*NOTE: as this is a file that was scanned, it is still being proof-read, notes converted to footnotes, and corrected. If you come across any obvious mistakes, I would be grateful if you would let me know.*

*The contents of the Diary for this period are still to be inserted according to the relevant dates.*

1839

683. To Father Courtès, priest, superior of the Mission, at the residence of the Parish Priest at Istres. Bouch[es]-du-Rhone. 1

683:IX in Oblate Writings

Advice to the missionaries: instruct the people, zeal moderated by prudence. It is impossible to comply with the requests for missions.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Courtès

Marseilles,

J[anuar]y 19, 1839.

It is not the fault of the mail, my dear Courtès, if you have not yet received a reply to your first letter from Istres. It is just that I had as little possibility of writing to you as if I were absent. Even today I am taking up the pen only to acknowledge receipt of your two letters and to express to you my anxiety over Father Telmon’ bleeding. He had a cold; but since when does one bleed during a bad cold? Tell me, could it be that he is ill? Let him then stop every activity, work short-handed for a week, I shall have him replaced after the mission at Aygalades which is coming to a close and is proceeding wonderfully well. I recommend you to aim very much at instructing. Be not satisfied with devoting the morning to this great duty of the mission, but always use a quick quarter of an hour in the evening before the main instruction to summarize what had been said in the morning to a smaller audience. This quarter of an hour instruction is to be given in the form of a reflection or catechism, without any oratorical gesture. Instruct, instruct, ignorance is the plague of our times.

23rd.

The mission at St-Mitre definitely cannot take place this year. When the good Lord would want us to accept all the work that presents itself, he will send us the members. Just now we are doing more than what is possible for human strength.

I have received news of the mission of Tallard through Father Ancel who arrived at the novitiate today. The good they accomplish there is wonderful. Already 400 men have made their confession,

I received Telmon’s letter. I thank him for the particulars he gives me about the mission, but he does not inform me about his health! for God’s sake, do not exhaust yourself. How can you do the mission in Rognes if you kill yourself at Istres? You must look after one another. I got the impression that you are doing nothing of the sort. You are taking a great responsibility upon yourself. From here, I can only remind you of your duty. Zeal has merit only when it is moderated by prudence.

I embrace all of you and I bless you.

+ C. J. Eugene. Bish[op] of Marseilles.

1 Original:Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Courtès.

684.[To Father Courtès, superior at Aix]. 1

684:IX in Oblate Writings

Regrets that Archbishop Bernet of Aix did not go to confirm the men at the mission of Istres. Father Telmon is having a rest.

Courtès

[Marseilles.]

February 14, 1839.

You must do your best to make up for the silly mistake that was made in not coming to confirm these people who were so well disposed. Don’t we know that by postponing it to the time of the children’s Confirmation, all these men are being exposed to the danger of giving in to human respect and then people will tell you that these men had not persevered? Supposing his Grace the Archbishop was hindered, did you not have his Lordship the Bishop of Digne.2 who would have done this favour willingly? I don’t even mention myself; but in God’s judgment who does not accept excuses or wrong reasons, it will be said that when other means are not available even that one could have been used to fulfil a great duty towards three hundred converted souls for whom we are bound *sub gravi* to provide the assistance to which they have a right in order to fulfil a precept. I don’t excuse the Parish Priest3of a very grave sin for having, in some way, turned his Grace the Archbishop away from the idea of exercising his ministry by describing to him the condition of the place with an exaggeration capable of scaring the Prelate, who, if better informed, would not have bothered about that.

I have just visited our Fathers Telmon and Ricard. Father Telmon is in a pitiful condition. God forbid that you have to reprimand yourself for having incapacitated him for the rest of his life. And in this condition, he had the persistence to propose to me that I send him to the mission of St. Mitre. I am going to see to it that he be treated with very great care; he will be cured if his sickness has not become chronic. I don’t swear by it. When one is sick, one must not force nature, that is tempting God.

1 YENVEUX I. 217; IV. 223.

2 Bishop Miollis, former Bishop of Digne, retired at Aix since 1838.

3 Father Coustet, appointed Parish Priest of Istres in 1836.

685.[To Father Courtès, superior at Aix]. 1

685:IX in Oblate Writings

Authorizes Father Bise to hear confessions.

Courtès

[Marseilles,]

February 23, 1839.

Even though I had wished, my dear Courtès, that Father Bise were more proficient before entrusting him with the ministry of the Confession, if you think it is absolutely necessary that I authorize him for this; I shall do it, even though I do it quite reluctantly. I request you to be very careful with him about this kind of work for which he may not be quite ready.

1 YENVEUX II. 88. Yenveux writes: February 23, 1832. But it is 1839. Father Bise was ordained priest on September 22, 1838.

686. To Father Semeria, priest of the Mission, at Calvaire, Marseilles. 1

686:IX in Oblate Writings

Request to send him a Breviary, borrowed by Father Telmon.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Semeria

Marseilles.

March First, 1839.

My dear Father Semeria, you may say that I have recourse to you for making up for all the thefts of your brothers. This shows you how much trust I have in your sense of justice. Yesterday I have made a claim for my Uncle’s purificators and mine and I have forgotten to ask you to verify if some corporals with our mark did not also remain on the battle-field; today I ask you for another restitution, and I do so in haste because I am afraid that an objection based on prescription may be raised against me as in so many other things; it is the part of the Frejus Breviary which Father Telmon, that famous hoarder and dangerous borrower, has recently taken from me in order to help the good Parish Priest of Istres,2 who had misplaced his Breviary en route, recite the office.

My dear son, you understand that I have reason to be apprehensive when I remember that without taking the trouble of coming to look for it so far, he could have found, in the library of Calvaire, not one but even two Frejus Breviaries. My dear little Father, do you remember the ampollina3 or ampolletta of the holy Chrism? Taking the holy Chrism from a Bishop is a peccadillo for Calvaire! What would happen to my Breviary if I do not address myself to you promptly, you who are so just, so equitable, who would never enrich your house to the detriment of your neighbour? Don’t trust this professor of theology4 who holds that what is good enough to take is good enough to keep. Use a bit of stealth to remove my property from his clutches, for woe to us if you attempt to prove to him that his axiom is pernicious, capable of disturbing the peace of families and of overturning State. He will sufficiently remember his old profession to hold out against you with seductive arguments that he is right in his conduct and that it is only thus his monastery can be enriched. Don’t we pray to God for all the benefactors, and that is making restitution a hundredfold! I would not know myself how to reply, and so my good Semeria, let us do our part without saying anything. Sniff it out, search for it everywhere and carry off this poor Breviary which its three companions claim with loud cries, place it under your cloak and, bring it to me in a hurry without the knowledge of the terrible Telmon. I shall embrace you, thanking you for the service you will have rendered me. Good-bye.

+ C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Semeria.

2 Father Coustet, the parish priest of Istres where the Oblates had just preached a mission, came to thank Bishop de Mazenod on February 22: “He was in admiration of everything he saw during the mission.” the Founder writes in his Diary, February 22, 1839.

3 An Italian word meaning a phial.

4 Father Telmon, who had been a professor at the Major Seminaries of Ajaccio and Marseilles.

687. To Father Bellon, priest of the Mission, at Vico, Corsica.1

687:IX in Oblate Writings

Reproaches Father Bellon for not writing often enough. Affection.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Bellon

Marseilles.

March 8, 1839.

