*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.*

1861

184.To His Eminence, Cardinal Archbishop Donnet of Bordeaux.1

184:XIII in Oblate Writings

Death of the Abbé Noailles. Father Bellon is named Pro-Director of the Holy Family. Illness.

Donnet Archbishop

Marseilles,

February 12, 1861.

My Lord,

Confined to my bed of suffering for the last several weeks, I have just learned of the death of the venerable Abbé Noailles, the pious Founder of the Works of the Holy Family. The Council for these Ladies, in announcing this regrettable loss to me, recalled the obligations that I had contracted as Superior General of the Oblates of Mary in the agreement finalized under the auspices of Your Eminence.

If the obligations I accepted were exclusively personal, perhaps I should have waited until I am completely well before accepting the duties they lay on me; but since it is the Superior General who is bound by them, I felt it my duty to reply already today to the Council of the Holy Family that as of now I accept the consequences of my given word. Thus I have, according to formally expressed wishes of those Ladies, designated Father Bellon, who is already known to Your Eminence, to reside at Bordeaux and represent me in regard to the Holy Family.

I did not hesitate, Your Lordship, to respond instantly to the terms of the request from the Council of the Holy Family: I recall that you yourself encouraged this affiliation and shared with me your hope that from it would result a greater good for the glory of God and the benefit of souls. It will be the case if God, taking Your Eminence’s and my intentions into account, as well as those of the Congregation of these Ladies, deigns to bless a work to which we brought no human motivation.

Is it necessary, My Lord, to request Your Eminence’s continued protection and beg you to freely give at every moment your advice and counsel to Father Bellon, who has been advised to seek them.

As for myself, My Lord, I am in God’s hands. The doctors and those around me give me hope that my good health will return. May God’s will be done!

Your Eminence is aware how much moved I am by the sentiments of goodwill and friendship that you have always shown me. I thank you once again for the encouraging cooperation that you lent me in finalizing the matter that I have just spoken about and which I like to regard as your own work.

I recommend myself to your good prayers which will be pleasing to God, for they come from a friend’s heart.

On my part, Your Lordship, I renew the assurance of my total and constant dedication.

+ C.J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Original, Bordeaux, Archdiocesan Archives: religieux ohlats.

1465. [To Father Charles Bellon, at N.-D. de Talence, Bordeaux].1

1465:XII in Oblate Writings

Father Bellon is named delegate of Bishop de Mazenod, Director General of the Association of the Holy Family. He will take the oath called for in the general Rules.

Bellon

Marseilles,

February 14, 1861.

When they gave us the news of the sorrowful loss of its venerable Founder, the Holy Family, through the intermediary of the president of the General Council of Mary, reminded us that in our quality of Superior General of the Oblates, we had become Director General of the Holy Family; and that we have to delegate one of our men who will effectively represent us by residing in the midst of the works of the same Society and by guiding them in our name and with our authority.

After the first moments of sorrow which followed the death of so kind a friend, the providential founder of an ensemble of works that are so useful to the Church, we hastened to provide for the government of those whom we must henceforth see as our daughters and who ought to find in us him whom they so truthfully called their good Father.

Consequently, aware that you have been able to draw from the source of this venerated Founder’s spirit, and that by the affection and confidence he honored you with until his last moments he seemed to be designating you in advance as our choice; taking into account the formal request sent to us by the General Council of Mary; knowing ourselves the affection that you have dedicated to the Holy Family, your filial attachment to us and your devotedness to the Congregation, and being convinced that your personal qualities make you quite fit to fulfil these tasks, we now designate you and appoint you to be our representative in conformity with what has been agreed upon in the affiliation contract.

Therefore, my dear son, you must be deeply imbued with the duties that are now yours because of this new position. We do not need to tell you what zeal. devotedness and prudence that you must bring to the accomplishment of this grave and difficult mission. Nor will you forget that, having been called to direct under our authority, you must through frequent communications and a complete openness enable us to follow constantly your administration and to lend it the support of our dignity.

In order to facilitate this mutual understanding, we have designated one of our Assistants who is resident near to our person, the Reverend Father Fabre, as the official correspondent with you in matters concerning the Holy Family.

The objectives that we should aim for are: to maintain always in the Holy Family the spirit of their venerated Founder; to see to the observance of the very wise rules that he has left us; to assure the sanctification and happiness of his children; to take care that the union of the two families under one and the same head be consolidated by relationships which are ever more apt to procure the common edification and progress of the persons concerned.

Nor will you lose sight of the fact that we profess a special devotedness to our Lords the Bishops, that we love to receive their light and have at heart to merit their blessing on our works. We owe a special gratitude and complete deference to the Eminent Cardinal2 in whose diocese the Holy Family has its origins.

