**1809**

**Thoughts on the feast of All Saints.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

38:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Reflections on the Church’s catholicity, “a wonderful ... communion which turns the whole universe into one single, large family”.*

Reflections

Saint Sulpice

[1808‑1812][[2]](#footnote-2)

One of the thoughts that strikes me most about our holy religion is the thought of its catholicity; in my mind’s eye I scan the whole wide world and everywhere it numbers men as brothers, it would not be easy to find any part of the inhabited globe where the fact of being a son of Jesus Christ and his Church would not assure the Christian of a welcome as an envoy of the Lord and not meet with an abundance of tender care flowing from the most ardent charity and poured forth in the name of him in whom all hearts who have seen the light are joined together. From every part of the world there rise up to heaven prayers and supplications which, being made in the name of all, take on the value for each one of the faithful of an inestimable treasure of graces and favours. The humble Christian, digging deep within the earth for precious metal, without ever satisfying the cruel and insatiable greed of his masters, owes perhaps to some savage but fervent inhabitant of Paraguay the strength and constancy he needs to endure joyfully the wearying works which ...

How wonderful this communion in which turns the whole universe into one single, large family whose interests are common, needs are similar, helps are mutual. How I love to dwell on this concert of ardent prayers directed up to heaven where dwells the Father, the bond, object and centre of ...

**General counsels for achieving perfections.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

39:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Twelve counsels for achieving perfection.*

Reflections

St. Sulpice

[1809]

1. Place all one’s trust in God, and never rely on one’s own strength or be satisfied with good intentions.

2*.* Abstain from every deliberate fault however trivial it may seem.

3. Never be discouraged when one commits some fault, but humble oneself immediately, without fretting, and turn to God with an act of contrition, renewing one’s good intention not to sin again; then recover one’s peace of soul; and do likewise each time one falls, even if it be a hundred times a day.

Never reveal the temptations to which one is subjected to those who have not made much progress in perfection.

4. Keep custody of the heart so as to have no disordered affection for one’s neighbour, one’s goods, life’s pleasures, etc. Avoid all familiarity with persons of the opposite sex, however pious they may be.

But above all one must renounce one’s own will and the good opinion one is tempted to have of oneself, one must even be prepared to refrain from seeking one’s own will in spiritual things like prayer, holy communion and mortification, and to submit oneself in that, as in all the rest, to obedience. In a word, one must expel from one’s heart anything that is not in accord with God’s good pleasure, anything that does not come from God.

5. Rejoice interiorly when one perceives that one is despised, mocked, looked upon even as the dregs of humanity. Oh! How well a soul prays that delights in being despised by man! This virtue is especially necessary in communities; one must furthermore nourish in one’s heart the tenderest affection for one’s enemies and persecutors, firmly resolved to serve them and even to show them marks of our esteem by honouring them, etc.; one must at least pray a lot for them and wish them every kind of blessing in imitation of the saints who returned good for evil in this way.

6. Continually elicit within oneself the most lively desires of loving God and pleasing him. Without this desire the soul cannot make progress in the ways of perfection, and God will refuse those special graces he gives only to those who sigh after his love.

Along with this sincere and heartfelt desire there must ever be joined a firm determination always to do all that depends upon ourselves to please God. “The Devil fears nothing so much,” says St. Teresa, “as magnanimous hearts.”

One must also hold prayer in high esteem, it is the furnace to which one comes to draw fire from the divine love. The saints, because they loved God alone, also loved prayer above all else. One must further have an ardent desire for heaven as it is there alone one loves God without limit and measure; that is why God wants us to yearn with all the ardour we are capable of for this eternal Kingdom that O.L.J.C. acquired for us with his blood.

7. To conform oneself in everything and without reserve to God’s will principally in the things that are contrary to our taste, and offer this submission several times a day to the Lord. St. Teresa did not fail to do this **(**fiftytimes a day).[[4]](#footnote-4)

8. Obey with the most scrupulous exactitude the commands of our superiors and our Spiritual Father. “Obedience is the queen of virtues,” says the Ven. Father Caraffa, and St. Teresa said “that of souls who set themselves to love him God asks nothing further than obedience.” Perfect obedience consists in doing what is prescribed for us without delay, with fidelity, joyfully, no questions asked, never asking for reasons or motives, so long only as we are not certain that the thing commanded is a sin. Such is the opinion of St. Bernard, St. Francis de Sales, St. Ignatius Loyola, and all Fathers of the spiritual life. In doubtful cases choose what one presumes obedience to prescribe; and when one cannot presume what obedience prescribes, choose what goes more against our tastes and inclinations. It is in this that the *vince te ipsum* consists that was so often inculcated and recommended by St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius.

9. Have God’s presence always before one’s eyes. A person who really loves never forgets the loved object. To keep this divine presence in mind it is good to keep about one’s person, or have in one’s room, something suitable to remind us of it, or again to think of it when the clock strikes, etc. The best way is often to repeat during the course of the day acts of love of God, and acts of petition to obtain this divine love, for example: “My God and my all, I love you with all my heart ‑ I give myself to you ‑ Do with me as you will ‑ I desire nothing but you alone, My God ‑ Give me your love and it is enough.” But one must produce these acts without straining and without aspiring to sensible consolations, for absolutely no other reason than to please God by saying them.

10. Direct one’s intention towards pleasing God in each of one’s daily actions, be they spiritual or bodily, saying: “Lord, I am doing such-and-such a thing just to please you.” There you have the secret that transforms even the most ordinary and trifling of our actions into very meritorious works.

11. Make a spiritual retreat each year of eight to ten days, in total solitude and isolation from the world, devoting oneself exclusively to the exercises of the retreat, abstaining from any conversation and affairs that might distract and turn one from God with whom alone one must dialogue in this time set aside for recollection.

Likewise each month choose a day for recollection and retreat.

In a spirit of devotion, observe the novenas of Christmas, Pentecost, the seven principal feasts of the B.V.M., St. Joseph, one’s Guardian Angel and one’s saintly Patron.

During these novenas one may approach the holy Table each day, praying for one hour or at least for a half-hour more than usual. One may recite some vocal prayers, but they need not be very many; it is infinitely more valuable to make a set number of acts of love or the like.

12. Have a special devotion to St. Joseph, one’s Guardian Angel, one’s saintly Patron, but especially for St. Michael, patron and universal protector of all the faithful. But devotion to the Blessed Virgin must excel all others; for the glorious Mother of God is called by the Church: our life and our hope. It is morally impossible for a soul to make any progress in the ways of perfection if it lacks this tender and sincere devotion to the most holy Mother of God.