I have an old debt to pay, my dear Father Bellon, which I shall be very much tempted to keep owing at least till your heart inspires you to claim it. It is not that I am a bad payer, but I have the unfortunate habit of insisting that the real title of credit be produced in such a way that I cannot doubt its legality, and in my view, this title is not a letter mailed at random to fulfil a formality, but the attitude that prompts one not to live overseas and separated from his father without preserving remembrance and affection for him. A good son, who knows what to expect when he knows his father’s love, shares his concerns, his troubles, and is very careful not to demand, as an indifferent person might do, that every letter be answered exactly to the point and no more. He writes when his heart prompts him up to do so, and, pleased with the happiness it brings to his father, he writes whenever the occasion presents itself, knowing fully well that even before receiving a letter from him. his father has already replied to him in the depth of his heart by a redoubled affection which he will express to him later.

This is what I am doing today, my dear son, while complaining about your too prolonged silence. You may have thought that I did not reply to you through forgetfulness or indifference. If you did so, you have wronged me, for my very delay in replying to you has called you unceasingly to mind in such a way that my heart always expressed a feeling of affection for you. It seems to me that despite the distance your spirit should have heard it. My God, I often said to myself. I have not written to my good Bellon! This dear child will perhaps be disappointed thereby! Oh! he knows how much I love him, he will excuse my delay . . I am going to write ...but something else happened. I was disturbed unexpectedly, and my letter remained on the shelf. But let us not blame each other, and so, my dear son, accept this letter as an expression of my fatherly affection and a proof that I would never forget you however far you may be from me.

I bless you and I embrace you.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Bellon.

688. To Father Courtès, superior of the Mission, at Aix B. d. R.1

688:IX in Oblate Writings

Plan for a retreat at Istres. Send a chair that serves as a prie-dieu.

Courtès

Marseilles,

March 8, 1839.

Father Telmon should have written about what I think of the planned retreat at Istres. There is no doubt that your presence there will be useful. It is only the question of your health that must restrain you, and on this point you alone are the competent judge.

Father Fissiaux2 is going to spend two hours at Aix. He has a special vehicle. I would like to profit by his kindness to make him bring me a certain chair made out of walnut wood which serves also as a *prie-dieu*. I beg of you to have it brought to the spot which he will indicate to you. I think that this chair is found near the music-lectern in the choir of your church.

Good-bye. I have time only to embrace you.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Courtès.

2 Father Charles J. M. Fissiaux, from the diocese of Marseilles, born at Aix in 1806. He founded, in 1835, the Society of the poor Daughters and Orphans of the cholera and, on March 4, 1839, the Society of Saint Peter-in-chains so take care of young children sentenced by the courts. Bishop de Mazenod loved this priest affectionately and encouraged him in all his undertakings.

689.[To Father Mille, at N.-D. du Laus].1

689:IX in Oblate Writings

Reproaches Father Mille, who was too eager to take up a collection with the view to buying a bell.

Mille

[Marseilles.]

April 11, 1839.

There is no way, my dear Father Mille, of dealing with you. I must reply or expose myself to the danger of seeing you find very strong reasons to go your own way. Nothing is more edifying than the beginning of your letter. You have worked stupendously. You long for the tranquillity of your shrine for which you feel an extreme need. One would believe that knowing the need to work a little for oneself after having done so much for others, you are going to enter into seclusion, etc. Not at all. The conclusion of all these beautiful expressions is to ask me to let you go running around to collect money. You need it to get the bell. But why do you want to do everything all at once? Before dreaming of getting the bell, you must think of paying for a belfry.

For once you should get out of your little local interests, remind yourself that before anything else you should be interested in the welfare of the Congregation and fulfil your obligation of restitution for what you have received from her to attain your goals.

It is difficult to pay interests to another party when one’s funds are tied up in a total loss. If you can come across some indiscreet persons who, for the twenty francs they have given, pretend to demand that you must spend five or six thousand francs, don’t listen to them; or if their happiness consists in hearing the belfry sound, quite frankly mount the small bell that is being used now. This is what common sense prompts, independently of reasons of a still higher order which should divert you from dissipating yourself for purely worldly interests. All this is very fine, but in your usual style. you are drawing a magic circle.

You will wait till the end of next week to give my letter time to arrive, since you wish to be at Embrun the second Sunday after Pentecost. I thought I had already made you understand all that is awkward in this way of procedure. Who has given you the right to impose on me an obligation to reply on this or that date? How can you conclude from the delay of my letter that I agree to what you request of me? On the point in question my ideas are so different from yours that you should reason quite differently. In any case, since I insist on a principle of order more than all the wealth of this world, whatever might have been my idea to concede, had you acted with more moderation and as obedience required of you. I see myself obliged to ask you to turn back and return to your community as soon as you receive my letter, both you and anyone else who may have gone along with you or on your orders before receiving my explicit permission. This will be a lesson you will remember and which you could recall as needed in the case of all those who would be tempted to act in a similar way. Should reflection have intervened to help you and you did not venture to undertake this journey before knowing my intentions and receiving my letter,2 then, though with great repugnance and with an aversion capable of making me take further severe measures to save me from vexation and from further compromising the regularity and the spirit proper to the Congregation, I authorize you to make this unfortunate journey with one of our Fathers, as quickly as you can. You would have done better to keep yourself busy training Father Pont for the ministry he has to exercise in the Congregation. You have not known how to make the best of him till now. You will be the first to suffer therefrom for your community will not receive any more members for a long time. There are no Brothers available at the novitiate.

Good-bye. I pray God that my letter finds you still at Laus.

1 YENVEUX VII. 188. 243-250.

2 The Founder in his Diary, April 18: “Letter of Father Mille. He had been awaiting my reply before starting his collection.”

690. To Father Guigue[s], superior of the Miss[iona]ries, at Notre Dame de L’Osier, near Vinay, Isère.1

690:IX in Oblate Writings

Reply to nine questions. Various writings of the Fathers of N.-D. de L’Osier.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Guigues

Marseilles,

May 9, 1839.

Before leaving for Digne, my dear Father Guigue[s], where I am going for the Ordination. I reply to your questions.

1 - If the collaboration in the Catholic newspaper2 does not divert you from your obligatory duties, you may contribute for your part, but with discretion so as not to commit yourself in a way that may be embarrassing. I don’t understand why it was so difficult to submit your article to me, and if I am to judge it by what you have done till now, my advice could be useful to you. Nevertheless, I agree to you handing in your first article without showing it to me on condition that, whoever it may be among you who does it, you read it to your companions so that they may freely make their remarks. Be good enough to send me a copy of the published page.

2 - Rather than suggest to Father Vincens the topic he should undertake, I prefer that he let me know the subject he would like and the plan he intends to follow. It is then that I should obtain for him the merit of obedience either by choosing from several plans or by ordering him to go ahead.3

*3* - I have written, I don’t know to whom, that I was surprised Father Dassy wanted to set to work and redo a month of Mary. There are already several by different authors, what is the use of risking not doing better or maybe of doing worse? I do not approve this project.4

4 - I am far from being disposed to agree that you assign Father Baudrand exclusively to take care of the parish. If a missionary had to be appointed for this ministry, Father Baudrand should not have been chosen for it. To encourage vocations, would you like it said in the diocese that people join us to become parish priests? It is the superior of the house who is really the parish priest, he gets all the members of the community to help him as he deems fit to use them; the best thing would be to get this service done by taking turns. Still the fact remains that I do not want it said Father Baudrand is functioning as parish priest at L’Osier.

5 - Come to an agreement with Father Tempier, who functions as the General Treasurer, regarding the hymns.5

6 - I did not have the time to read Father Pison’s6 program; I shall not refuse to support his work once I have been able to assess it.

7 - I grant Father Baudrand the permission he asks me to give the Brigittine7 blessing to 2000 rosaries.

8 - You acted very wisely in not imitating the extravagance of the Gentlemen, your neighbours. One must do what is fitting and nothing further.