Place all your trust in God, my dear son; place yourself under the tutelary protection of the patrons of the Holy Family and especially of our Immaculate Mother. The assistance of Heaven will not fail you.

I bless you, my dear son, and all my daughters of the Holy Family.

+ C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.3

Vincens, s[ecretary] g[eneral], O. M. I.

To our dear son, Charles Barthélemy Bellon.

We, Charles Joseph Eugene de Mazenod, Founder and Superior General of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in the moment of taking on the general direction of the Holy Family’s works, want to fulfil the obligation that befalls each new Director General to make and to receive the oath prescribed for such a circumstance by the general rules, and, using the freedom allowed us to have ourselves represented for this act by someone who replaces us:

Delegate for this purpose the Reverend Father Charles Barthélemy Bellon, priest in our Congregation and presently resident at Notre-Dame de Talence near Bordeaux.

We want him to make the oath in our name and to receive in our place the oath which was to have been sworn before us and we determine that these acts thus carried out have the same force as if we had ourselves proceeded thereto in person.

Given at Marseilles on this 14 February,

Eighteen hundred and sixty one.

C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

Vincens, s[ecretary] g[eneral], O.M.I.

1 Orig.: Rome. Archives of the Holy Family.

2 Cardinal Donnet.

3 The Founder had been seriously ill since the first days of January; he only signed these texts prepared by Father Vincens.

Circular Letter no. 6 on the affiliation with the Sisters of the Holy Family of Bordeaux1

Circular 6: XII in Oblate Writings

Death of Father Noailles. The General Council of Mary recognizes as its first head the Superior General of the Oblates and proposes Father Charles Bellon for the title of pro-director. Main points of the affiliation treaty. Rules of conduct for Fathers who will be ministering to the Sisters. Branches and works of the Holy Family.

L.J.C. et M.I.

Circular 6 to all Oblates

Marseilles.

March 15. 1861.

My reverend and dear Fathers.

Barely a few months ago. we addressed to you a circular letter regarding a matter of the highest importance: the proposed union with the *Holy Family.*

Your replies were fortunately not long in coming. We have them all in hand, even those from the foreign missions - all except those of the vicariates of St. Boniface and of Natal. The Fathers there are located at such great distances from each other that, to our great regret, in view of the circumstances, we cannot count on their votes which, as far as that goes, would not occasion any notable change since your viewpoint is almost unanimous.

Generally speaking, your replies are such as we expected them to be. You either approve quite simply or else you trust yourself to our own wisdom. There are very few conflicting voices which to us seem to be refusing something that was not at all requested.

This consent, which we had made a condition in the treaty of affiliation, was necessary to us as an assurance in a matter which, while presenting real advantages, seemed at first sight to be counter to my own views and to remove us from the spirit of our vocation.

It would seem that God has himself chosen to dissipate our doubts.

One could say. in fact, that he was only waiting for the verification of this condition before he would call to himself the Founder of the *Holy Family* to crown his merits and to put the final seal to the proposed union.

As early as February 10th, two days after the death of the Good Father, we received the following letter which you will certainly read with holy emotion:

My Lord and Reverend Father.

You undoubtedly already know the sorrowful loss we have just sustained in the person of our well-beloved Father and Founder. In spite of the profound sorrow into which we are immersed, in spite of the sad thoughts that preoccupy us, we cannot lose from sight the duty which we have to fulfil towards your Lordship.

And first of all, allow us to say how fervent are the hopes and wishes we entertain for the restoration of your precious health. While removing from us the kindest and best of Fathers, may God be pleased to keep for us him to whom we are bound by ties that are all the stronger because they have been fashioned by our venerated Founder himself.

I shall limit myself, my Lord, by communicating to you an extract from the deliberations of the General Council of Mary, which has met today, for the purpose of setting out in the direction that the treaty of Affiliation points out for us.

EXTRACT OF THE DELIBERATIONS

*of the General Council of Mary*

Today, February 8, 1861, Mother Octavie Daudigeos, Permanent President of the General Council of Mary, called into meeting the general councillors of Mary present in Bordeaux, for the purpose of carrying out, as far as they are concerned, the sole clause of the affiliation treaty that remains to be implemented.

She explained the necessity into which the painful circumstances have placed us to embark immediately upon the route so explicitly charted by our beloved and forever regretted Father.

In the same line as she had taken, all the Council members emphatically affirmed that their most ardent desire was to conform fully and entirely to the perfectly well-known will of our venerated Founder.

After the said treaty of affiliation had been read aloud, and particularly articles 3, 4 and 5, from which it follows that by the sole fact of the death of the Founder of the Holy Family the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate becomes, by right and in perpetuity, the Director General of the Association of the Holy Family, all the Council members declared that they recognize as their first Head the said Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, and that they consider themselves to be the obedient and devoted daughters of him whom their venerated Founder has designated to replace him in the government of the Association’s members and works.