**Eugene to his mother, in Aix.[[5]](#footnote-5)**

40:XIV in Oblate Writings

*New Year greetings. How to say the office. Eugene goes about in the centre of Paris in his soutane regardless of human respect: laughter and jeers from the local riff-raff.*

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice

January 4, 1809

... Before I go any further, dear, excellent mother of mine, let me give you a most affectionate hug. This is my first letter to you this year. May it be a happy one for us both. I include myself as I am well aware that my happiness is always entwined with yours, as yours is wholly entwined with mine. But is there something you can do for my sake? Yes there is: do not go getting yourself all upset, look after yourself as befits our most valuable member, I mean of the family, for you know that we are totally united; that is why the far-away one suffers such a lot from the others being absent. So look after yourself properly, and do not go gadding about in the bad weather. Light a huge fire in your icebox of a bedroom. When you are saying your office, say it sitting down by the fire. You know how you hate standing up straight, and you know too quite well that posture, provided it is not immodest, does no damage to the interior respect called for when one addresses one’s prayers to God. Furthermore the Church sets you an example when she provides in her liturgy that one should be seated for the recitation of the psalms and lessons; I think the Church’s way of doing things is much to be preferred to individualistic ways, especially when the latter are certainly going to cause one problems...

5 p.m.

Today was a hike day. I had permission not to go, and I made use of the time to finish off a lot of matters. As the weather was not too bad, I was quite happy to run all my errands on foot, taking care however to tuck in my soutane half-way up my legs. I left the seminary at one o’ clock…

But first my itinerary. From Madame Duclos’ I went down to Rue des Sts. Pères, where the cabriolets usually stand. My intention was to take one as far as the banker’s, M. Suchet’s agent, who lives in Rue de Choiseuil which is just a stone’s throw from the Montmartre boulevards. It was not so much to save my legs as ... from a certain reluctance we have to cross the centre of Paris, the veritable Babylon.

Not having found a cabriolet, I was not bothered and to steer clear of the approaches to the Palais Royal I crossed the Tuileries like a man under the whip. From there I stumbled upon Rue St. Honoré, from there I do not know how at all I managed to get to M. Dupasquier’s house in Rue de Choiseuil, where he paid me out 400 francs that I put in my pocket. Then, conscious of carrying all this money I bravely skirted the boulevards, saying the *Miserere* over and over, as is our praiseworthy custom when we are crossing the most scandalous sections of Paris, which earned me the bowed heads of two or three devout women, who perhaps imagined I was carrying the Blessed Sacrament. These attitudes of respect counterbalanced the mocking laughter of the riff-raff of both sexes who encountered me on their way. This type of laughter is less amusing than the insults they hurl at us usually at the top of their voices. For example, the day before yesterday in the Rue de Grenelle someone shouted repeatedly after me: “lazybones, lazybones”; a fit of laughter seized me and it was all I could do to keep it in. Another time it was “rolling black stone”: that was the stone masons. Another time: “O, sorry breed of men”, or “Crow”, and who knows what else? To tell the truth, they give us a laugh and as for myself I am very annoyed I see these insults in this way as I cannot in all conscience offer them up to God. Today then there were no remarks. (I forgot to mention that sometimes I get compliments on my appearance, as they cry out at the top of their voices: “What a shame!” etc.). To cut a long story short, I eventually reached Madame Simeon’s, where I found the Portalis ladies ... Finally, after two more stops, as night began to fall, without further ado I took out my rosary and got down to saying it, as on hike days we do not say it in the seminary, as the community recites it in groups of three or four on the way back from the country. Although it was beginning to get dark, people could see enough to perceive what I was doing. I rather think this did not do any harm, and in a city where vice reigns so audaciously the least the servants of J.C. can do is to make a public profession of the trust they have in the powerful intercession of the most holy Virgin ...

**For darling grandma.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

41:XIV in Oblate Writings

*New Year’s greetings. Eugene has a heart that is ` perhaps over-sensitive” and is the source of “disquiet”, “worries” and “anxieties”.*

Joannis Mme

Saint Sulpice

January 12, 1809

I will write a little letter too for dear, darling mamma, and try to forget for a moment that I have been without news of the family now for a month, and not put on too sad a face with my New Year’s greetings. What a multitude of things are comprised in this New Year’s greeting! Dear, darling granny divines them all in her heart; a hint is enough for understanding hearts.

Tender mother, allow me at least now I am far away to tell you that I love you more than myself - more than ten thousand myselves, as I would lay down my life for you ten thousand times. The consolation I feel in expressing my tender feelings unburdens me to some extent of all the disquiets that have their source in an over-sensitive heart. Even so, nothing would induce me to exchange it for the stoic fortitude the vast majority profess who claim to be above certain delicate and beautiful feelings that their hearts are actually incapable of feeling. You could cut off my arms and legs and not get a single tear out of me, but just to think of my loved ones can bring them forth in abundance. But what inexpressible happiness there is too in feeling oneself repaid in the same coin, in being able to count on people for whom one would sacrifice oneself. Far from being dissatisfied with my lot, I often thank God that he has enabled me to love as I do, all the more as it does not seem that he has given this gift to many. It is common enough to find a mother and grandmother who passionately love their children or infants, but one does not often come across instances of these latter reciprocating this love to the same extent. Most people open themselves to love as long as it is to their advantage, but that is as far as it goes; or if they repay some act of friendship they do so in a really cold and icy way; even so, those who are not made like me may have less to suffer in the way of worries and anxieties and it may turn out that they have earned less time in purgatory.

I said when I urged mamma to take care of her health that these were the New Year’s gifts I was giving her. As I urge you to do the same, may I say the New Year’s gifts I want from you are that you will stop seeing yourself always as a nobody, but take care of yourself and surrender your self to the care your children want to show you. For heaven’s sake, do show a little docility in this matter.

It only remains for me to seal my bundle of letters so as not to miss the opportunity of sending them by M. d’Oppède who is on the point of leaving. This is one letter at least that will reach you fairly quickly, even if it is a lucky exception. If only my letters could get to you as fast and often as my thoughts are with you, you would be spending all your time reading them. As it is, I hope you will go on giving me your love; besides, you will only be paying what you owe.

Goodbye, goodbye, darling mamma; I hold you close and give you a thousand hugs, and am always your Eugene.

P.S. The postman has been; again no letters for me. It really is cruel. Today is the 12th, and mamma’s last letter was dated December 11.

**To Madame de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, isle 56, n.21, near Place St. Honoré, in Aix.[[7]](#footnote-7)**

42:XIV in Oblate Writings

*He asks her to write every fortnight. Eugene’s anxieties and fears when he gets no news of the family.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice Seminary,

January 18, [1809][[8]](#footnote-8)

What on earth has happened? Dear mamma, how can you possibly let a whole month go by without writing me? What on earth has happened? I cannot conceal the dreadful state I am in. Here I am with several days gone by already when I was counting on getting a letter from you, but always in vain. Unless there has been an accident, I cannot imagine you would leave me for such a long time with no news about the only thing that interests me in this world: my dear family’s health.

