concentus* (S. Bonav. De Sexalis Seraph. c.8), that I begin during this life that concert of praises that I shall not cease to repeat in the other, if, as I must hope, I have the happiness to get there.

So I will direct all my attention to acquit myself worthily of this holy and consoling ministry, both as to the manner and as to the order in which I say it. As to the manner, I will direct all my attention to see that it is not an empty din of muddled words said out of obligation; I know well enough what reproaches the Jews merited for not having acquitted this duty of religion in any other way than this. This people honours me with their lips, says the Lord, and their heart is far from me. How many priests deserve this reproach, and as for myself too, do I not have some improvements to make on this score?

The indispensable conditions required for praying as one ought are found in this preparatory prayer that a laudable custom normally prefixes to the recitation of every part of the divine office: *Aperi Domine os meum ut digne, attente, ac devote recitare valeam hoc officium, etc*., namely, respectfully, attentively, devoutly.

*Respectfully* i.e., without haste, in a modest posture, in a suitable place.

*Attentively* for without attention there is no true prayer, prayer being a rational worship. To pray without attention is to act purely mechanically.

*Devoutly* for prayer is homage of the heart even more than it is of the mind, and the words of O.L. cited above prove that it is in the heart that lies the merit of prayer.

In the recitation of the office, therefore, it will be very much to the point, indeed indispensable, always to prepare myself, even if only by fervently raising my heart to God.

I will take pains to repulse every distraction that comes up as soon as I notice it, and to avoid them persisting in spite of myself I will make an imperceptible pause at the end of each psalm while saying *Gloria Patri*, to renew my intention and refocus my attention if it has wandered for a moment. I will fix my mind to the best of my ability on the meaning of the Psalms that I am saying, in such a way as to follow the Psalmist in the various feelings that move him and that my heart may produce the same effect that animated him when he composed those wonderful canticles*, Si orat Psalmus orate. Si gemit gemite,.si gratulatur gaudete, si timet timete* (5. Aug. in Ps. 30), but when I do notice some involuntary distraction, I will try to accept not to go over it again as has sometimes happened, being satisfied in that case with humbling myself before the Lord, asking pardon of him from the bottom of my heart, and starting again then with a new fervour to make reparation for past negligence.

So much for the manner in which I will acquit myself in a holy way of that important and consoling function. I will not add anything else save a desire that I might make this prayer on my knees, with uncovered head, as we read that the Venerable Cardinal Bellarmine and several other holy personages never failed to do.

As to the order, I will enter as much as I can into the spirit of the Church and its ancient practice by dividing up my saying of the office, and reciting it at the different times set out for it; if the Venerable Bellarmine, overburdened as he was with so many responsibilities, managed to conform with this edifying practice, it seems to me it should not be impossible for me, especially as I have always wanted to do it and have even made the attempt without difficulty while I was at the seminary.

*Presence of God. Ejaculatory prayers.*

But however holy, however excellent this prayer may be, it is not sufficient to fulfil the Saviour’s precept which calls for our prayer to be continual, *oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere* [Luke 18:I]. Anyone would therefore be deluding himself if he thought he had wholly satisfied his obligations by saying his breviary reasonably well, even if he had celebrated the divine Mysteries as well: *oportet semper orare et nunquam deficere*. This continual prayer is not at all impossible as some might think, it would even be impious to say so since O. Lord who laid it down could not command something that was impractical.

A simple and easy way of fulfilling this precept is the practice of the presence of God and ejaculatory prayers, adding to that the important, vital meditation which is like the arsenal that supplies the provisions for the day, *in meditatione exardescet ignis* [Ps. 38:4]. By means of this holy practice, the faithful soul is ceaselessly in the company of his beloved, and if for a few moments it is obliged to be absent, it finds a way to show him, even from afar, that its greatest good would be never to leave him, it makes use for this purpose of ejaculatory prayers which are like so many arrows of love which one lets fly towards God to draw his grace into our hearts.

And so during the day whether I am studying or eating or walking or alone or in the company of other persons, I will take great pains to keep myself in the presence of God, watching over myself so as never to do a thing that might sadden my good Father, and to bear witness to my love for him, I will sigh often towards him by means of short but lively aspirations, secret yearnings, loving glances towards the images which trace for us what he has done for us, his all-too-ungrateful creatures.

I would wish to have near me a faithful friend who would remind me of my beloved in times when occupations cause me to lose sight of him. In the absence of such a friend, I will use other means, such as, for example, raising my heart to God whenever the clock sounds, whenever someone knocks on my door, whenever a carriage passes, etc. Since I am already familiar with this practice, I have only to continue it.