9 - Your opinion regarding the Brothers cannot be accepted in a Congregation. Certainly you must try them out and choose them well, but you must not do without them. On the contrary it is an abuse to get the service done by lay people, worse still by women. It could be tolerated only temporarily and the dispensation in this matter has lasted already too long.

I wish you all the blessings of God.

C.J. E., Bi[shop] of M[arsei]lles.

P.S. Father Tempier will write to Father Vincens regarding his trip.8

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Guigues.

2 There was a plan so publish a newspaper “to bring back the numerous Protestants of the diocese.” Cf. J. M., April 18, 1839.

3 The Founder writes in his Diary, April 18: “Father Vincens is going to revise his booklet [*Le missionaire aux populations qu’il a évangélisées*, Grenoble, Baratier, 1840. 162 pp]; he wants to know if I would agree so him composing a retreat for his own use to be preached later in religious houses, or else that I suggest to him another book he could write ...

4 It is to Father Dassy himself that the Founder had written not to compose a new *Mois de Marie* since several of them were already extant. Cf. L. M.- Dassy. June 27, 1838.

5 “They need to make a new edition of their hymns. Must we give the copyright to M. Baratier?...” Cf. J. M., April 18.

6 “A good Father Pison submitted so me a petition for approval to a work he has planned.” Cf. J. M., April 18.

7 Mss.: brigiter. In his Diary of April 18, 1839, the Founder speaks of “blessing 2000 rosaries.” There is a rosary named after Saint Brigitte, initiated and propagated by S. Brigitte of Sweden (+ 1373). It consists of 6 decades (each of 1 Pater, 10 ave and 1 credo) and has special indulgences. After the cessation of the Order of St. Brigitte, the blessing of these rosaries was reserved to the Regular Clerics of the Holy Redeemer. This faculty was granted to other priests also. Cf. PALAZZINI. Dictionarium Morale el Canonicum.

8 The Founder writes in his Diary on May 5: “Letter of our Father Vincen’s brother. He requests me as a favour to allow his brother to go and see him, he supports his request with many plausible reasons”.

691. To Father Courtès, superior of the Miss[ionalries, Carmelites’ Square, at Aix, B,d.R.1

691:IX in Oblate Writings

Father Tempier will go to preach at Aix, Father Albini is again seriously ill. Let all the Fathers write their own recollections about the deceased brethren.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Courtès

Marseilles,

May 27, 1839.

My dear Courtès, I am informing Father Telmon about your wish. He was somewhat reluctant to respond to it, but I requested him to go and he has accepted it with good grace. So you can count on him both for the feast of St. Mary Magdalene and for that of St. Louis. However he would like to know if these feasts are celebrated on the very day they occur or on the following Sunday; be good enough to inform him about them.

The day before yesterday I ordained two priests for our Congregation, but neither of them is as yet available. One of them is Father Lagier, the brother of the Father with the same name, the other has not finished his novitiate.2 But even if they were already fit to serve, they will not be able to make up for the loss we will in all likelihood have incurred by now of our blessed Father Albini.3 The last bit of news informed me that he was anointed once again on Ascension day but this time we are not to count on the possibility of his recovery. It is thus the man most useful to our Congregation, the one and only person for the country that fell to his lot, will be taken away from us. God is demanding a huge sacrifice from us, We have only to humble ourselves and adore him.

This premature death reminds me that you have not sent me Morandini’s portrait. I had so urgently requested that it be drawn before his death that it is impossible it was not done. Then why delay so long in sending it on to me?

There is another duty that is being too much neglected despite my repeated requests, namely, writing down everything that is known on the life and virtue of our brothers who have lived in our midst and are now in Heaven. We don’t possess complete information on so many predestined men who have honoured and edified our family. This is intolerable. This is why I am determined to order all the members of the Congregation that, within the period of three months, they send me detailed statements on each one of our deceased Fathers. They will write little or much according to the more or less knowledge they have of the individual, but they will say what they know, what they have heard narrated to others and what they themselves think. I am making you responsible to notify the Fathers of your house of this order and I request you to consider this as now told to you without further notice. Once I have collected all the information, I shall put one Father or other in charge of editing the biographical sketch which will constitute the most edifying part of our history. The Chapter had already settled something on this matter; I am elaborating it a bit and that, so as not to return to this anymore. I make this a precept from which I dispense no one.

Good-bye, my dear Father Courtès. I embrace you paternally.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bishop of Marseilles.

P.S. Send me Father Magnan one of these days.

1 Original: Rome, Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Courtès.

2 Father Lucien Antoine Lagier, ordained priest on May 25, 1839, brother of Jean Joseph Lagier, and Jean Jos. Frédéric Perron.

3 On May 29, Bishop de Mazenod received from Father Guibert the news that Father Albini had died on May 20.

692. To Father Mille, superior of the Missionaries of N.-D. du Laus, near Gap, Upper Alps.1

692:IX in Oblate Writings

Notification of Father Albini’s death.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Mille

Marseilles.

May 29, 1839.

The Lord whose hidden ways are unfathomable has just taken away our dear and venerable Father Dominique Albini from the Church and from the Congregation. He surrendered his beautiful soul to God on the 20th of this month, Monday after Pentecost.

Whatever may be the merits of his saintly life and of his precious death, which gives us reason to consider this beloved brother as already in glory, you will have to offer for him the suffrages the Congregation reserves to all her children when they leave the world.

I wish you God’s blessing.

+ C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles,

Sup[erior] Gen[eral].2

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation, L. M.-Mille, signed only by the Founder. A similar letter was addressed so all the superiors, cf. J. M., May 29, 1839.

2 Subsequently the Founder copies out the letter of Father Guibert who had communicated the news.

693.[To Father Pélissier, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

Father Pélissier’s neglect in serving the parish. The Founder’s principles on the obedience of Oblates.

Pélissier

[Marseilles.]

May 30, 1839.

My good Father Pélissier, you will not take it amiss that I acquit myself of a duty by reproaching you in all simplicity for having been careless in serving the parish of L’Osier. It would have been a fatal illusion to think that you were not bound to do what depended on you to instruct the children well, to care for your parish the way a good pastor must do, under the pretext that you are a missionary. Note well, my dear son, and repeat it very loudly to all those who may be tempted to avail themselves of this pretext not to carry out their duties with zeal, whatever they may be, that are prescribed to them. Only offending God is adverse to the Congregation. Everything else falls under obedience. It will never be the business of any member of the Congregation to question the ministries that superiors distribute to them according to the needs of the Congregation or of the Church. This principle is indisputable, and I will always react very strongly against any grumbling which offends it. Whoever indulges in it is in error as long as he is in ignorance; he is guilty when his duty has been made known to him, I am not committed to this or that, some say. Blasphemy! You have committed yourself to everything that obedience can prescribe, and everything that is not sin comes under its domain, This is not understood otherwise in God’s Church, and never has it occurred to any religious of whatever Order, even the Orders that are far removed from external contact with the world, to think of having the least difficulty when they are entrusted with a ministry that is little in conformity with the principle ends of their Institutes. In fact, even in Rome we see parishes run by Dominicans, Franciscans, even Bernardines, and I don’t know in how many countries, for example, along the coasts of the Black Sea, the Jesuits are or have been in charge of serving small parishes of these regions before they were expelled from Russia. It belongs to the wisdom of Superiors General to judge about the expediency of things. For the members the chapter is closed when they have received their obedience, and they are bound to fulfil their mission with all the zeal of which they are capable from the very moment it is entrusted to them.