I am flabbergasted that there is no one writing to me. Time-wise, it is easier for me to read fifty letters than to write a single one. It’s not as if I do not make the effort and I hope that up to now you have not found me neglectful in using every means to hand to get my news through to you ... A month without getting any news, this is more than I can endure. So I am not waiting for M. d’Oppède’s departure to make my complaints, if complaints are due, for who knows what may have happened?

I do not insist that it should always be you who does the writing, if you would find that too tiring; but get someone else to write then and just add a few lines in your own handwriting. In other words, find some way to make sure, without distress to yourself, that I am not left a fortnight without a letter from you. You are not unaware that your letters are life to me; I become sad and depressed when I am without them, as my mind invents a thousand awful and oppressive phantoms. In God’s name, do not let it ever happen again that you forget me like this.

With all my love, my tender and all too dear mother. Please give my affectionate greetings to Grandma and Eugenie, but what a lot of anxiety and fear there is too in this sweet outpouring of my soul!

**Eugene to his mother, in Aix.[[9]](#footnote-9)**

43:XIV in Oblate Writings

*His joy on learning that Eugenie retains her fervour; she is held up as an example in the catechism class on perseverance. Advice for his cousin Emile Dedons.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

January 21 [1809]

... Eugenie’s little effort at a letter gave me a very great deal of pleasure. The sentiments she expresses came as no surprise; she is passed the age, and has received too many graces from O.L., to let herself be dazzled by the world’s wretched passing show. Even with a little reflection, the wretched state of the greater number of the worldlings she sees around her will help her all the more to appreciate the wisdom of the part she has chosen. Far from being drawn into lukewarmness by others’ example, she must spur herself on to ever greater fervour. Let her go into the world, she is cut out for that, but once there let her be Christian and very much the Christian. People must realize that the reason she does not go to the theatre is that she is a disciple of J.C., that she does not go dancing because she is a disciple of J.C., that she does not stuff herself at suppers given on days of abstinence because she is a disciple of J.C. In other words, she must give witness that O.L. has his chosen ones in all classes of society, who are faithful to him in all life’s circumstances. Above all I pray she will not give up the practice of frequenting the sacraments; that is where she will find strength. The early Christians were exposed to a form of persecution less dangerous than today’s world offers to those who, finding themselves in its midst, want even so to serve the Master who redeemed us. We must therefore make use of the same remedy, all the more so as there are no others.

Our fervent friends in the seminary, to whom I read out the bits that are of interest to all who are lovers of God’s glory, will be offering many prayers for that dear child’s perseverance in the path of goodness. I will even disclose in confidence that one of our catechists intends to cite this example of a young person who resists the pursuits and bad examples of the world, despite having every opportunity to give herself freely to the dissipation normally felt to be permissible to people who are not monks or religious, to his little flock, soon I think to be mine as well. And so our dear Eugenie’s example is going to help not only those in her own home town who are worthy of experiencing her reserve at its proper value but will also do a power of good in the souls of four or five hundred young girls who take part in the second catechism of St. Sulpice. Judge for yourself the graces this will win her. Forward, “fervour and perseverance”, this is the knightly motto I bestow on her ...

... It strikes me that Sir Emile is having a good time. He had better watch out! If play-going will bring harm to his soul, dancing will harm both his soul and his body. My advice to him is to show moderation in all these draining and dissipating activities. If he loses his way, who will there be to steer him back? I really do not know. In the meantime, keep an eye on him without his knowing it; it would be a bad habit for him to pick up, one that it would be difficult to shake him out of. So, without setting out to preach him a sermon, which is scarcely to his liking, do not be afraid to do some straight talking ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[10]](#footnote-10)**

44:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene is appointed catechist to a group of boys. His joy on learning of Eugenie’s perseverance in a life of piety. Visit from Magalon junior. Cardinal Fesch is appointed Archbishop of Paris.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

February 4, 1809

I will not be able to write to you as much as I would like, as tomorrow I take on a new job that will involve a lot of work. At St. Sulpice we have six or seven catechism classes, which are going wonderfully well and are really admirable in the way they are set up. It is not acceptable, in these catechism classes, to teach the children just by rote; assiduous efforts are made through instructions to inculcate in them the spirit of religion, and care is taken in these instructions to prepare the children to be active participants. This is an excellent method, in the first place for the children who are obliged to reflect and discover proper answers out of their own heads, to say nothing of the other benefits they get from it. It is also very useful for the catechists as it prepares them to give homely instructions on all aspects of religion. The whole operation is so satisfactory that many grown up people come to take part, not just out of curiosity but to derive some benefit from it themselves. Just one of these catechism classes was not going to the satisfaction of the catechetics director, not so much perhaps because of any fault on the part of the people in charge as because of the bad dispositions of the members of the class; these are the poorest in the parish, children of tavern keepers, in a word a vermin-ridden lot. It has been decided that perhaps I might breathe some life into this ailing body, and so I have been chosen to be its head. Rumour has it that the intention is for me to go on then to another, but I am not concerned with that, and I am very happy to find myself in the middle of these poor verminous lads, whom I shall try to win over to ourselves. Tomorrow we are going to meet for the first time and God willing we will be good friends. Talking of this, I must ask Emile to take on a big job for me; namely, to copy out from the Aix catechism the headings of the stories given at the end of each chapter; he is to write them out on a sheet of paper, writing very small, as follows, for example: Baptism: story of .... Pride: story of .... and so on for all the chapters, beginning with the first. He should let me have this a little at a time, as he progresses. If I see it is not going to be much of a help to me, I will call a halt; but I think the listing of these stories is going to be most useful for locating them easily and applying them, as I want to pepper my instructions with them to make them more amusing. Children have to be attracted in all sorts of ways. I will have in my catechism class a large number of big boys who have not yet made their first communion. Taking them on does not constitute a problem for me, as with God’s help we will not do such a bad job. Clearly they have to make their first communion, but it is still more necessary that they do it well. Please tell my uncle that I will perhaps be obliged to ask him to sponsor me and help me put up some small incentives, such as good books of piety that are normally given to those who show the best behaviour, are the most fervent, most punctual, etc. As for the rest, to calm any fears you may have, if you think that I have to look after this bunch of brats all alone, I can tell you that I am going to have at least two helpers, and perhaps three. I am all the more glad to be involved in this type of work, which has enjoyed every kind of success in the period of more than 150 years it has been in operation, as I want to familiarize myself thoroughly with its modes of procedure, statutes, etc., so as to set it up at Aix where the catechetical classes are going about as badly as they could and in consequence of this failure one does not see a single child persevering after first communion, while here it is quite the opposite.