Another means for habituating oneself to place oneself very often in the presence of the Saviour, is that used by the good and respected M. Emery; he used to have a small box filled with little peas, and each time he thought of God, he passed one of these peas into another box: he used then every evening to make a count of the number of times he had been united with God during the day, he compared that with that of the previous evening, and if he had not had the thought at least every quarter of an hour, he imposed a penance on himself. That is what that venerable old man used to do in the midst of his countless occupations.

*Oraison*

I will say nothing about oraison as there is too much to say, I am sufficiently familiar with its importance, I have a sufficient knowledge of what the Saints thought about it, and that maxim consecrated by experience, that there are no really good priests without oraison, has been too deeply drummed into me for me ever to be able to forget it, and for me ever to be tempted to give up this holy exercise. Oraison must be the daily bread of the priest, that is where he will find strength, light, consolation in all the afflictions with which his life will be marked; that is where God communicating himself to him through the intimate union of his inspirations and his grace, will give him in abundance everything he needs to fulfil his ministry worthily, and make it useful and profitable to his soul and those of his brothers, in a word it is there, and only there, that he will be able to learn the science of the Saints, and the ways they followed so as to imitate them and attain the same results as they.

*Spiritual Reading*

But to furnish material for this exercise, there is yet another very important one which I will make it an obligation never to miss, namely spiritual reading. I see spiritual reading as the store where one furnishes oneself in abundance with the prime matter which must then be worked on, elaborated in oraison which extracts from it as it were the most exquisite sugar; this is not a far-fetched idea, it conveys exactly what I think, for I am convinced that unless one be led by extraordinary ways one will make but little progress in oraison if one is ignorant of what the Saints have written about the spiritual life; besides, the examples of their virtues, that one reads in their lives, are singularly suited to bring us to imitate them, and it is really only in ascetical books that we can acquire the taste for piety, and if the reading of these kinds of books is not familiar to us, how will we lead the souls who are confided to us. One will follow one’s own private bent and do all manner of foolishness [p. 17].

*Visit to the Blessed Sacrament*

A priest who knows that O.L.J.C., not content with mystically immolating himself every day on our altars for love of us, wished to push the excess of his tenderness for his children to the point of dwelling habitually among them, needs no other motive to be eager to go to render him all the duties that gratitude demands of him. What journeys would one not undertake, what labours would one not endure, what obstacles of every kind would one not be determined to overcome to reach the place, were it at the extremities of the earth, where one would have the certitude that our lovable Saviour had come down.

And yet, because in his excessive, incomprehensible goodness, he wanted to spare us all these pains in choosing his dwelling among us, in establishing in our midst the throne of his mercies, where he awaits us to fill us with his gifts and most abundant graces, Christians forgetting all that they owe to so good a Father for so much love, by an inconceivable madness, deprive themselves voluntarily of the indispensable helps that they would infallibly find at the feet of the sacred tabernacles where their tender and generous friend resides. What a terrible reckoning these ungrateful persons will one day face for this indifference as insulting to O.L.J.C. as it is disastrous for them!

For myself, to whom the Lord has always given the grace of being touched and penetrated with the love he shows us in his Sacrament, I who have experienced so often the effects of his promises when in times of trial or affliction I have had recourse to his Mercy, I will not imitate the insouciance of those priests who after they have said Mass, if they say it at all, do not appear again in the temple of the Living God who resides there, and who awaits them there, unless it be to pass through on the run when some business calls them there, contenting themselves then to spend a minute kneeling before the Supreme Majesty of God whom they seem to ignore, while their icy heart is perhaps far, far away. I will be happier to take as my model the holy priest Nepotianus to whom St. Jerome gives this testimony *ubicumque eum quaereres, in Ecclesia invenires*; at least I will not let a single day go by without going to the foot of the holy altar to pour out my heart in the bosom of the one who loves me, sincerely regretting that the time has passed when, living under the same roof as he, I was able without disturbing in any way the performance of the other duties he had imposed on me, to go and spend some moments in his company many times in the course of the day; a happy time when I had the consolation of seeing from my bed as well as from the room where I studied, the light that shone in his holy presence, and whose lot more than once was my envy.