1 YENVEUX II. 140. 143; REY II. 64.

694. To Mister Champsaur, gold-smith, for Father Mille, priest, at Gap. Upper Alps.1

694:IX in Oblate Writings

Father Magnan will replace Father Martin at N.- D. du Laus. Father Pont remains at Laus and must be trained by Father Mille. Father Albini’s death. Let everyone write his recollections of deceased Oblates.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Mille

Marseilles.

May 31, 1839.

I am constrained, my dear Father Mille, to make a few changes in the personnel of our houses. I am taking Father Martin away from you: he will be replaced at Laus by dear Father Magnan. Father Martin will go to Aix in his place. I would very much like to see him at Marseilles before he goes to that city. For this he must leave as soon as you receive my letter, since I have to sail next Sunday. I mean Sunday, June 9,2 Father Magnan will come to Laus as soon as Father Martin arrives.

I agree to leaving Father Pont in your community, but it is on condition that you do not neglect him. You must take the initiative with him, he is too timid to volunteer to do anything. It is a question of training this man for the various ministries he will have to exercise; don’t forget this, and give priority to this among your duties.

I shall reply to Father Bermond, in the meantime inform him and Father Pont that I am granting each of them the permission to give the indulgences for 2000 rosaries for the course of this year.

I saw your mother after my return from Digne.3 I found her in good health and expecting to see your brother arrive soon.

Good-bye, dear Father Mille, you will have received the Circular which informs you of the fatal news of our venerable Father Albini’s death. I avail myself of this opportunity to let you know the decision I have taken communicating to all the members of the Congregation the obligation of sending me within three months detailed information of all they know and all they have learnt about the life of every member of the Congrega[tion] whom the Lord has called to himself. I am notifying you of this obligation and make you responsible for making it known to all the members of your community so that they may conform to it. You will see to its fulfilment.

Good-bye. dear son, I embrace you and I bless you.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation, L. M.- Mille.

2 Bishop de Mazenod and Father Tempier made a trip from June 9 to the beginning of August, to Biandrate, near Vercelli in Italy, in order to obtain a relic of St. Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles in the 6th century. They visited Genoa, Turin, Vercelli, Milan, Billens, N.- D. de L’Osier and N.-D. du Laus. Bishop de Mazenod narrates this trip in his Diary, note book February 17- June 6, 1839, pp. 69-73.

3 Bishop de Mazenod had gone to do the general Ordination of May 12 at Digne, accompanied by Father Casimir Aubert. Bishop Miollis, very old and retired, had no successor as yet.

695. To Father Aubert, superior of the Priests of Calvaire, Montée des Accoules, Marseilles, France.1

695:IX in Oblate Writings

Let Father Reinaud go with the scholastics to N. - D. de Lumières. Plan of the new altar of Calvaire. Portrait of Father Albini. His manservant’s loyalty.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Aubert C

Turin.

June 24, 1839.

My dear son, your letter of the 18th has given me the most pleasant surprise. I did not think I could reply to it from here because I find it very difficult to withdraw myself from the assiduous attentions of friends with whom I am lodging2 and because I find I have to leave today without having realized it. I shall limit myself therefore, to acknowledging receipt of your letter, the more so because I have just realized that I have written on the reverse side of the sheet, which makes me lose one page.

I say nothing about the first part of your letter; whatever may be the friendly reproaches that I sometimes have to address to you. I know what to expect; moreover reflection and supernatural thoughts which faith suggests to us in showing us what we are before God, marvellously help us to be less demanding than what our ever too human heart would be.

It seems that Father Reinaud had manifested to Father Tempier some reluctance to going to spend the holidays at N.-D. de Lumières; nonetheless I think that a stay at this rural residence can only be useful for his health. The classes he will have to give the Oblates will serve as a distraction for him, hence I think that it would be good for him to go with them to this vacation house. You will assign someone at Calvaire to replace him in the prisons.

I must not hide from you that I don’t very much like the plan Father Telmon made for the altar. I don’t think it should be carried out. See that several are made so that we can choose from among them, I am adverse to doing things in a hurry. I am not particular that it should be finished at such or such a date. The important thing is not to risk later regrets. To make myself more explicit I formally ask you not to decide on anything till I am there [on the] spot. Prepare some plans. That is all I approve.

You have nothing to tell M. Benesse either about the time or any other circumstances regarding the matter I have left to your charge. The restitution is due to his business establishment, that is all.

It was not Father Semaria’s idea to have our venerable Father Albini’s portrait made. It was mine. I do not yield to anyone the honours in this matter. Much less do I want this project to be carried out in my absence. Would you like to do the second volume of Father Suzanne’s lithograph?3 My plan is to have this portrait done by Reynaud or someone else as capable as he.

The request by S[emeri]a’s4 brother is an indiscretion that has no equal. Before I spoke of it to his Excellency he mentioned it to me, apparently to avoid my asking him something he could not grant. I am surprised that [Father Semeria] has made a new attempt after I had pointed out the inexpediency of this matter to him.

Good-bye. my dear son. I have no more space than to embrace you.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bish[op] of M[arsei]lles.

P.S. Though I had thought I had lost a page by beginning my letter on the reverse side of the sheet. I profit from this blank space which may seem like a trick to say a word about your illustrious penitent.5 I am satisfied with him in this sense that he does well the little service I require of him, and he listens to my little remarks which are truly always gentle and kind, but I cannot say that he profits from them, since he is satisfied with listening to me without ever replying. I don’t know why I am so little convincing. In fact, on arriving at Turin, because a few days afterwards I had to go to say Mass at the *Consolata* on the occasion of the big feast of this church. I had advised him to go and meet the theologian6 Gualla, his Grace the Archbishop’s confessor, a saintly priest who is known to me and who speaks French. I had told him that on that day 6 or *7* thousand Communions were distributed in that shrine in order to entice him and foster in him the desire to unite himself with so many good Christians. I spoke in vain. Yet, he has not left me any more than a young girl would separate herself from her mother. I insist that he accompany me everywhere and that he does not go anywhere alone. God will do the rest.

Good-bye. my dear son. I embrace you once again for this is the *post scriptum* of my letter. Tempier is keeping well.

After due reflection, it will be Father Reinaud who will go with the Oblates of N.- D. de Lumières. He will be the director both for studies and for spiritual matters; it is evident that the local superior can hear the confessions of those who go to him. You will send from Calvaire the miss[ionar]y who has to replace Father Reinaud in the prisons.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Aubert Cas.

2 Bishop de Mazenod, Father Tempier and a man-servant spent a few days with the Chevalier de Collegno, near Turin.

3 Mss.: Litographie.

4 The word is erased in the manuscript.

5 The reference is to the servant who accompanied the Founder. His name is never mentioned. He is simply mentioned in a pro-memoria of the account of Bishop de Mazenod’s visit, preserved in the parish archives of Biandrate.

6 Mss.: theologo. In Italian it is written teologo, meaning theologian.

696. To our dear Father Bellon, Ajaccio, Corsica.1

696:IX in Oblate Writings

Notes on Father Albini. How to replace him in Corsica? Few vocations for the Congregation from the seminarians at Ajaccio.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Bellon

Marseilles,

August 30, 1839.

I thank you, my dear Father Bellon, for the notes you have sent me on the saintly life and the precious death of our ever regretted Father Albini. I hope we will be able to compose, from these notes and those that other Fathers will supply me, some memoirs fit to edify all the members of the Congregation and all who know how to appreciate virtue. Every day I feel more intensely his loss, and the impossibility of replacing him would torment me if I did not tell myself that it is God who has done it. This good Master knew our powerlessness. By taking away the labourer from us he wanted if not the termination at least the incomplete state of his work. I may not wish differently from God. Thus whatever I may be able to arrange, we can expect that things will go badly, and it will cost me excruciating sacrifices, for the Society of the Italians at Marseilles will experience such a great blow that we can fear it will not recover.