What you tell me about Eugenie’s conduct delights me; I expected nothing less of her piety. She is taking the right road for a lifetime of happiness. I say it again, it does no harm for people to know that it is on account of her religious principles that she does not go to the theatre and out dancing. Those so-called devout ladies who express surprise at this are deceiving themselves; inside they are raging because Eugenie with her wise, Christian and generous conduct is exposing both their own slackness and that of their daughters. The question has to be put to these silly women, whether they would have the gall to invite J.C. or the Blessed Virgin to a dance; for what J.C. and the Blessed Virgin would not do, we cannot do either. O.L. is the model for every age and every state of life; he has sanctified by his example all the different situations the Christian can lawfully put himself in. It would take too long to go into particulars, but it is enough to reflect for a moment on his life and precepts to penetrate the question more deeply than I could ever express it. People who deceive themselves to the point of abandoning all constraints had better watch out; that is the way to lose one’s soul; that is the meaning of a passage in the prophet Ezekiel that could well be applied to these “updaters” of the Gospel.

I have seen Magalon junior a number of times.[[11]](#footnote-11) It goes without saying that he is the one of all our compatriots I most like to see. I find his views very agreeable and I rather regret to hear him say the same thing about me, in the sense that it took him so long to come and make my acquaintance. He has come three times in four days, and I would not let anything interfere with our chats, as we talk only about God and I hope this will not be without fruit for him. Eugenie can tell Madame de Magalon and Amelie I am very fond of him because of the good qualities I see in him; a mother always likes to hear that ...

... The Emperor has just named Cardinal Fesch to be Archbishop of Paris. You will have learnt of this before you get my letter; but you will not hear people saying that every good Catholic is delighted by this as His Eminence is very attached to the Pope and to religion.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[12]](#footnote-12)**

45:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene is preparing 50 children for their first communion. He takes the initiative in forming a group of seminarians to keep the fast during Carnival time. Sanctification of the days of Carnival. Madame de Mazenod should not overtax herself in keeping the fast. The provisions sent from Aix will go to pay Eugene’s fees for the second semester at the seminary. He will spend the holidays with the family.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

February 13, 1809

... So here I am in charge of a First Communion Remedial Catechism Class. We have only about fifty, but they give us more problems than all the other 430 who make up the class of which ours is a section. I was detailed, yesterday, Carnival Sunday, to give an instruction on the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation. This instruction, that lasts about an hour, is simply a deepening of the catechism, but this deepening is quite a problem, as one has to get these abstract matters over to children and then engage them each in turn in dialogue. I find I get a lot myself out of these exercises. In the first place I get a much more precise and profound idea of the matters I have to deal with, I give them a good chew myself before passing them on to the children, I get used to public speaking, for 50 children, plus a score of curious onlookers, some of them from the house, do constitute in all reality a public; and then too I get a real insight into the method of conducting catechism classes which has enjoyed a lot of success at St. Sulpice for more than a century, with a view, God willing, to setting it up at Aix where they really have no idea what catechism is. Next Sunday one of my colleagues will give the instruction, my job will be to given an explanation of the Gospel lasting only five or six minutes. It is a short talk that our people usually write out and learn by heart; I will go along with this practice the first few times, but later on I intend to stand less on ceremony with our children.

Can you guess how we spent Thursday, Monday and Shrove Tuesday at the seminary? To start with, we did not go out except for Church, and that went for everyone; but, as well as that, about a dozen of us got together and, in keeping with the mind of the Church and in order to make reparation, in so far as we can, for all the excesses contrary to the holy virtue of temperance, and others besides, during these days of lunacy, we resolved to keep the fast these three days and offer a little expiatory prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. It was God in his goodness who gave me this idea and it worked out as I had hoped. No one in the seminary knows anything about the little act of mortification our little society took on itself, and even the members of the society do not know that it was I who took the initiative. I notice that a lot of good things never get done for want of someone to make the suggestion; a lot of Christians have it in them to do all kinds of good works that they will never perhaps carry out unless they meet up with someone, who is often less perfect than they are themselves, but who invites them to get to work, with no more trouble to himself than that of making the proposal.

What happiness it is to be on retreat during these days of dissipation; what a consolation to be able to spend some time at the feet of Jesus Christ, to make honourable amends for all the insults he gets from all parts of the world. Today is Monday, my day for making adoration in the community’s name from 4:30 to 5:00. I have just this minute come away from being at the feet of our good Master. What an effort it cost me to tear myself away from his presence. I felt that this tender friend must experience some satisfaction when at the very time most of his children, ingrates all, for whom he shed all his blood, are giving him offence and cruelly insulting him, I felt, I say, that the adorable Saviour must experience some satisfaction on seeing at his feet a miserable sinner, repenting of his sins, groaning over his ill deeds, putting them behind him in the sorrow of his soul, putting his trust in his mercy to the point of daring to offer himself as a victim to Jesus Christ and in union with Him to his heavenly Father, not only in expiation for his own faults but also for those blind unfortunates who are even so his brothers. It’s getting too dark for me to see what I’m writing. And the bell is summoning us too to go to St. Sulpice for Benediction. I have the honour of carrying the cross in the procession, something I often do; on these occasions I assist at the altar dressed in a cope.

14th

I cannot get over how few people come to church, in relation to the size of the population in this enormous city, it amounts to practically nobody. It is true that the few Christians one does find are there out of devotion. Today is the last day of Carnival and its madness. Would to God it were the end too of all sinning! But in the unhappy age we live in any time is a good time to offend God. So Lent will not put a stop to the flood of iniquities that is inundating the world. It is up to us to try to appease God’s anger, but let me point out dear mother there is more than one way of fulfilling this duty. So do not be too hard on yourself, I implore you, in keeping the fast, which, if entered into over strictly by someone in your situation, could be very damaging. So do not scruple to have a drink between meals; meagre fare has a way of making that stomach cry out for this relief. Why don’t you, in the evening, allow yourself some boiled prunes, they are very good for the chest. A mother with family, and such a mother as you, is acting meritoriously when she takes care of her health for in that way she provides at the same time for the welfare of a lot of other people too.

We are very conscious of the good care you have taken of us and of all the trouble you went to over our consignment. You have earned your reward from God, for it is a work of charity to provide for the needs of God’s servants, and I can assure you there are a lot of very fervent ones in our community. However, I should be upset if this put you to too much trouble. As to the money, I will leave most of it in the hands of the Bursar to pay for my second semester. Here I am at the seminary five months already which means that in another five months I will be giving you a big hug. Of all my expenditures the one I will mind least is the cost of my journey. I very much fear I will have to pay in purgatory for the way I love my family. I do not want to dwell too much on that subject ...