After article 28 of the treaty of affiliation had been read, all the Council members again declared that they gave their full and entire adherence as mentioned in that same article, aware as they were that the Superior General was for his part working to implement this clause.

It was decided that the Permanent President of the General Council of Mary would communicate to the Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate this extract of the deliberations with the intention:

1° - to offer his Lordship the assurance of submission and obedience that all the General Councillors of Mary send to him in all sincerity;

2° -to remind his Lordship that, according to the terms of the treaty. he is to have himself substituted in the administration of the *Holy Family* by one of his own men, who will reside in the centre of our Association and administer it with full authority under the dependence and direction of the Superior General;

In this respect, the members of the General Council have unanimously expressed the wish that the Reverend Father Bellon, who has been in a position to comprehend better our venerated Father’s ideas and sentiments and upon whom this good Father seemed to rely with so much confidence and affection, especially during this last illness, be the one whom the Superior General designates as his representative;

3° - the Council members also take the liberty to draw the Superior General’s attention to article 17 of the treaty of affiliation according to which one of the Assistants General attached to the person of the Superior General is to be designated to concern himself officially with matters pertaining to the *Holy Family*

4° Finally, one last formality must be attended to: the oath which, according to the general rules and article S of the treaty of affiliation, the new Director General of the Association of the *Holy Family* is to take when he assumes his duties of office either in person or through his representative.

Deign to accept, y Lord, our filial and respectful submission; we want to be your most devoted and obedient children. Be a good Father to us; help us by your prayers and paternal affection to bear the weight of our profound and so legitimate sorrow and be so kind as to accept the expression of the veneration filled with respect with which I have the honor to be

Your Lordship’s most humble and obedient servant and daughter.

Octavie Daudigeos.

Permanent President of the General Council of Mary.

Bordeaux. February 8. 1861.

As you can well imagine, reverend and dear Fathers, upon receipt of such a letter, there was no reason at all to delay.

Though seriously ill, two days later I wanted my Council to meet in order to take cognisance of this letter, to verify your assent by studying your reports. and to take a definitive decision.

Acceptance was unanimously voted and on the same day I authorized the Reverend Father Bellon to assume, on my behalf and that of my successors, the duty of Director General of the *Holy Family.*

Such being the situation,Reverend Fathers and Brothers, we deem it necessary to give you some explanations which will be useful to direct your conduct in this new state of affairs.

Here, first of all, are the main elements of the treaty which serve as a basis to this union.

First article. - A spiritual association is now formed between the Congregation of the Oblate Fathers of Mary Immaculate and the Association of the *Holy Family* which consists of different Works or Branches related to it.

... These different Branches will continue to form only one united whole. All will be equally subject to the general rules and to the particular rules which their Founder has given them, as well as to one and the same direction which originates with the Director General or his representative and is transmitted by the one superior whom the rules indicate under the title of General Directress.

Art. 2. - As a consequence of this affiliation, the two Societies will henceforth form only one as to the spiritual domain and there will be communications of merit and privileges to the degree that the different positions render possible.

Art. 3. - The Superior General of the Oblates gives his consent. for himself and his successors, to accept the government of the *Holy Family* as he does for his own Congregation.

Art. 11. - The Superior General of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate will direct the Holy Family according to the constitutions and rules given to this Association by its Founder.

Art. 15. - In the administration of the Holy Family. the Superior General will be substituted by one of his own men who is to reside in the centre of the *Holy Family* and who will carry out his administration with the full authority of the Director General according to the rules of the Association, but always under the direction and dependence of the Superior General.

Art. 16. - The representative of the Superior General can be removed at his will.

Art. 17. - One of the Assistants attached to the person of the Superior General will be designated to concern himself officially with the *Holy Family* affairs. Administrative measures concerning the Holy Family’s members and works ought normally to pass through the representative and the General Directress.

Art. 18. - The four assistants of the Superior General will also be assistants in regard to the Holy Family in all matters that are forwarded to the Superior General’s Council.

Art. 19. - The provincials. vicars of mission and local superiors will not by right have any authority over the provinces and houses of the *Holy Family* the Superior General, however, will be free to delegate this authority to them in a transitory manner as visitors.

Art. 20. - In towns where both an Oblate House and a community of the *Holy Family* are located, whenever possible an Oblate Father will be entrusted with the spiritual direction of this community.

Art. 21. - The Director General is not bound to give spiritual directors of the Congregation to all the communities of the *Holy Family;* but he will see to it that the Sisters are not deprived of the spiritual aid that they need.

Art. 22. - Nevertheless, in order that the Sisters may find in these holy exercises instructions that are more in line with their vocation, the annual retreats will as much as possible be preached by Oblate Fathers.