But then what are you doing in your Seminary? Out of a 130 students not one is to some extent fit for us? Has the clan of Morandini been exhausted? Oh! holy child! The Lord gave him to us only to arouse our regrets. It is rather painful when we consider the good that perfect man accomplished in his country. The good Lord wants to lead us through the path of tribulation. May his holy will be done.

Since you are at Ajaccio, don’t forget to remember me to our dear Father Mouchel. I embrace you and I bless both of you from the depth of my heart.

+ C.J. Eugene. Bishop of Marseilles. S.G.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.- Bellon.

697. To Father Courtès, superior of the Mission, at Aix. B. d. R.1

697:IX in Oblate Writings

Fathers Lucien Lagier and Cyriaque Chauvet go to Aix to replace Fathers De Veronico and Magnan.

L.J.C. and M.I.

Courtès

Marseilles.

Sept[ember] 1, 1839.

I do not know if Father Tempier replied to your last letter, my dear Courtès. I am using the time of the procession to write you myself and tell you that in the embarrassing situation in which I am: finding men for our houses of Corsica on the one hand, and the need to take Father Magnan from you on the other, it will be rather difficult for me to give you what I would like to. In place of Father De Veronico who is not very helpful to you. I shall give you Father Perron, but since he has not finished his novitiate. Father Lucien Lagier will substitute for him in the meantime. The latter must have reached your place already. De Veronico could remain to follow the doctor’s orders. I had only sent him to Lumières to take a rest. If he does nothing at Aix, it comes to the same thing; he can be dispensed from going to Lumières. It will be Father Chauvet who will replace Father Magnan. The latter will go to Lumières to replace Father Chauvet. If you wish to make the pilgrimage to Lumières you can wait till you return from Aix so that you can send Father Magnan there.

My brother-in-law is coming to talk business. I shall hand him my letter which I cannot finish. Good-bye.

Before receiving your letter of this evening. I would have replied that you should not make any commitments for Advent since it is the time of the missions. You tell me that there are no requests. If you foresee that no request will be made, then do as you please.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation. L. M.-Courtès.

698. [To Father Guigues, at N.-D. de L’Osier]1

698:XI in Oblate Writings

Personnel of the house of N.- D. de L’Osier. Father Vincens book. Information about deceased Oblates.

Guigues

[Marseilles.]

September 4, 1839.

In the painful situation of need in which our different houses are placed, N.- D. de L’Osier has given me its share of suffering. I have produced for this community Father Guigues, as superior, Father Vincens, the first assistant and admonitor, Father Dassy, the second assistant, Father Kotterer, Father Pélissier, Father Pont and Father Baudrand.

I warn you that this arrangement which fits in with all that has been fixed for the other houses is irrevocable. Making the least observation would uselessly displease me. The grace of state will help the superior to shape, direct and use, according to the need and capacity of each, all the members of the community. This task is inherent in his position, and he cannot neglect it without failing in his duty. Father Guigues possesses all that one needs to succeed if he applies himself to it as an essential duty which he must perform with a supernatural outlook and with means taken from this perspective.

I am very pleased that our Father Vincen’s book has been approved by the Vicar General of Grenoble.2 If it is absolutely necessary to declare the proprietor, to avoid any counterfeit, I prefer Father Vincen’s second edition to the first, namely. “property of the priests of N. - D. de L’Osier,” signed by the superior. Perhaps this may not be sufficient in which case you will abide by the printer’s advice. If all that could be avoided, so much the better. But I insist that the frontispiece carry: “by a priest from N.-D. de L’Osier.”

See to the obligation I have laid down of sending, before the period of the missions, everything one knows or has heard from others about each one of our deceased Fathers. I am binding you *sub gravi;* for there will be no more order or discipline in the Congregation if people continue to pay so little heed to the Superior General’s orders, and it is my duty to curb this tendency.

1 YENVEUX III. 71; VI. 165; VII. 150.

2 *Le missionnaire aux populations qu’il a évangélisées*, Grenoble. Baratier, 1840. 160 pp.

699.[To Father Gignoux, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

699:IX in Oblate Writings

Father Gignoux is asked to reflect seriously before leaving the Congregation.

Gignoux

[Marseilles,]

September 14, 1839.

God is my witness that I would willingly have given my life to calm your exasperation. I am calling on you to exonerate me before God’s tribunal; I did everything I could to remove this misfortune from you. I pray God that he remove from you the chastisement I fear for those who are unfaithful to their vocation. I would offer him my life if I knew that the sacrifice could save you from this ruin.

1 YENVEUX VIII. 262. According to the letter that follows, addressed to Father Guigues, September 21, Gignoux is still at L’Osier. The Founder wrote to him this “fatherly letter ... on first hearing of his aberration.” Cf. L. M. -Gignoux. November 24, 1839.

700.[To Father Guigues, at N.-D. de IOsier].1

700:IX in Oblate Writings

Works done without permission. Father Gignoux. Information on deceased Oblates.

Guigues

[Marseilles,]

September 21, 1839.

I had expressed very clearly my intention that the room which is above the choir remain as it is so that it may serve, when needed, as the community hall or for a particular purpose which will be fixed when we consider it opportune. I was formally opposed to the plan that wanted this room, the only one of some size in the house, to be turned into rooms. Today I learn indirectly2 that someone feels obliged to do precisely what I had rejected. I find it difficult to convince myself that people can forget themselves to this degree. Nevertheless, I must not fail to write you immediately, and spare you the trouble of destroying what you may have built and the double expenses of demolition after building.

I make no comment on the fact of building. You will have to examine your conscience as to whether you can order a job of this nature without consulting me. Whatever it may be, on receiving my letter you will have to demolish all that has been done and to restore this space to its original state. It is to be arranged only to be the community hall, the conference hall, etc. I request you not to delay in doing this work; expenses matter little to me when good order is at stake.

I had written you in haste the other day that you should keep Father Gignoux; but I implore you to see that this man is looked after by Father Vincens. I also recommend Father Pont very much to you.3

You have not forgotten that I have ordered detailed information be supplied to me on the life and death of each one of our Fathers. I want absolutely to end this matter. I insist that every other work cede to this. I am not asking for any vague information. It must be something well thought out and suitable for the end I propose. You at L’Osier are late.

I greet all of you and embrace you with all my heart.

1 YENVEUX VI. l63~ VII. 152. 251.

2 Father Dassy explicitly wrote to the Founder to announce the starting of these constructions. cf. L. Dassy-Mazenod. September 19, 1839. Rome. AG.

3 In his letter of September 19, Father Dassy writes: “I tell you in the simplicity of a child that hides nothing from its father that, should Father Gignoux leave L’Osier, our house will not function so badly, and especially if you send us Father Pont, the charitable Father Pont, who will render us many a minute service in the shrine ...

701.[To Father Courtès, at Aix] 1

701:IX in Oblate Writings

Exercise of the coulpe.

Courtès

[Marseilles,]

October 3, 1839.

I had made it a rule that the exercises of the coulpe should never exceed one hour. The superior does not question each and every one. He chooses between self-accusation and remarks by others; and he always reserves a certain space of time for himself to speak, either on the topic provided for him by the exercise itself or on another theme taken from the Rules or from virtues of religion.

1 YENVEUX IV. 227. It is difficult to ascertain if this very short excerpt is from 1839. It is doubtful. The Founder presupposes a big community, but the community of Aix then comprised only four or five Fathers and Brothers.

702. To Father Courtès, superior of the Mission, at Aix. B. d. R. 1

702:IX in Oblate Writings

Schedule of the missions in the diocese of Aix during the Winter of 1839-1840.

Courtès

Marseilles,

October 23, 1839.