Magalon comes to see me almost every day and I do not hesitate to give up my recreations for him as good comes from our conversations. The first we had together had a singular effect on him that I had neither foreseen nor desired, as enthusiasm is not something that appeals to me, even when its object is a good one, when it does not produce lasting fruits. Imagine, he got so worked up that he wrote immediately to tell his mother that, after a long conversation he had with me, he foresaw too many dangers in taking up a career in the army (he had only just obtained a commission), that he felt powerful religious feelings reawakening in his heart and a powerful desire to enter the clerical state. You can imagine how that letter would have gone down in the family, which is pinning great hopes on this young man’s success as a soldier. You can understand they will be ready to crucify me. I had a chuckle over this, imagining the friends coming together to find a way to keep the young man away from a fanatic like me. In any case, they did not have to put themselves to the trouble. A single night was enough to pierce these fogs, and our young hero reverted to a plan more suited to him, namely, to take the decision to serve God as a soldier. The happiness he had seen in me had for a moment tempted him and perhaps the lively way I expressed my vivid feelings swept him off his feet without my even trying. So his family will be wrong to imagine I tried to snatch him from them. The grace of vocation[[13]](#footnote-13) to the clerical state is not given to everybody and that is something that should make those of us appreciate it all the more whom God’s mercy calls to share his sufferings and the sublime ministry of the God-Man. I am telling you this as it is possible that the Magalons will speak to Eugenie about it and in a guileless way she might just let it drop that I had written that I was overjoyed at seeing a young man take the firm resolution to serve God courageously in the armed forces. On the other hand, perhaps it would be better not to say anything. They will believe what they want, and that will not affect me any more than the view that was entertained when it got about that I was at the seminary. When we are close to the sanctuary we acquire an amazing impassivity in the face of all these things. Let the world talk, let it frown, spread calumnies, this does not go below the surface and we will not swerve from our path on that account. As the world is the enemy of Jesus Christ, it has to hate us and we for our part rejoice at being hated for Jesus Christ ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[14]](#footnote-14)**

46:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene will be going to Aix during the summer but he will not be ordained priest before then. He answers his mother’s objections. The Mazenod name will die with him. Consolations Madame de Mazenod will experience when she assists at the Sacrifice offered by her son. Death of two priests in Aix. Eugenie must live in the world without developing a taste for dissipation. Eugene is coping well with the Lenten fast.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

February 28, 1809

When I left I promised I would do a year’s novitiate. Take me at my word, and put aside any fears you may have on that score; however, in the course of this year, you really should be giving the matter some serious thought, if it is to be a joyful experience for you when the day arrives and I make my final commitment in the Lord’s service. So let us lift up our hearts to God and consider if there be any happiness like that of sharing in the divine mission of the Son of God. What truck then would you want me to have with this earth and all its vanities, that will vanish at the moment of death and leave us alone with our works? Haven’t I already given too much of my time to this world, when I should rather have been at war with it, enemy as it is to Jesus Christ? And when this divine Master calls me to Him to serve his Church, at a time when she is abandoned by everyone, am I to resist his voice and pine away in an alien land? Believe me, my dear mother, the worry you give yourself over this is a veritable temptation of the devil. Be sure of this, I know in my heart that I am destined to do some good. The graces God gave me in the past, those he gives me each day, are my warrant for those yet greater ones he is keeping for when I shall be in the ministry. This being so, should one be surprised if the demon does everything in his power to put obstacles in the way of carrying out a project that must be harmful to him? But do we have to listen? I put that question to you. When all is said and done, we are upsetting ourselves in a struggle with phantoms of our own creation. As a cleric, will I not be, as I have remarked on other occasions, much more present with you than if I were married (married, yes indeed, that is a fine way to go to the devil nowadays). The affection one is obliged to have for a wife and children is so much taken from what I want to keep whole for you. I was going on to say some really beautiful things when the bell sounded to shut me up. I will not continue with that subject as after all a moment’s reflection will bring to your mind everything I could say about it. I will allow myself just one more word, that is to remind you we are Christians, that the earth we are so attached to is nought but a place of passage and exile, that one would have to be out of one’s senses to be attached to something that can be of no help to us for our celestial Fatherland; finally, and putting it all in a nutshell, we can have no other end than to do God’s will. Now when this will is sufficiently clear to us, we must follow it and count ourselves very fortunate, even offering unceasing thanksgivings when he calls us to the greatest thing on earth and in heaven. If only we could always see things in their true light! Grasp with all your being the excellence of the dignity of the priest, dispenser of God’s mysteries, mediator between God and man, etc. All the actions of his life, what he does with every minute of his day, brings him straight to God. But there I am going to stop or I will never end. As to the dangers that may be brought up as objections, I reply that there is nothing at all for the man to fear who knows his weakness, places all his trust in God and leans on him as he strides along the way he has laid out for him.

There are some people who cannot conceive how I could come to a decision to see my name come to an end with me in the obscurity of the sanctuary. My reaction today is one of pity, and I am ashamed that I lingered for so long over such a futile vanity. Now is the time to apply something I said when I was 14 year’s old and that you reminded me of one day. What family even of royal blood would not feel itself honoured to become extinct in the person of a priest, invested with all the powers of J.C., exercising on earth his royal priesthood, to be lifted up to heaven to a degree of glory and happiness in proportion to the excellence of the character with which his soul has been signed by God’s mercy.

You do not take into consideration the consolation you will know when you assist at the Sacrifice offered through the ministry of your son. You will be besides yourself for joy, and I am quite sure tears will flow from your eyes, when you receive the precious body of J.C. from the hands of your son who ... will have consecrated it in your presence notwithstanding his unworthiness. Can we even imagine what it will be like for us on the day of my first Mass at which, I hope, the whole family will receive communion? Believe me, my dear mother, far from getting upset and allowing yourself to be the prey to imaginary fears, pray to God in his goodness with all your heart to cut short the time of trial and deign to admit me soon to the ranks of his ministers. It is not a problem for me to defer a little longer the commitment I shall make through those sweet ties that will bind me to J.C. for all eternity, first of all so as to have a space between the secular state and holy orders, and to test myself further and to satisfy you. Then once I am a subdeacon, it is my hope in God that I will soon thereafter be a priest, with everything conspiring and carrying me forward to have myself dispensed from the interstices; but we can talk about all that in the holiday, and I will tell you again that the most I will then have is minor orders.

I was very sorry to hear of the deaths of good Father Philippe and Trophine. The former especially did a lot for our diocese. What a lucky man to die sword in hand! In all truth I find it hard to pray for him, I am so sure that soldiers of J.C. dying on the battlefield receive their reward without the least delay. As you see, the ranks are getting thinner every day, soon the Church will be at a loss to know to whom she might confide her children, and one would have to be slothful indeed not to burn with the desire to come to the aid of this good Mother in her well-nigh desperate plight. Does not the fact of feeling this desire vividly, deeply rooted in the heart, in these unhappy times when the faith produces but faded fruits, in itself offer a clear sign of the will of the sovereign mover of hearts? However, it is not for us to assert this.