Art. 23. - The temporal goods of the two branches of the Congregation remain completely distinct.

Art. 26. - Finally, as a consequence of this affiliation, the two works will see each other as forming but one single family and will reciprocally render each other all the good services that their respective positions allow them to offer or to claim.

My Reverend and dear Fathers, these are the main articles of the treaty which served as the basis for the affiliation which we have just contracted.

It is easy to deduce therefrom the kind of zeal arid devotedness with the two works ought to help each other in temporal and spiritual matters; since they now have but one Father, they will truly constitute one and the same family.

We do not see it necessary to give you an exhortation in this regard. The spirit of charity, zeal and holiness that we have tried to inspire in all our children guarantees that in all circumstances the *Holy Family* will find in you priests according to God’s heart as well as devoted Fathers. Here are some points, however, that should be kept in mind.

Please note, first of all, that only the Superior General and his representative exercise authority in regard to the *Holy Family.* Consequently. except for a special delegation. no one, no matter what position he may fill in the Congregation. will have to concern himself with the works or members of the *Holy Family.*

You will surely before God show a lively interest in those whose merits you share. You will pray for them, you will consider yourself fortunate to be able to help them, to find vocations for them, to contribute to the success of their works; but never, unless specially authorized thereto or with an explicit invitation, are you to meddle in their works, even under the pretext of exercising your holy ministry.

The more the bonds that unite us are close and sacred, the more reserve and discretion are necessary in our relationship.

Thus, when travelling, the Sister superiors of the various communities will certainly be glad to receive your visit, to open their chapels to you for celebrating the sacred Mysteries; they will be concerned to help you as we will consider ourselves happy to render them some service; but you will never stay with them and, unless their chaplain is well-known to you or you have received an explicit invitation to do so. you will not stay with him either.

Likewise, as a general rule, you will not ask to see any individual Sister; or. in certain cases when you have sufficient reasons to request this, you will explain these to the superior in all simplicity and the latter will decide what is appropriate.

For the same reasons, there will be no correspondence with the different members of the *Holy Family,* except with explicit permission.

Secondly. since it is extremely important that the spiritual direction of the Sisters retain a unity which is its strength and security, you will take care not to attract individual dirigées to yourselves from the houses of the *Holy Family;* nor will you offer yourselves to hear confessions there, except when authorized thereto by your superiors or upon a special invitation from the Sister Superior.

On the other hand, the superiors of our different houses will readily be prepared to render, either in person or through the men under their jurisdiction, all the services they can to the communities of the *Holy Family.*

The ministry we will most often have to exercise among our Sisters will be retreats.

Those of our Fathers who will be assigned to this important task will do all they can to prepare themselves and to be fit to accomplish this service in a most fruitful manner.

We shall be breaking the bread of the Word for Sisters and that ought to be a consolation for us. Since, however, this sublime ministry is beset with difficulties, nobody will undertake it on his own responsibility. but everyone will leave it completely up to the superiors to call them thereto and to designate the communities to be thus evangelized.

My Reverend and dear Fathers, in these retreats you will beware against every particular bias and preconceived ideas. You go there not to make your views prevail, not at all to introduce a new spirit, but to reanimate your Sisters in the spirit of their vocation. You will remember that the main purpose of a religious retreat is to bring people back to regularity, to draw them closer to their superiors, to revive the spirit of piety and abnegation. by maintaining above all the fervent devotedness which, so to speak, is the very essence of the vocation of the *Holy Family* Sisters.

It is possible that you may be consulted about changing Institutes. Generally speaking. this is a very dangerous temptation. a snare laid for souls in an effort to have them return to the world. But especially in cases where you feel you ought to favor a change. take care not to set yourselves up as masters and even take care to conceal your doubts. One cannot make a definite decision about a Sister’s future after seeing her only once or twice and having heard only her side of the story.

There is no need, my dear Fathers, to tell you with what reserve you ought to conduct yourselves toward the Sisters during the time of the retreat. *In omnibus exhibeamus nosmetipsos tanquam Dei ministros.* This maxim is sufficient. I only want to add that you will carefully avoid establishing relationships which are meant to last beyond the time of these holy exercises. Let us do good while we are there doing the work, *let us withdraw as soon as we have finished* and then let us limit ourselves to pray for the souls to whom it was granted us to do some good.

Some of our Fathers who are qualified to do this kind of ministry may be called upon to undertake the spiritual direction of *Holy Family* communities located near our houses. You are aware of the importance that we attach to such a position.

Many reasons motivate a good priest to concern himself with devotedness to souls that are solely dedicated to procuring God’s glory and the neighbor’s sanctification.