*Examination of Conscience*

To consolidate the work of my sanctification, it will be necessary:

1. to examine twice a day the way I have conducted myself during the day, confronting it with what God’s law, the Church’s precepts, the duties proper to my state, and this rule prescribe for me and if through human weakness, or negligence, I have been unfaithful to any of these points however unimportant it may seem, I will humble myself before God, and take steps to do better on the following day; if on the contrary I see that by God’s grace all has gone well, I will bless the Lord to whom alone belongs the glory, and I will encourage myself to continue on the same path, and with still more fervour, having always God and God alone in view in all my actions, renouncing all the glory that might redound to me, recalling that saying of the Saints, that men often praise you for an action in which God the severe scrutinizer of hearts finds only matter for condemnation.[[17]](#footnote-17)

One of these examinations must be specially employed in the pursuit of the predominant fault which is to be given no quarter until it has been entirely destroyed. I will then pass in search of another with the same determination and then another, until no more remain. There will be enough there to take up my whole life.

Here is the method I will follow in my examination, it is I think that of Father Surin:

Before the examination: 1. Thank God for his gifts. It is also necessary to thank God for all the evils of body and soul from which he has delivered me, not only those of which I am aware, but also those that I am unaware of.

2. Ask him for the grace to know and detest sin.

Examination: 3. Carefully examine one’s conscience by running through in one’s mind every hour of the day, and considering attentively what I did, said or neglected to do in each one.

After the examination: 4. Ask God for forgiveness of one’s sins.

5. Form a purpose of amendment with God’s grace. It would be good too in this exercise to offer God the little bit of good I may have done in the day, as well as the share that belongs to me as member of the Church of all the good which is done within her bosom. To finish up, I will impose some penance on myself.

This exercise should last a quarter of an hour.

As to acts one must consider:

1. What perfection is required for each act to make it pleasing to God and like that of J.C.

2. What defects does one discover.

3. What remedies must one impose.

It is clear that if one is exact in doing in this way one’s examination every evening, one cannot but end up with extirpating the greater part of one’s vices. One derives too another very great advantage from this method: namely, one acquires in this way a very great facility for doing well the examinations that precede confessions. One also fulfils [p. 20] by this salutary practice this important counsel of the Saviour that few people like to think about: *Vigilate quia nescitis qua hora Dominus Vester venturus sit ... Ideo et vos estote parati quia qua nescitis hora filius hominis venturus est* (Matt. 24:42-44).

By this examination one settles so to speak one’s accounts every day with the Father of the family, and one is ready at any time to present them to the Sovereign Master of life who can at any moment, and at the moment one least expects, summon us to go into their every detail before his fearful tribunal.

It is in this examination that one exercises over oneself that judgment which, according to the word of the Apostle, should exempt us from another infinitely more fearful and severe judgment. *Si nosmetipsos dijudicaremus, non utique judicaremur* (I Cor. 11:31).

For by the contrition it arouses in us, by the penances one imposes on oneself, by the stern resolutions one forms to sin no more, one obtains pardon for one’s faults, one arrives at diminishing their number, and one pays in advance, through voluntary satisfactions, the incomparably more rigorous chastisements which were reserved for them in purgatory. The Lord, as one knows, does not punish twice the same fault.

However small the attention with which one looks at all the advantages that ought to result from the examination of conscience done as it ought to be done, one will not be surprised at the expressions used by the author of an excellent book that every priest should mediate on, with which I conclude this article.

“No words can express, says this author, the usefulness of this holy practice. It is such that one would have to have lost one’s judgment, desire for salvation, and the fear of eternal damnation not to embrace it with all one’s heart” (Instr. des Prètres de D.A. Molina, Chartreux).

*Confession*

Confession is not only useful to those who have had the misfortune of mortally offending God. It is for these unfortunate people an absolute necessity, but this sacrament is so advantageous even for a priest who by God’s grace abstains perseveringly from every grave fault, it is so important for him to make frequent use of it that I would dare almost to hazard that it is indispensable for him to approach it often if he wishes to persevere in the virtue and purity of conscience requisite for ascending every day to the holy Altar.

Without going into details on this subject that this rule is not concerned with, I will limit myself to reminding myself of the example of the Saints, such as St. Philip Neri, St. Charles Borromeo and so many others who practiced daily confession, and the synodal ordinances of so many different dioceses that oblige priests on pain of suspension to go to confession at least once a week, and the rules of various institutes [p. 22] which prescribe confession three times, twice or at least once a week, finally the practice of every good priest I have known throughout my life. Even apart from all these respected authorities, a properly understood piety, simple good sense even would say enough on this heading for me unhesitatingly to decide to continue always what I have practiced up to the present day with as much advantage for myself as consolation. So I will go to confession at least every week.

I believe it is Father Surin or Father Rigoleu who gives the following rules for people who aspire to reach a high state of perfection.