That is fine for the Parish Priests to ask for missions during Lent, but the miss[iona]ries cannot be everywhere all at once. Hence you must go from one parish to the other beginning with the month of November until Easter. They have to take it or leave it. Since you can back out of the Holy Spirit parish, withdraw without hesitation. Then you could go on mission during the month of December and it would be to Alleins you will go then. You must make the Parish Priest understand this. According to your remark in place of Mallemort we shall accept Stes-Maries where we shall go the second week of November: you take the responsibility of writing to the Parish Priest. La Fare will remain for January and Lamanon is uncertain since this mission cannot take place unless the house of Lumières can furnish a priest: the latter is not likely because we are committed in this diocese for villages with four thousand souls.

If Alleins remains obstinate in not wanting the mission in December rather than in November, then we shall go to Lamanon instead.

It is up to you to write to all these Parish Priests. But for God’s sake, let us be firm and not go back on what has been settled.

During your retreat2 insist on holy detachment which is the royal road to accomplish God’s will.

Good-bye, I embrace you. You will send back De Veronico after the retreat so that here I can assign him to look after the Italians.

1 Original: Rome. Archives of the Postulation, L. M.-Courtès.

2 The annual retreat of the Fathers and Brothers during the last week of October.

703. [To Father Guigues, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

703:IX in Oblate Writings

The Founder condemns undertakings done without permission. Father Pont at N. - D. de L’Osier. Annual retreat.

Guigues

[Marseilles.]

October 23, 1839.

I persist in condemning the building you have done without my authorization and against my wishes. Even if you had succeeded in building a palace, I hold order a greater value than comfort, beauty or wealth. I will never consent to the local superior considering himself the master of the house over which he presides and acting against the spirit and letter of our Rules independently of the Superior General. I allow so many things to run their course which my successors will certainly not tolerate, and they will be right. You understand that it is my duty at least to protest when things are pushed too far.

I had insisted on having Father Pont sent to you; he should have arrived for the retreat. Don’t disregard this good Father. Know how to appreciate his excellent qualities, he possesses what many others lack. For the rest, he will shape up, give him time and the assistance he may need.

I authorize all the Fathers of your community to hear the confessions of one another during the retreat. I don’t do this too willingly because you have some missionaries whom I consider incapable of giving good direction to those of their brother-priests who may need advice.

The two deacons have started their retreat.2 One of them came to see me before starting it to tell me of the pain his family’s regret was causing him. I think I gave him good reasons, encouraging him to overcome the cry of nature that is fairly normal and which all of us have overcome and so have the Saints who give us the example.

Certain personages are the heaviest cross the good Lord could lay on me; I try to carry it as best as I can. I would ask only for common sense for these people who see only themselves in this world and that is precisely what they lack, besides a heart.

I wish all of God’s blessings during your retreat. I recommend you to treat therein the crucial points of religious life so that each may be imbued with his duties.

1 YENVEUX III. 27; IV. 187: VI. 14; VII. 151. 259; VIII. 28.

2 Only Jean Viala was ordained on November 3, 1839, cf. *Registre des Insinuations de l’éveché de Marseille*.

704.[To Father Guigues, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

704:IX in Oblate Writings

The Congregation is caught in the midst of a storm.

Guigues

[Marseilles,]

November 4, 1839.

Pray to the Blessed Virgin that she comes to our assistance, never before has the Congregation experienced a similar storm. Death,2 apostasy,3 dreadful persecution4 from those whose duty it is to protect her. Are these sufficient reasons to cry out to God?

1 YENVEUX V. 237.

2 Brother Morandini’s death, on December 27, 1838 and that of Father Albini. on May 20, 1839.

3 Father J. A. Jérome Gignoux from the diocese of Gap had joined some priests of Gap to oppose the presence of the Oblates at N.-D. du Laus. “This wretched man has burnt his boats. He had to go to the Bishop of Gap to sell the Congreg[atio]n the way Judas sold his Master ...a traitor presents himself to betray his mother with all the calumnies his empty head and hateful heart had helped him invent ....“ Cf. J. M., November 24, 1839.

4 During the annual retreats, the priests were asked to sign a petition asking for the foundation of a home for elderly priests at N.-D. du Laus and thus indirectly asking that the Oblates be sent away.

96. [To Bishop N.A. de La Croix d’Azolette of Gap].1

96:XIII in Oblate Writings

Sadness that the Bishop of Gap supports the claims of his clergy against the Oblates at N.-D. du Laus. Conditions for the establishment at Laus in 1819.

La Croix d’Azolette Bishop

Marseilles,

November 6, 1839.

Your Lordship,

As much as in the ordinary course of events, mutual good relations with you are a pleasure to me, so, in the present circumstance, I would have wished to be dispensed from the sad necessity of coming to tell you that your letter, in spite of all the expressions of great kindness2 therein, has very much increased the profound grief that I feel since learning of what has happened during the last two pastoral retreats in your diocese. In the midst of this sorrow, I retained one source of hope: I told myself that you were the born defender of all the works placed under your care, and I was sure that you would reject, as it deserved the unspeakable attack provoked by a faction and [which gathered round it, taken in by surprise] a certain number of your priests against the community at Laus.3

The words that you expressed to me on your own initiative during your trip to Marseilles to assure me of your attitude was full of confidence and concern in regard to that community;4 similar statements that you made officially and in writing to members who are part of it; the language that you used concerning this matter on several remarkable occasions, especially at Lyons when speaking to a parish priest from my diocese; and finally, what has been reported to me as coming from your lips by M. Jeancard, a Canon of my Cathedral, who recently had the honor of seeing you on my behalf at Gap and at Embrun,5 everything assured me that you would defend by your authority, essentially a custodian of that which is good, a work that has never ceased to have the right to your protection. I was counting on it so much the more because, besides the perfect confidence that your justice, zeal for your charge, and whatever the piety of a Bishop makes him feel for those who have dedicated themselves unreservedly to the services of the Church which adopted them, inspired in me, I could not convince myself that there was the least chance that you would carry out what took place in the retreats with so much scandal for your diocese; you who, as you tell me in your letter, consider that the matter in question should be treated only by a few persons. How is it now, Your Lordship, that I am condemned to see, in the overture that you make to me, a first concession to the suggestions of certain people whose spirit is so opposed to your own, without respect for your character, persons who want you to bless a revolting injustice? I certainly am not going to do you the wrong of believing that you could ever become, as some might expect, the pitiless executor of the plan by which they had the audacity to compromise your authority; you are too wise, too just, to sum up in one word, too much a Bishop in your sentiments to come to that. Besides, your letter formally says that we need not fear such an extremity. Nevertheless, the proposition that it contains seems to be a direct result of the plan I am speaking about, and pursuing the same goal: it can only produce in me the most painful surprise. This very painful feeling which I cannot help you will not find amiss, I hope, and I confide it to your tact as a complaint drawn from the soul of one of your colleagues who expected news that is more consoling and better merited.

Your Lordship requests me to find some appropriate means to shorten the term of the possession, that is to say to set the time when the community of Laus would cease to exist. I can only reply to you in this regard that I don’t know of any means which would allow me to set such a date. When that community was canonically established by your predecessors, there was no time limit for its duration. It was well understood at that time that the premises that it occupies, as well as the service of the Church with the title of Parish Priest was granted them in perpetuity. It was a matter of forming, not a temporary establishment, but a stable and perpetual community in as much as things of this world can be such. I would never have accepted the proposals made to me by the ecclesiastical authority and by the owner of the house, if the community had not been definitively and perpetually established. The canonical act of institution, in accord with everything that was said at that time, forbade a supposition contrary to a perpetual establishment. There is more: a note of M. Peix, the owner, stating that the premises had been acquired as well as all the dependent property “with the intention of forming a retirement home for elderly priests or to make a gift of it to some religious Congregation which would serve the Church and restore the devotion of the h[ol]y place”. The known dispositions of this excellent gentleman and what he told the Superior of Laus during his last moments makes one believe that his intention was, when making the Parish Priest his heir in his will, to endow his right upon that of the members of the existing community who would be in charge of the Parish, which, according to the agreement made in his presence with the Ordinary of the diocese, was always to rest on one of these gentlemen.