In the case of our own men, other more powerful reasons join the more general motives. Henceforth, the works of the *Holy Family* are our works, their merit is added to ours, their success is our own. These Sisters are working for us. And what good work they do!

Let us tell you, my dear Fathers, that the zealous Founder of the *Holy Family* had undertaken the task of sending his devoted daughters wherever there was good that needed to be done, however difficult its accomplishment may have seemed.

The Association of the *Holy Family* has its Hermits who, far removed from the world’s noise, pray without ceasing for us and for poor sinners.

It has its Sisters of Hope who enter the dwelling of the dying wicked person. will take her place near the bed of his suffering, and watch day and night in an effort to win his soul through the power of charity and abnegation.

It has its humble Farming Sisters who will condemn themselves to the most difficult manual work, to tilling the fields, in order to teach the children of good farmers to love their farm, their work, and God.

The Sister of the *Holy Family* teaches the child of the poor in modest schools; likewise, in the midst of our most populated cities, she opens boarding schools to which the highest classes send their children to receive the benefit of a Christian education.

We see her visiting the needy in their homes, serving him in hospitals, opening homes for him, directing workshops, establishing orphanages, and, finally, developing abnegation to such a degree that, under the name of Sister of St. Martha, she will become a maid-servant out of love for Jesus Christ. Souls who can offer themselves to all these kinds of devotedness are truly daughters of God alone. The merits of such a life must be abundant and, since a portion of them are shared by us, we have all sorts of reason to promote the good success of these works.

It is therefore our task to work ardently at sanctifying these elite souls, to encourage their zeal, to sustain them in suffering and trials, to find devoted members for them, to neglect nothing on our part which would hinder our Sisters from finding in the *Holy Family* all the means of perfection that they came to discover there.

We shall therefore apply ourselves with a holy earnestness to fulfil this important ministry.

On the other hand, you will always keep in mind the rules of wisdom that ought to guide your conduct:

1° - First, it is from us, through the intermediary of our Provincials, that you will receive your mission and you will not cease from being placed under the dependence and direction of your ordinary superiors.

Our representative to the *Holy Family,* the General Pro-Director, has no authority over you, but in a spirit of respect and deference for him, you will gratefully receive his advice, observations and the direction that he may wish to give you on the best way of fulfilling your important functions.

2° - To assure unity in an Association that is so vast and made up of such different elements, the general direction of the houses and members must come from the centre.

Not only will you refrain from thwarting this course, but you will also strive to bring back thereto those who may be tempted to withdraw from it.

3° - The Sister superior of each house must, under her Superior General, enjoy full and entire authority. You are not to meddle with the government of the houses. You have no permission or dispensation to give, to order to give in anything that is under the jurisdiction of the Sister superior. Your constant concern should be to draw all members close to this salutary authority.

4° - Consequently. you must never forget that the members being open to the superiors is a basic point in every religious community. Their happiness and security rests almost exclusively on this practice.

We can even affirm that this total openness is even more necessary in the *Holy Family* than it is elsewhere. In the various tasks that the sublime devotedness of this Association has undertaken, the members risk the greatest dangers if they do not care to make sure that they are well known.

The direction given by the confessor cannot replace that of the superior. We help people to sanctify themselves in the situation in which they are; we cannot do anything to change or modify that situation. Consequently, convinced as we are of the importance of that regular direction, we will do all we can to encourage it among the members.

5° - Generally speaking. you will make the effort to be imbued with the spirit of the *Holy Family ‘s* constitutions and you will always conform yourselves to the same in your direction.

On the other hand, keeping in mind the world’s malice and the weakness of certain people plus our own, and want to keep intact the honor of our dear Congregation. we will conduct ourselves towards our Sisters with a great deal of prudence and an extreme reserve.

Generally speaking. you should see the Sisters only in the tribunal of penance. Too many parlor visits occasion miseries, pave the way for criticisms and are not without their dangers.

Finally, my Reverend and dear Fathers, we are deeply convinced that the *Holy Family,* if well directed, will continue to be a powerful instrument for the salvation of souls; that it will be one of the glories of the Congregation, but on the condition that, as we become fathers to these spouses of Jesus Christ, who are meant to be angels on earth, we ourselves feel the need to fill ourselves more and more with God’s spirit, to detach ourselves totally from all human sentiment, all self-seeking, and to live only for Jesus Christ.

My dear Fathers, I am very happy to add that my health is improving, though quite slowly. I take this occasion to thank you for your good prayers and I bless you and all the members of the family with the tenderness of a Father.

+ Charles-Joseph-Eugene.

Bishop of Marseilles

Superior General of the Congregation

 of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate.