It is no cause for alarm that Eugenie is going about a lot in the world and staying there for long periods. In the first months of marriage she could not oppose her husband’s desires and run the risk of upsetting her sister-in-law. Next year, God willing, things will be different, she will have a thousand ways, not open to her today, to excuse herself and to do in that as in many other things what she wants. At the same time it will never be right for her to cut herself off from the world, I mean by the world the social circles where persons of her state of life meet together, provided she does not develop a taste for dissipation and carries and sustains herself there in her character as a Christian. My advice to her will always be to read every day a chapter of the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francois de Sales, it is the best book she could read in her situation. Please remind her of this for me. If only every sentence of that masterpiece of devotional literature were inscribed in indelible characters on her memory; it is, in the estimation of all the greatest masters of the spiritual life, the most perfect Christian treatise after the Gospel.

I have seen Madame Pinczon. She lives with the Dames of St. Thomas, that is to say, just a few steps from here; it is scarcely farther away than our house is from the Enclos. She will be going back to Aix a little after Easter. I return M. Beylot[[15]](#footnote-15) the compliments he kindly sent me, or better, I send him others in exchange, and also to those few others who really concern themselves about me. I pray for those whose faith is not big enough to form a balanced judgment on the step I have taken which seemed to many to be taken in haste, as they were unaware how long the Lord has been inspiring me to take it; besides I wonder whether most of them know that there is a Lord at all! Do not be the least bit concerned about my Lent. Here I am with a large part done already and without my having noticed it. We get an extra course at dinner, so you see they are looking after us. Abstinence does not cause me any problems; we have fish quite often, and the bread we get for collation would equal two big quarteron loaves in Aix. You know my evening snack at home with you never amounted to very much, so you can easily see it is no hardship for me when I see a choice of a mere three desserts on our table. It seems vegetables do not form part of a collation in Paris; we are served first usually some cheese and, as well, sometimes either grapes or nuts, sometimes boiled prunes and apple or pear jam, or something like that. My confessor obliges me to eat at least one of these things with my bread. So, there you have more than enough to set your mind at rest ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[16]](#footnote-16)**

47:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene has renounced the world and the goods of this world; but he does not want his mother to sell off her property, the Enclos, near Aix. He wants his uncle Roze Joannis, to whom the family is very attached, to go on living at Aix. Eugene’s affections bear the imprint of his character, strength and sensibility.*

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice,

March 6, 1809

... So I hasten to tell you that, when I went so far as to take the soutane, my intention was to die to the world and its absurd vanities; and since, by God’s grace, I was finally enabled to assent to my name becoming extinct in the sanctuary, with all the more reason I have put aside various small attachments, even less sustainable than the former. And so I can assure you that I was attaching no more importance to St. Laurent than to any other property. If I seemed not to want you to sell off the Enclos, it was because as a hermitage it fitted in perfectly with my plans for when I shall be in the ministry; but so far as St. Laurent is concerned, I repeat you can sell it without the least fear of upsetting me.

... So what about this trip my uncle is planning to make to Paris? Does he intend to stay there permanently, or is he only thinking of a limited stay? What is the point of such a move? Only four days ago he wanted to buy a house in Aix, and now here he is abandoning that city only to throw himself into a Babylon from whence he would inevitably have to flee with all speed once he were there. How can people be so out of touch with what really suits their needs? Where is he going to find the amenities that he has at Aix? Will he find anywhere else people who are so fond of him and look out for his health with such care? What can take the place of the charms one tastes in that family circle where hearts reciprocate the tenderest and most sincere affection. It is quite easy to find flatterers somewhere else, so-called friends, but how deceptive it all is; egoism or self-interest is what is really behind these false appearances; there is no question of the heart being in it, and without heart what’s the point of anything? Beyond that, I have no comment to make except to convey the pain such a plan would give me, first because I feel this departure would be painful for you, and also because, in spite of the difference of opinion on some articles of faith and some old quarrels best forgotten, at least so far as I am concerned, I am really fond of my uncle and view his separation from us with pain. It is rather unusual but all my affections bear the imprint of my character, both strength and sensibility. When I love, I do it with constancy but tenderness always gets mingled in with it and this often brings sorrow in its wake as it makes me feel very vividly anything that is opposed to my heart’s sentiments and affections. Do let me have some details about this dismal plan of my uncle. I still like to flatter myself that his absence will only be temporary and that after a short absence he will return to enjoy that dear place of retirement that held such charms for him, were it but to receive the friendly, informal visits of his darling cousin “who has no equal” and of her children. Darling mamma, I re-echo that you have no “equal” and send you my most affectionate greetings, not forgetting either to urge you to take good care of your precious health ...

**Spiritual conference.[[17]](#footnote-17)**

48:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene is not worthy to preach God’s word. Thanksgiving for graces received, especially to his call to priesthood. Commentary on a page of the Gospel according to St. John. A comparison between Jesus’ holiness and Eugene’s sinfulness. Trust. Armed with the cross, he will enter into combat with the enemies of salvation.*

Spiritual Conference

Saint Sulpice

[March 19, 1809][[18]](#footnote-18)

As one who has but lately fled the world’s snares, but now been introduced within the sanctuary, and so recently admitted to the company of the Saints, how dare I, Sir, lift up my voice among my brothers, in the presence of my Fathers and Teachers to preach the sacred word of our divine Saviour. Will I be so rash as to dare to undertake to break the mysterious seals which I am scarcely worthy of admiring in silence; foolishly swollen with pride at the precious dignity that the Church has but recently conferred on me in admitting me to the number of her Levites, am I to imitate those all too notorious priests of the Old Testament who drew upon themselves God’s curse and most terrible chastisement for arrogating to themselves a right that was quite alien to their functions? No, Sir, you must not expect from me anything but the expression, all too imperfect, of the feelings of gratitude with which my heart is penetrated at the sight of the great mercies the Lord has bestowed upon me. Anything more would be out of place in my mouth, and it would not be without good cause that I would fear to hear addressed to me those formidable words the royal prophet was once inspired to utter: “Sinner, who are you to preach my word, sinner, tremble, for you pollute my acts of justice by your proclamation of them. *Peccatori* ... *dixit Deus: quare tu enarras justitias meas, et assumis testamentum meum per os tuum* [Ps. 49, 26].

It is then the mercies of the Lord I must proclaim: *Confitebor tibi, Domine Deus meus, in toto corde meo, et glorificabo animam tuam in aeternum quia misericordia tua magna est super me* [Ps. 85, 12.13]; for he has quite exhausted the treasures of his grace for my sake. *Misericors et miserator Dominus, patiens et multum misericors* [Ps. 144,8]. Yes, I will proclaim them all the days of my life, and every moment of the day, *Vespere et mane, et meridie narrabo et annuntiabo* [Ps. 54, 18].

Beginning with the happy moment when, regenerated in the saving waters of baptism, I was raised to the awesome dignity of child of God, loaded with my Saviour’s gifts, I could more easily count the successive and rapid movements of my breathing than the number of the inestimable benefits that this adorable Master has poured out on me in generous measure. But there is not one of them, I do believe, that I can more suitably dwell on than that ever memorable act of mercy by which this powerful God snatched me with sweetest violence from the midst of a corrupting world, where sadly seated with the wicked, and by a fatal necessity living among them, I ran the risk at every moment of succumbing beneath the multitude of poisoned draughts with which they plied me.