The general examination and the accusation of faults in the confessional tribunal ought to have for object:

1. *Deliberate* faults against the commandments of God and the Church, the duties of one’s state, vows, rules and constitutions.

2. Faults of pure weakness, committed through fragility or by surprise and committed so to speak with *semi*-*deliberation*.

3. The first movements that lead to some considerable emotion, especially when they derive from an interior principle, namely, from vice or passion, for example, from self-love, anger, jealousy, even if no consent is given.

4. The sacraments that one does not receive with exactitude, fervour, preparation and thanksgiving.

5. Personal resolutions that one has neglected.

6. The inspirations of grace that one has not responded to faithfully enough.

N.B. The examination ought not to be minute, and the accusation should enjoy genuine clarity and precision.

**Resolutions.[[18]](#footnote-18)**

110:XV in Oblate Writings

*How to perform pious exercises. Attitude in the apostolate. Avoid sin, imitate Jesus Christ.*

Resolution

Aix

1812-1813[[19]](#footnote-19)

A moment’s recollection before beginning the office, say it in a reflective way, savour it. Examen after saying it. Say it kneeling down whenever possible. Recite the breviary come what may.

St. Philip Neri, from the time he was ordained, every day at Mass when the rubrics permitted used to say the prayer: *Deus cui omne cor patet*, etc.

Hospital and prison visitation, the workhouse. Access easy. Fixed day for confession. Much charity, gentleness, compassion in this work. Preaching.

Director, duties as to him. Annual retreat and each month. Think often of death, at every hour after saying the *Cor Jesu*. Perform all these actions as if they might be the last ones in your life. Fix a day each month to think specially on this. Say the viaticum Mass.

Discipline. Dry bread for lunch. Fasts. Prayers as they should be said. Rosary. Particular examen, general examen. Oraison. Holy Scripture.

Retreat every month in which I will pass in review all my various duties: Mass, office, oraison, etc. Read Tronson on the Mass, office, confession, etc.

Rectify, purify, supernaturalise as much as possible the choice of state.

Avoid not only every mortal sin, and even every deliberate venial sin, but also do all I can to diminish the number of faults committed unintentionally.

Before performing an action, foresee the dangers that my weakness may encounter in it, and take some precautionary resolution to guide me in it with purity of heart, rightness of intention, discretion, reserve, gentleness, patience, etc.

Occasionally let fall from my lips that word that is so difficult for me to utter: I am wrong, I have made a mistake.

Take J.C. as model in his interior and exterior, in his hidden life and in his public life. Ask what is his mind, the way he would have judged, etc., so as to conform our own with his and judge like him. Never entertain vain and useless thoughts, that is not loving God *ex tota mente*, with all one’s mind, not permitting one’s mind to fill itself with what has nothing to do with God, so as to conform ourselves with the sentiments of his heart, loving only what he would have loved, etc., i.e., the glory of his Father, etc.

**Concerning mortification.[[20]](#footnote-20)**

111:XV in Oblate Writings

*Necessity of mortification; how to mortify oneself*

Reflections on mortification

Aix

[1812-1814][[21]](#footnote-21)

There are two kinds of mortification, one affects the body, the other the spirit; they are both the one and the other very necessary to the priest of Jesus Christ. *Omnis enim qui in agone contendit ab omnibus se abstinet* (I Cor. 9:25). And who is most committed to combat in this life’s arena if not the priest who is obliged to it not only in virtue of a duty common to all Christians, but because of his special office and the obligation entailed by his ministry. He must do battle not only for himself, but for others and even for the Church *adversus principes, et potestates, adversus mundi rectores tenebrarum harum, contra spiritualia nequitiae in caelestibus* (Eph. 6:12). This is why the same Apostle who sets out this teaching for us adds…*castigo corpus meum et in servitutem redigo, ne forte cum aliis praedicaverim, ipse reprobus efficiar* (1. Cor. 9:27).

One must, if one wishes to live the life of J.C., following the advice of the Apostle, carry always about oneself the mortification of J.C. and do this not only to dominate the depraved inclinations of corrupt nature by mortifying its members, but also *ut adimpleat in corpore suo quae desunt passioni* *Christi* (Col. I:24).

He can include in the category of his mortifications, not only all that he does to avoid sin, but also all he undertakes in the practice of some virtue, both when he has to fulfil some duty of his ministry, or do some action agreeable to God to the detriment of his leisure, comfort, liking.

That is what Our Lord calls renouncing oneself, which he requires of those who wish to follow him.

Although what one abstains from or does for God are often small things in themselves, the virtue that specifies them is always considerable in God’s eyes.