It is true that the lease signed by myself and the person who granted the house and its dependents legally assures the possession for only twenty-nine years, but that act did not, in our common thought, set the date when the community would have to leave. That was so well understood that the first agreement would have made the lease for 99 years, and it was only on the erroneous decision of a lawyer consulted by myself (I still have his reply at hand), which told me that we could not make such a contract, that I proposed to reduce the lease to 29 years. We agreed on this, promising each other that the agreement would be renewed at each expiry, if, as seemed likely at that time, a testamentary arrangement or other would not have already transferred the property to the Missionaries who were being asked at that time to serve the shrine.

Your Lordship is thus aware that the real claim of the community at Laus is not that of people who offer themselves to serve a diocese for a specified time. A perpetual establishment has been formed, and, if one is not to be counter to agreements made, it can be undone only if those who are part of it were to deserve the loss of your confidence through their conduct. That is the condition for all establishments of this nature. They are all protected by possession which creates a true right in the eyes of the Church. I would violate justice if, without there being any complaints, I would, according to my own whim, send away the Jesuits or the Capuchins from my diocese, even though nothing had been stipulated with them. The community at Laus can not be treated with less consideration after twenty years of an existence so well earned by so much service rendered to the diocese. Even Your Lordship had no different sentiments when you instructed your secretary to write to the Superior at Laus the following letter: “You now have undoubtedly learned about our Bishop’s plan relative to a diocesan establishment that he intends to form. I must tell you that after a long conversation with His Lordship in which I set before him all the pain I would feel if he had any notion of being contrary to you in his diocese, he instructed me to tell you that he had no such intention; that your work was infinitely dear to his heart, that he valued you and respected you too much to undertake anything that could alarm you. There is enough work for everyone, he told me again, and even if there were twelve of those Gentlemen at Laus, we could still use all of them for the good of the diocese.”7 Relying on such formal words and others similar, the Missionaries at Laus have continued with the same zeal their ministry which is so profitable for souls. However, I do not wish to speak of the gratitude owed to them, nor of the confidence placed in them by the faithful and by so many good priests and which you yourself have shown them up to now; nor of the scandal which would certainly result from the destruction of their community and which without their generous as well as edifying concern would have already broken out in a deplorable manner: I will limit myself to saying that is impossible to agree that other works must be built up on their ruins. There is no precedent in the Church for destroying a community which is what it should be in order to replace it with another. The Jesuits establish themselves next to the Dominicans, the latter next to the Franciscans, the Redemptorists next to the Lazarists, etc… but none is sacrificed to the other, acquired rights are always respected. Without this spirit of conservation nothing would be stable where a good work must assist pre-existing good work and never destroy it. Thus, I sincerely wish the Lord to bless your works, but when my affection is involved in this question, I would regard their success as a scandal if it had to be bought at the price of destroying another holy work which has the blessing of the Catholic Church upon it.

I hope, Your Lordship, that the reasons that I have just succinctly set forward and which can be corroborated by so many others which the limits of a letter do not even allow me to indicate, will be strong enough to make you aware of how irreconcilable with tact and fairness is the plan according to which one would want, under the guise of good, go counter to your religious attitude.

Please accept, Your Lordship, the assurance of respectful attachment with which I remain your very humble and obedient servant.

+ C.J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Orig.:N.-D. du Laus.

2 Letter of October 24. Bishop de La Croix asked Bishop de Mazenod to “find in his charity some admissible means to shorten the term of the stay at Laus”.

3 During the retreats of 1838 and 1839, a petition was signed by the clergy asking for the establishment of a hospice for elderly priests at N.-D. du Laus, and indirectly, asking for the dismissal of the Oblates.

4 Bishop de la Croix had stopped at Marseilles at the beginning of 1838, cf. *Oblate Writings,* 9, p. 79 (Mazenod to Mille, January 6, 1838).

5 Letter of Jeancard to Bishop de La Croix, October 15, 1839, Ibid. “I was pleased to repeat what I heard from your own mouth that nothing will be done during your episcopate against the Laus community.”

6 We do not have this letter. In 1838. Bishop de la Croix founded a community of diocesan Missionaries, cf. J-M. Salgado, *Les Oblats à N.-D. du Lous. Etude et documents,* 1950-1965, polycopied, p. 24.

97. To The Reverend Mother Abbess of the S[ain]t Clare convent.1

97:XIII in Oblate Writings

Request for prayers: “persecution” in the diocese of Gap and lack of vocations.

Superior of Saint Clare’s Convent

Marseilles,

November 23, 1839.

I thank you, Good Mother, for your attention. I profit from the occasion you provide me to beg you to enjoin your community to recommend especially to God the Congregation of our Missionaries which is suffering a cruel persecution in the diocese of Gap. To you alone I tell the reason; you must not let your Sisters know about it. We lack men, it is impossible to fulfill all the ministries that the Congregation wants to do. The death of the holy Father Albini has completely undone the missions in Corsica. We are obliged to pass over a great number of missions in various dioceses evangelized by the Congregation. In short, a time of trial; we need the help of your prayers to repel the evil one to whom God has allowed some power to sow darnel in the field and to devastate the inheritance of the Father of the family.

I let you know these things so that you can speak confidently to God about them. I unite myself in advance with your prayers and bless you as well as your whole community.

+ C.J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Orig.: Marseilles. Monastery of the Poor Clares.

705.[To Father Dassy, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

705:IX in Oblate Writings

Fathers Guigues and Vincens may examine the novena to N. - D. de L’Osier. The building done by Father Guigues without permission must be demolished.

Dassy

[Marseilles,]

November 24, 1839.

I think you will do well to send me the novena2 composed by good Meyer; I shall send it back to you by coach unless some other occasion is handy. Father General of the Carmelites has sent me the replies to your different questions. I think you should abide by them, for there will be no end to this if you go on listening to all the critics in France.

After due consideration, I agree to your having your novena examined by Father Guigues and Father Vincens who will be in charge of this minute examination. You did not even send me one copy of Father Vincens’ booklet.

Far from giving approval to the building plan. I have blamed him very much, but everything was over. I did not at all accept the reasons they had given me and I was determined to have these constructions demolished at my first visit. It is already a lot that I did not order it immediately, for things were, according to what they claim, favourable to the mission. For the very fact that it was done without apprising me beforehand, it must be destroyed. They suspected that I knew of this disorder from you even though I did not divulge anything and, far from hiding it, you must maintain that not only did you make use of your right but that you have done your duty. As a matter of fact it has even been claimed that you were enchanted by it after it was finished; this still does not exempt those who had indulged in such a breach of the Rules from reprimand.

1 YENVEUX II. 45-46; III. 118.

2 The Founder had not approved the first text prepared by Father Dassy. The latter “completely” re-did the novena. Cf. Dassy to Mazenod, November 2, 1838. Original: AG.

706.[To Father Gignoux, at N.-D. de L’Osier].1

706:IX in Oblate Writings

Let Father Gignoux stop saying Mass.

Gignoux

[Marseilles,]

November 24, 1839.