1 Printed: Rome. Postulation Archives. D M LX. *5.* This circular letter has the no. *5.* This number designates the fifth letter published in *Circulaires administratives des Supérieurs* Généraux … from 1861 onwards. The first four were written by Father Tempier (January 17th and 30th; February 10 and March 7th. 1861) on the Founder’s illness. This one was composed by Father Vincens. Cf. obituary notice by Father Fabre. *Notices nécr. OMI.,* VII. p.494.

78. [To Cardinal Barnabo, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide]1.

78:V in Oblate Writings

Words of thanks for the interest shown by the Cardinal and the Holy Father during Bishop de Mazenod’s illness. Despite his many qualities, Fr. Trudeau is not the right man to become bishop of Vancouver. The Oblate Congregation can propose a number of names for one of the future bishoprics in British Colombia. Hopes for a solution favorable to the Oblates in the near future on the problems of the Church in Ceylon.

Propaganda Fide

Marseilles,

March 27, 1861.

Monseigneur,

I have just received your letter of the 21st of this month. Before proceeding to respond to the serious matters therein contained, I first feel it necessary to thank Your Eminence for the kind and affectionate thoughts transmitted through my auxiliary, Bishop Jeancard, and for what you added personally in your latest letter. On this occasion, as always, you have shown me how sincere and profound was your affection for me. Rest assured that as far as I am concerned, the sentiments of affectionate esteem which Your Eminence has always inspired are and will remain unaltered. My strength is slowly returning and I hope that slowly but surely and with the help of God, I will be able to regain sufficient strength.

I was also profoundly touched by what the Holy Father instructed you to tell me and the Apostolic Blessing he granted to me. Alas! This well-beloved Father is on Calvary: if the filial expression of the part I assume of his tribulations can sweeten the bitterness of his pain, I would be very grateful if you could assure His Holiness that my heart as a son shares all his pains and that I pray the Lord to shorten the days of tribulation and finally bring about the triumph of justice and truth in the person of their most august representative.

With regard to the matter for which I am writing, I request your permission to address you with that complete frankness by which you know me and which many times has not displeased you. In all the communications I have had the honor to have with Your Eminence, I have never had but the greatest good in view. In this matter as in all others, I am inspired by the same reason.

Firstly, I can only be very grateful to the Bishops of Canada who made the choice and to Your Eminence who agreed upon this priest for the See of Vancouver from the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary of which I am the Founder and the Father. I could not be indifferent to this sign of esteem. Therefore, if I asked Your Eminence to be so kind as not to appoint the designated subject, Fr. Trudeau, to that See, I did so to fulfill a duty of conscience imposed upon me by the confidential and most personal communications that Father felt it necessary to send me as his superior. In the eyes of Your Eminence my observations must have that special character with which they are endowed by my profound knowledge of the subject. I am in no way surprised that His Excellency the Bishop of Montreal, judging on the basis of external qualities alone, is of a contrary opinion and insists upon the adoption of his choice. My opinion, however, should not be compared with that of this worthy prelate. We begin from a different principle and while one only considers the exterior, the other considers the interior dispositions. These dispositions oblige one to insist anew that Fr. Trudeau, in whom I am pleased to note excellent qualities, should not be raised to the episcopacy. My insistence in this way with Your Eminence is in compliance with the wish expressed to me by that Father through his confessor in a letter written after the one I had Fr. Tempier write to you on the matter.2 I am telling Your Eminence all of this to justify my insistence, but I take the liberty to point out that I am confiding all of this to you alone. Without betraying the trust placed in me by this religious, I could not permit the members of the Sacred Congregation to know all I have had the honor to tell you on this matter. I therefore venture to hope that taking my new requests into serious consideration Your Eminence will not give effect to the nomination of Fr. Trudeau to the See of Vancouver.

Nor should I conceal from Your Eminence how great my suffering would be if an Irish priest3 were appointed to that See. His Excellency the Bishop of Montreal sees absolutely no one like that in all of Canada who could be proposed. However, there is one in Vancouver and he is the only secular priest Bishop Demers has in his diocese. That priest has already made himself known and his elevation to the episcopacy would make the ministry of our Oblates of Mary impossible in his diocese. His Excellency the Bishop of Vancouver called them there, and the Sacred Congregation ordered me to send them there. I did it eagerly as I will always do. Their ministry there has encountered slowness, difficulties, and clashes, some of which certainly inherent to the location and the type of ministry, but many others were caused. Some of them have been overcome but it was only with time that it was possible to triumph, and even that in an incomplete fashion, over all the problems which had been raised by this priest who exercises such a great and unfortunate influence over the character of a naturally irresolute Bishop Demers. Like many other priests from his country, this Irish priest went to this mission to do good undoubtedly, but perhaps and especially to create a position for himself. That concern to advance is the only thing to which I can attribute the proposal made to Your Eminence by Bishop Demers. It was suggested to him by this priest who wants to become a bishop to do, no doubt, on a larger scale what he can only do today in a way which is more modest and insufficient for his aspirations. I know that Your Eminence will stigmatize views like that and I am convinced that to make them known to you means to put a stop to them. With similar thoughts of money and ambition not only does one not accomplish good, but one also prevents it from being accomplished. That is what has come to pass in part and what would have happened completely without perseverance on one hand and without certain feelings of respect for public opinion on the other hand.