From that moment, (Lord, you are my witness), my eyes have been turned to the sanctuary of your son, and if I did not yet dare to hold it in my gaze as something destined one day to be my heritage, I sighed already for the happy moment when it would please you to make your voice heard by your servant. No doubt my prayers reached you, as you deigned to grant them. You restored my flagging courage, and helped me overcome the obstacles that every day grew more. Helped by your powerful grace, I overcame without difficulty, nay joyfully trampled underfoot the barriers that vanity, the world’s false prejudices, and even more a misplaced tenderness for persons you command us to honour and love, but to whom you wish to be preferred, seemed ever to place between the altar and myself.

Ah Lord, one voice does not suffice to express, and one heart cannot elicit the gratitude that is due to you for such a great blessing. One heart! But can I doubt that at this very moment you are receiving the tribute of as many hearts as I count here brothers. Sweet effects of that intimate charity that unites disciples of one and the same Master, gives us a common interest, and so discharges through that wonderful harmony the debt incurred by one alone and which, left to its own resources, it could never satisfy.

May I not be permitted, Sir, to confine myself to proclaiming the blessings and mercies of my God towards his wretched creatures? What reason can there be for obedience to command me to break off the recital, and order me to raise my head from the dust to take in hand the Gospels of Jesus Christ, so as to share with you the feelings that this reading inspires in me, the affection it gives birth to in my heart.

Alas! The first words that strike me as I open today’s Gospel, while giving me a just idea of the sublime perfection of our divine Master, are all too apt to bring me face to face again with the emptiness of my misery.

What a comparison in effect do they not leave me open to? I see the model I must imitate, the living example I must follow, challenging his deadliest enemies to convict him of a single sin, discover in him the least fault, *quis ex vobis,* he says to them, *arguet me de peccato* (Jn. 8,46). I see him reminding the princes of the priests, the Scribes, and the Pharisees of all the circumstances of his innocent life, the heroic deeds of his tender charity for us, the dazzling miracles infinitely multiplied for the sake of mere ingrates, perhaps revealing to them all the love still pent up in his heart, and what he was about to do to save those very people there who had designs on his life, and lovingly adding, at each point in this ravishing portrayal, these words, applicable to him alone amongst the children of men, *quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato,* to force these hardened persecutors to admit by their silence that he was really sinless.

There you have the features that characterize my model.

How can I but be dazzled by such a pure and brilliant light? And are not my fears justified[[19]](#footnote-19) when I consider that far from having the least resemblance to the one I must of necessity imitate, there is nothing in my life that is not in stark contrast with such virtue.

Jesus challenges his implacable enemies to find a single sin in him.

My dearest friends, however prejudiced they might be in my favour, could not but agree that I am the greatest of sinners.

The Saviour’s whole life is totally consecrated to his Father’s glory. Mine, alas, could scarcely muster a few moments of non-resistance to his grace.

The heart of Jesus burned with love for us. Mine is deadened to its devotedness.

At the very moment when the immaculate Lamb has just forced his persecutors to admit he is sinless, he humbles himself, and far from showing any complacency over the advantages such an admission gave him over his despicable adversaries, he immediately adds these remarkable words: “If I glorify myself, that glory of mine is worthless”: *Si ego glorificabo me ipsum gloria mea nihil est* [John 8, 54].

While I for my part, none of whose actions may yet have found acceptance with the just arbiter of merit, scarcely have I accomplished the most ordinary act of the commonest virtue when I imagine I have filled heaven and earth with consolation and joy.

But what is the good of continuing on any further with this parallel which shows me up in all my poverty and serves but to plunge me ever deeper into discouragement of a damaging kind.

After all, is the past all I have to turn to? Can I not stand on the present moment with its hopes for the future? If Jesus, at the time of his entry into Jerusalem, at the moment when he clearly proclaims the kind of death he would be made to undergo, believes he must establish his innocence in a way that cannot be contested, must I forget that our God wipes away the blemishes of those who return to him with all their heart, and must I renounce the career he has himself laid out for me, because I am not bringing to it all the advantages he had enriched me with?

No, Lord, when I enter on the exercise of the sublime ministry it has pleased you to call me to, I will not say, it is true, as you did: *quis ex vobis arguet me de peccato,* butI will loudly confess my past iniquities, they will be ever present in my mind, but rendered powerless by penance they can no longer be the hated object attracting your vengeance.

Well, then! not having imitated my model in his innocence, will it be denied me to imitate him in his devotion to his Father’s glory and our salvation?

Ah, if it was in my power to betray the first vows I made in baptism, is it not open to me to follow my Master on to Calvary and do him homage afresh of my fidelity at the foot of his cross and wash my robe in his blood after staining it with my own?

Like cowardly soldiers who have in the first assault shamefully abandoned their colours, can I not like them make reparation for my wickedness and recklessly hurl myself into the midst of the enemy ranks?

Yes, Lord, you will give me the strength for this, for you have deigned to inspire my heart with this desire. Armed with the sacred sign, symbol of the victory you have gained over hell, inwardly blazing with that burning fire you came on earth to set alight, I will trample on your enemies like a roaring lion and snatch back the prey they have seized from you, I will harry them to their last entrenchments. And never will I count my task completed until I have displayed your cross on the forehead of the proudest of them, or, sore pressed by their number and pierced by a thousand wounds, I breathe forth my last, as I say and with better reason than ever: *Miserator et misericors, Dominus, patiens et multum Misericors.*

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[20]](#footnote-20)**

49:XIV in Oblate Writings

*After his ordination Eugene does not intend to get involved in temporal affairs. A student at 28 years of age. Story of his vocation, the directors he consulted. Eugene will never become a Greyfriar, and feels no attraction to the “Retraite”. Examinations. Holy Week.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

March 23, [1809]

Do not lose sight of the sale of St. Laurent, which, I think, will take a load off your shoulders. You must quietly encourage M. de Bartas’ interest but without letting him know you want to get rid of it. Shrewdness is called for in this instance. After all, if, to make this land productive is always going to be uphill work, it cannot be of any further use to us, for neither your sex nor your health permit you to take on this responsibility and my state in life forbids me getting involved in all such affairs, for I have not become a cleric to work the lands of this world, but to cultivate the vine of the Father of the household. These concerns are incompatible and I am quite determined that I will rather be satisfied with a crust of bread than get involved the least little bit in temporal matters, no matter what ... But that is enough of that, at least for now, for it is time I prepared my class. It seems odd going to class at 28 year’s of age; the example of St. Ignatius Loyola who started learning Latin at 30 year’s of age encourages me all the more as this did not stop him later on from doing very great things for the good God. I pray I may imitate him in his devotion for the glory of God and the salvation of my soul.