Your apostasy places you in a state of mortal sin. Your disobedience to the order I gave to present yourself before me is an act of culpable insubordination which aggravates your crime still more. If there is still the least ray of heavenly light in you, you will understand the gravity of your fault and you yourself will abstain from going up the altar until you have made reparation, but since it is to be feared that a person who has surpassed all limits will be so blind as to take this step also, it is my duty in the double capacity as your superior and your bishop (for I believe that you have not forgotten that I am really your bishop by virtue of the act of excardination given by Bishop Arbaud on March 6. 1833, which constitutes you a subject of the Bishop of Marseilles), to halt you on this sacrilegious path; that is why I notify you by this present order to abstain from celebrating the holy mysteries until I decide that your repentance is sincere and that the great scandal you have just caused has been sufficiently repaired. In the meantime you can go back to your family to weep for your sin.

Since so fatherly a letter as the one I wrote you on first hearing the news of your estrangement did not produce any effect in you. I shall not attempt to add any other feeling than that of deep sorrowwhich your behaviour causes me.

1 YENVEUX VIII. 276. Father Gignoux was still staying at L’Osier. cf. J. M., November 22, 1839.

98.[To Bishop de La Croix d’Azolette of Gap, at Paris].1

98:XIII in Oblate Writings

The matter of Laus. Sends a copy of the agreement signed in 1818 between Father de Mazenod and M. Peix. Bishop de Mazenod does not appeal to the civil law, but to “the all powerful justice in a Bishop’s conscience”

La Croix d’Azolette Bishop

Marseilles,

December 19, 1839.

Your Lordship,

When you wrote asking me to shorten the term of the stay of the community at Notre-Dame du Laus, I was in a sort of impossibility to understand that such a request could be addressed to me by the Bishop of the diocese where the community that they want to expel has never ceased to do good. I was distressed to see that you lent yourself to a death-wish directed against a holy work of which you are the natural guardian, and which both the Church by approving it, and your predecessor by adopting it, had destined it to the greatest possible duration and recommended it to your benevolence. Nevertheless, I hoped that the reasons that I gave in reply to your letter would make a decisive impression in the eyes of justice as well as of religion. I invoked the evidence of agreements; I said that through the reciprocal consent of the ecclesiastical authority and the owner of the property on one hand, and of myself on the other hand, the community of Laus was set up to be perpetual, that I would never have accepted on any other conditions the proposals made to me, and that if the lease stipulated only twenty-nine years, it was the result of an error on a lawyer’s part. They had offered me to have it last for ninety-nine years. On top of that, it was only a legal title that we agreed to renew at each expiry if we had not foreseen beforehand in a definitive manner to the perpetuity of the work that was established, but in reality the agreement of trust guaranteed that perpetuity.

I thus appealed, not to the civil law which could know only the written agreement whose term was still far away, but rather to the all-powerful equity in a Bishop’s conscience. I reassured myself with your given word that I recalled and I was thus even further from thinking that after that reply the matter could ever take on a legal character which your own letter formally stated [that you wished to avoid]: “As much as it is in my power,” you said, “I dismiss and will [always] dismiss from this matter any legal action distressing to human hearts. That thought will always be far from my mind or rather it will never have a place there. Would it be fitting for us who, in the position that Divine Providence has placed us, ought especially and before all else to give the example of impartiality and maintain concord between brother? That is the language I have used at every meeting.”2

How astonished I was when, after my explanation about the right of the community, I received a letter in which you asked me for the agreement with M. Peix, and, speaking of this matter, gave me to understand that you wanted to examine to what point it would be legally speaking an obstacle to your plans.3

It is certainly normal that you know the agreement, but the manner in which you asked for it supposes that you consider it as the only title that I can urge; from which it follows either that you did not believe what I told you about the agreement of trust, in which case you do me the most cruel injury that a Bishop can receive from one of his colleagues; or that the agreement of trust which binds both honor and conscience, and which has full authority between honest people doesn’t seem to have any importance for you since the civil law would not recognize them, and in that case you would harm yourself, Your Lordship, and it would be your sacred character that you would blemish. Will you tolerate that your brother in the episcopate speaks to you with such gospel honesty, between yourself and him? He has no intention of hurting you; on the contrary, he still hopes that it will suffice to offer you these observations so that once your piety and zeal are roused, they will stop you from committing an injustice which is far from your heart, but which would be notorious if, taking advantage of what may be discovered as some legal nullity in the written agreement, qualified legal consultants say there is none you would attempt to remove the community of Laus from the position that it now occupies.

They say that you plan to have the Government decide the question: but is that something that is fitting for a bishop to do?4 Would you hand over to the secular arm a community that has never ceased to merit good things from the Church? I can’t believe it, for that would be the greatest scandal of the present time, as well as your going back on your given word. Moreover, it is as an individual that I arranged the lease with M. Peix, the owner, and between myself and those who might come forward, even without any basis, as having a case to settle with M. Peix. The Government would not be competent, but rather the courts to which I have not had recourse: they alone, if we want a full-scale scandal broadcast all over France, could force me to abandon the property to which I have a right, as they would surely recognize.

I thought I should send along this declaration with the copy of the agreement with M. Peix, herein included.

I hope that what I tell you in a straightforward manner, but not without profound grief, will be understood by you in a sense favorable to the community which I defend, now that you are far from the wearisome obsessions of certain individuals, and are at the point of becoming the shepherd of another flock.5 I admit that, on hearing of this circumstance, I thought that you would discontinue a plan that could no longer have the same interest for you, and which, if it were to be complete during the remainder of your jurisdiction, would be totally unexplainable.

The community at Laus has certainly not merited to be persecuted by you beyond your episcopate.

Please accept, Your Lordship, with the same sentiment! of charity with which I address it to you, the language that zeal for justice inspires in me; think it over in your conscience at the foot of your crucifix; weigh the consequences of this whole matter with the standard of the altar, and we will immediately be reunited in the same mind of equality and guardianship. If unfortunately it would be otherwise, the responsibility of the public scandal would not fall on me, neither before God nor before men. But no, the charity of Jesus Christ will triumph, peace will be restored to a community that you highly regard and which at this very moment does not respond to the blows rained upon it except by the fruits of salvation that it is producing through its work in the midst of your flock.

I still hope from you a return to the kindness that your episcopal heart cannot refuse to evangelical workers who have never ceased to be devoted to you, and I remain, with respectful attachment, Your Lordship’s very humble and obedient servant.

+ C.J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

P.S. I take the occasion to complain to you about the raid that three priests sent by your Vicar General made at Notre-Dame du Laus to present to Father Mille a summation (with threats) to hand over the agreement, without leaving me, after I myself had written about this matter, twenty-four hours between the request and the reply to be made. You will be the judge of this lack of respect for me and this lack of tact. Besides, that is only one incident in a thousand in this deplorable matter.6

1 Orig.: N.-D. du Laus.

2 Bishop de La Croix had submitted the matter to the Minister of Worship in a memorandum dated December 13, t839.

3 The Bishop of Gap to Bishop de Mazenod, October 24, 1839. Orig.: N.-D. du Laus.

4 The Bishop of Gap to Bishop de Mazenod, November 16. 1839. *Ibid.*

5 Bishop de La Croix had just been promoted to the Archdiocese of Auch and was then at Paris.

6 In his letter of November 16 to the Founder, Bishop de La Croix had asked for a copy “of the titles that you have in your possession which formed the agreement between yourself and M. Peix”. Bishop de Mazenod was late in replying, and that is why M. Martel, the Vicar General of Gap, sent three priests to Laus, carrying a summation which demanded the titles immediately. Bishop Jeancard had already protested in the name of Bishop de Mazenod and explained the reason for the delay, cf. Jeancard to Callandre, Secretary of the Bishop’s house in Gap, December 15, 1839, *Ibid.*