I would have no difficulty at all with the appointment to that See of a Canadian priest truly worthy of the episcopacy and especially such a responsibility. Through experience, however, I am led to consider the reasons advanced by the worthy Bishop of Montreal quite weak. Bishop Demers is Canadian. He is not the only Canadian bishop in the province of Oregon. Over the twenty years that this province has been occupied by Canadian bishops, the rapidity with which priests from Canada have hastened to join them has struck me as being quite limited. There have been none at all for the diocese of Vancouver and if there were some, they were few in number and didn’t stay long. The Fathers of the Oblate Congregation represent practically all of the clergy in this immense but wretched diocese. That was one of the principal reasons which lead to the choice of Fr. Trudeau for that See. Wouldn’t it seem to Your Eminence that it would only be necessary to change the person and select another Oblate to take over the See which is not one to be coveted by anyone.

I was unaware of the request addressed to Your Eminence by Bishop Demers when I requested the erection of the Apostolic Vicariate of British Colombia composed of two episcopal sees which have been merged into that of Vancouver. I had advanced that request to finally give our missions some stability, to protect our missionaries from the many problems which tire and discourage them, to unite all authority under the same hand in order to bring to all the works more togetherness, unity, and activity, and to be able to work with greater ardor for the conversion of a large number of savage tribes which have thus far been practically neglected. I have told Your Eminence and must repeat that vexations and obstacles end up by exhausting the strongest zeal, and that our missionaries who ask for nothing better than to devote themselves with generosity and abnegation to these works need to have before them a perspective other than what they have had to date. I venture to hope that by adopting the way I have indicated, Your Eminence would be able to assure what has already been done and prepare what remains to be done for the general good. What remains to be done is very much more than what has already been done.

What I take the liberty to propose to Your Eminence has already been done, and I would dare to say with success, for the mission of Red River. This truly thankless and difficult mission prospers today. Why couldn’t it be the same in this immense diocese of Vancouver made up of three dioceses4 and where the savage populations especially abound and await the Good News. The diocese of St. Boniface, by being entrusted to the Oblates, is far from being neglected by the bishops, priests, and people of Canada. I dare to flatter myself that it could be the same in Vancouver and I do not believe I am rash in my confidence.

If Your Eminence deigns to take into consideration what I have had the honor to present to you and requests it of me, I could indicate one or more subjects to you who could be presented to assume this See.

I could not conclude this very long letter, which I regret not having been able to write with my own hand as I have had the happiness to do so many times, without telling Your Eminence how much I was consoled by the most kind dispositions you saw it fit to address to me for our mission in Ceylon.3 With paternal impatience I await the solution which you give me reason to hope will be in conformity with my wishes. Your Eminence will have added a further title to those you already bear in the respectful gratitude of all my dear Oblates and especially our missionaries in Ceylon and their worthy Apostolic Vicar. As far as I am concerned, you will have satisfied one of the dearest wishes of my heart and if my affection and esteem for you could increase, this new evidence of your benevolent interest would make them increase in a special way.

Please accept...

+ C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles.

1 Certified copy: Rome, Arch. of the Postulation, Registre des lettres 18 55-1863.

2 Allusion to the letter of Nov. 29, 1860. which has not been found. It is mentioned in the Registre des lettres... 1855-1863, p. 283.

3 Bishop Demer’s successor in 1873 was Fr. C. J. Seghers.

4 The reference is to the territory of Oregon, divided into three dioceses.

5 Bishop de Mazenod adds further on that it was one of the wishes dearest to his heart. He then spoke of transferring Bishop Semeria to Colombo. However, this solution was never adopted. The Sylvestrinian Sillani was appointed Apostolic Vicar after a two year vacancy. The Founder’s last letter to Cardinal Barnabo was written by Bishop Jeancard on April 6, 1861 and deals with the Pope’s illness. The Founder signed the letter himself and added in shaky script: “For the love of God, do not forget Ceylon or our excellent Bishop Semeria”.

187. To the Council of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyon.1

187:V in Oblate Writings

Dispatch of a report on the needs of the Oblate missions. Only what is essential is requested. The missionaries live in a state of privation. The list of missionaries who were sent in 1860.

Propagation of the Faith

Marseilles,

April 10, 1861.2

Dear Mr. President and Members of the Council of the Propagation of the Faith, Lyon.