One must also, following the example of the saints, impose some bodily mortifications voluntarily on oneself, for *Regnum coelorum vim patitur et violenti rapiunt illud* (Matt. 11:12) and also to render oneself more in conformity with J.C. *vir dolorum ac sciens infirmitatem* (Is. 53:3).

1. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-5a, cah. 2: sujets de meditations, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An undated text that might give the impression of being from his early days in the seminary when Eugene first had the opportunity of frequent communion. But it is located on p. 25 of the second notebook entitled: *Meditation Themes*. It seems to relate to meditation themes put before the seminarians in 1812. This page is thus to be dated in 1812. We publish it here because Eugene is clearly talking about himself and his state of soul at the time of his ordination retreat or shortly after, a period when he often speaks of his sinful life. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. An undated text. It was written after ordination at the close of 1811, or more likely at the beginning of 1812, as Eugene says he will stay on this year at the seminary; this refers to the calendar year 1812, not the academic year 1812-13 since, in May, Eugene had decided to return to Aix after the seminarians’ holidays; cf. letter to his mother and Emile, May 8, 1812. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Orig.: St. Martin des Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section omitted, Eugene sends greetings to Monsignor Jauffret, Archbishop-designate of Aix, he speaks of a stole he has had made, of Emile Dedons’ marriage and the lands at St. Laurent that ought to be sold, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Orig.: Rome. arch. de la Post. EB I-8. In the part that is omitted, Eugene tells how he spent Holy Week; he asks his mother to have shelves ready for his library at the Enclos and to check if the collections of religious works are complete, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Eugenie had written on January 17. 1812: “Nathalie [now 20 months old] loves to turn over the pages in books and find the pictures; when she finds one, she is as pleased as Punch and kisses them and says it is her good Jesus”. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Orig.: Rome. arch. de la Post. DM IV-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. The text is undated. As Eugene composed the rule of life, that is traditionally made in Sulpician seminaries on departure only in December, 1812, no doubt he drew up in advance some details before leaving Paris. We suggest August - September 1812 as a probable date as the rule is clearly intended for his life at Aix and was composed at a time when he still hoped to spend a lot of time at study. The same ideas are found in the letter to his mother dated September 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. No doubt the famous Dr. René Laennec (1781-1826). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. FB I-8. In the part omitted, Eugene speaks of various commissions, receipt of money, his return to Aix after the seminarians’ holiday has ended on October 12, the room to be got ready for his servant Brother Maur, the lands at St. Laurent, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Emile Dedons, Eugene’s cousin, got married on September 29 and went to live in Marseilles. Madame de Mazenod would have been left alone in the Joannis house had it not been for Eugene’s arrival and the consequent abandonment of his plan to go and live in the Enclos. We do not know the exact day of his arrival in Aix but it was towards the end of October. On November 22 M. Duclaux had already received a letter from him written as he passed through Lyons. Madame de Mazenod had waited a long time for this moment. During the summer she received a letter from President de Mazenod, the first since 1807, and in her reply dated August 20 she says about Eugene: “Finally early in October I will have the happiness of embracing this dear child. The road he has taken has caused me to shed many tears. My appeals have had no effect as his vocation came from God and was not inspired by any human motive.” [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Orig,: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM JV-2. In this rule, certainly unfinished, Eugene speaks only of his duties towards God, nothing concerning his neighbour. M. Duclaux gave his unqualified approval to this rule, drawn up during Eugene’s retreat at the major seminary of Aix. cf. letter to Eugene, February 23, 1813. in Rey. 1. 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. In the margin of the first page. Eugene wrote: This rule should have been drawn up last year at about this time, when I was making my retreat in preparation for receiving the priesthood; but I put off doing it until the time of my definitive return to Aix: so now here I am, let us get down to it. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. The following six paragraphs have been added in the margin of pages 9-11. These same reflections had been made and then crossed Out in the “Rule for life in Aix”, drawn up in August-September. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The following paragraph is written in the margin of pages 18 and 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Orig.: Rome. arch. de la Post. DM IV-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. An undated page. On the back one reads: “Entered the seminary at 8 in the evening. At 9: dinner, bottle of ink, firewood”. From the text (he was unpacking his valises) and context, these notes were written, it seems, at the outset of his ministry in Aix in 1812-1813. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM V-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. An undated text; we suggest 1812-1814 because it focuses on the priest and, in his December 1814 retreat, at the beginning of the meditation on the 6th day, Eugene begins with an expression very similar to that found here: “True mortification includes two things: bodily suffering and restraint of the spirit”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)