It is my pleasure to enclose the report compiled by the Procurator General of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate informing you on the needs of the different missions entrusted to our Fathers, to whose assistance your Society has generously come every year. Even though I have been confined to my bed of pain for more than three months, the Lord granted me the Grace, in the midst of my sufferings, to deal with matters incumbent upon me in my twofold quality. I myself conducted a detailed examination of the report I am sending to you. I had given instructions that, when compiling the report, due consideration be reserved to the enormous responsibilities which weigh upon your Society, and that in the requests advanced the amounts be limited as in the past to what is strictly necessary and an attempt be made to reduce the total amount of these requests. I am pleased to inform you that we have reached that result. The grand total of our requests is less than what it was in the past two years.3 I must not conceal the fact that we were only able to achieve that result by dedicating the most scrupulous attention to the documents sent to us by the various missions, eliminating everything which could be eliminated, and decreasing what could be decreased without imposing excessive privations and without impeding or hampering the good to be accomplished. I therefore submit this report to you with full confidence. I venture to hope that in your examination of the different amounts requested, you will refrain from applying overly substantial reductions in addition to those I have already imposed myself. They would place our missionaries in unbearable straits and in certain places, make it impossible for them to continue the good works which have been started.

I would not recommend any mission in particular to your kindness. They all deserve the generous concern you have been so kind to reserve to them thus far. I would dare to say that what you will do for our missionaries will not be lost. Their gratitude for your kindness is without limits. Their zeal will be supported by your assistance, and your generous aid will consolidate the works which are most pleasing to God, and most useful to souls, but founded in the midst of the greatest difficulties and at the price of the most painful privations. I do not ask you to assume all the expenses of these works but, for subsidy in aid of those who sustain them and remain responsible for the largest part. For our missionaries I request not what they need to lead a comfortable and easy life, but what they require in order to procure their meager sustenance, to provide for their modest upkeep, to cope with very arduous tasks, and to ensure a certain amount of respect for the sacred character with which they are invested and the august ministry they discharge.

I venture to hope that, this year as always, you will persevere in the kind interest you have never ceased to manifest for our missionaries and their missions, and I harbor the promising trust that you will continue to manifest it always and nothing will ever be able to make it waver.

Gentlemen, please accept the expression of my gratitude and the repeated assurance of my highest regards,

+ C. J. Eugene, Bishop of Marseilles,

Superior General of the Missionary Oblates

of Mary Immaculate

P.S. Last February I instructed our Procurator General to send you the list of the missionaries who had left for our foreign missions in 1860. In case this list did not reach you, I am including it here so you can publish it in the next edition of the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith.

The following Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate were sent from the mother-house in Marseilles:

For the missions of England and Ireland:

- Fr. Healy from the diocese of Ferns (Ireland).

- Fr. King from the diocese of Down and Connor (Ireland).

- Fr. Lenoir from the diocese of St. Claude.

- Br. Matthews, scholastic, from the diocese of Clifton (England).

Bishop Grandin, the bishop of Satala (in partibus), Coadjutor to Bishop Tach~ (bishop of St. Boniface), and a member of the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who came to France for his consecration which took place in Marseilles on November 30, 1860, has taken the following missionaries with him to the mission of St. Boniface:

P.S. Last February I instructed our Procurator General to send you the list of the missionaries who had left for our foreign missions in

- Fr. Simonin from the diocese of Bayonne.

- Fr. Séguin from the diocese of Clermont-Ferrand.

- Fr. Caer from the diocese of Quimper.

-. Fr. Gasté from the diocese of Laval.

- Bro. Grouard, scholastic from the diocese of Laval.

- Bro. Glenat from the diocese of Grenoble, catechist.

- Bro. Boiramé, catechist, from the diocese of Laval.

For the missions of Buffalo (United States).

- Fr. Bournigalle from the diocese of Vannes.

- Fr. Lux, from Holland.

- Bro. Génin, scholastic, from the diocese of Grenoble.

For the missions of Ceylon:

- Fr. Crousel from the diocese of Bruges (Belgium).

- Fr. Gourdon from the diocese of Fréjus.

- Fr. Salaun from the diocese of Quimper.

- Bro. Bennett, catechist, from the diocese of Dublin (Ireland).

For the missions of Texas and Mexico:

- Fr. Maurel, from the diocese of Toulouse.

- Fr. Schumacher from the diocese of Luxembourg.

- Fr. Cbs from the diocese of Tarbes.

1 Orig.: Rome. Arch. of the Postulation, L. M.P. Letter only signed by the Founder. A similar copy is kept in Paris.

2 This letter is not dated. In his diary, the Founder gave it as: April 10.

3 Fr. Fabre’s report likewise bears no date. The amount requested was 204 000 francs.