24th

Your conjectures go wide of the mark and your motherly intuition has led you astray in thinking that Father Charles[[21]](#footnote-21) was involved at all in the decision that the Lord and only the Lord was so gracious as to inspire me with. So do not exclude that saintly man from your good graces, you will never have a better intercessor with God. The only part he had in the decision I took is that he prayed a lot to God for me; it is M. Beylot[[22]](#footnote-22) actually who was towards the end my confessor, but what gave rise to the misunderstanding was probably the concern I showed about a letter enclosed in the parcel which M. de Rafelis delivered, in which I told you there were details that I was not happy for everyone to know about as in it I had related things belonging to the internal forum. After that you noted the arrival of a little letter for Father Charles and, associating these two things, you concluded that it was to him I had given my confidence; you were mistaken in that, for although assuredly Father Charles merits the confidence of any person wishing to go to God wholeheartedly, however I had never been inspired to address myself to him. Now I am going to give you the solution to the riddle. When I was being urged more strongly than ever by grace to give myself entirely to God’s service, I did not want to do anything rash and you must have seen that I began to move out of that state of tepidity into which I had fallen and which would infallibly have led to my death, I tried by a much greater fervour to merit new graces from the Lord and as this good Master is generous, he did not fail to grant them to me. I prayed, got prayers said, consulted, I ruminated in this way for a year over the design Providence inspired me with; finally, as the time drew near when I must make up my mind, before making a final decision and so as never to have to reproach myself with not having employed every possible means of knowing God’s will, not content with having consulted at Paris one of the best directors existing in the world[[23]](#footnote-23), in whose hands I am at present, I went to Marseilles for the express purpose of baring my soul to a saintly and experienced man,[[24]](#footnote-24) I had several sessions of several hours with that angel of peace, after which I could no longer have any doubt that God wanted me in the clerical state, towards which, notwithstanding the circumstances and perhaps because of the circumstances, he was giving me a definite attraction, it is to this holy priest that I wrote in detail, laying bare my soul to him, but you could not have seen the letter that I wrote him as it was enclosed with that of Miss de Niozelles[[25]](#footnote-25) to whom I entrusted its delivery. So now you know it all. So offer your friendship to Father Charles and especially ask him to pray for you. The conversions the Lord works every day by his ministry are a sure guarantee that he is pleasing to Him. My letter to him was no more than a little reminder asking him to pray for me at the time I was entering the army of the Lord.

I could not help smiling when I read your plea not to get too involved with these good Brothers[[26]](#footnote-26) and to remember that our mission must be different. I thought I detected in this maternal solicitude a certain anxiety lest I become attracted to the way of life of these good Brothers as I had veneration for their virtues. I must not keep you on tenterhooks before reassuring you about this. I have never for a single moment thought of taking a step so much beyond my strength and so little to my taste. It would take a quite different kind of virtue than I have to embrace the highest level of evangelical perfection and God has never inspired me with the least attraction to the Retreat[[27]](#footnote-27) and an overlarge degree of dependence. If one day I can do something for this establishment, I will do it with all my heart, as I am convinced they do an enormous amount of good, but that is as far as it goes ...

... I thank my uncle for the little letter he was so good as to write, I will write a reply after Easter, for between now and then I will not have time for anything. The examinations begin tomorrow, Friday, there will be some on Saturday, all Monday and all Tuesday, a part of Wednesday; we shall be at our desks from 8:00 in the morning until 5 o’clock in the evening. I leave you to guess how nice that is. But the holy days will put all that right, especially as I have managed to be serving at the altar on Thursday and Good Friday. I like this a whole lot more than being stuck in a pew where one can see nothing of the ceremony; you have to have the fervour of a seraph not to find the services extremely long from there, the way they chant in Paris.

Goodbye, dearest, wonderful mamma, I wish you and all the family in abundance all the graces Our Lord merited by his death and send you my most affectionate greetings. Pray for me.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[28]](#footnote-28)**

50:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Reflections on the Holy Week and Easter ceremonies. Order and details of the services. Suppressed feasts. Sons of the leading families called to the army. Answer to his mother’s objections to his vocation which he has been reflecting on for three years.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

April 4, 1809, despatched 7th.

It is Easter Tuesday and there is still a touch of ice in the air; although it was less cold on Easter Sunday, even so it was sharp enough. I felt it less than the others as for the whole day I was wearing a cope over my shoulders, and for a part of the time a cross that weighed a couple of hundredweight in my hands. What a ravishing ceremony for Christians, how the heart was bursting, what joy as one joined with the whole Church of heaven and earth to celebrate the glorious Resurrection of Our Saviour. After journeying with him through the sad event of his Passion, after weeping over the torments that our sins made him endure, how consoling it is to see him rise triumphant over death and hell, and what gratitude must fill our hearts at the thought that this good Master has really willed to make us sharers in his resurrection, destroying the sin that is in us and giving us a new life. That day we spent a good twelve hours in Church, I would not have wanted it to be a minute less. It was like being in heaven; so what are the joy and happiness we experience in that blessed homeland going to be like? But I am writing a letter, not a meditation outline, so I spare you my reflections.

I had asked to be one of the ministers in the Holy Week ceremonies and I got my wish; so I was on the altar Thursday, Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, morning and evening. My role is cross bearer and holding the paten during the Sacrifice; this ministry ought to belong to a subdeacon, so you can imagine that as I fulfilled it I had to make many acts of humility, acknowledging my unworthiness to approach so close to the altar and hold in my hands the vessel on which O.L. is deposed for a part of the Sacrifice.

I know you are interested in all these details and I will sketch out our timetable for Easter Day, but first I want to tell you that one of the most moving things, and one that attracts a large number of pious people, is on Good Friday at 4:00 a.m. when the seminary goes in procession to the tomb, or altar of repose, to pray kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, you know that our prayer lasts an hour; imagine the striking effect produced by eighty clerics in surplice and *camail*, with a group of venerable elders at their head, known for their virtues and merits, all on their knees and absorbed for a whole hour in meditation on the Passion of O.L. I was amazed on entering to find already in the chapel a large number of ladies along with some pious men, in their places and already at their prayers.

Easter Day found us in the Church at 4:00 a.m. to sing Matins, Lauds and Prime. After Prime, a first High Mass was sung at which the seminary received communion; (there are some feasts in the year on which the seminary communicates like this in the parish: Christmas Eve, Ash Wednesday, Holy Thursday, Easter Day). It is a superb sight, but how much more beautiful when seen with the eyes of faith. First the deacon and subdeacon receive the Body of J.C., then there come up level with them the cantors in copes, the assisting clerics in tunics, there are six of these, the *crucigeror* (that is what my role is called, namely, the cross-bearer), the *crucigeror* in cope in the middle. After they have communicated they split into two and go and form a straight line on each side of the altar, in such wise that the assistant priest in cope is on the first altar step on the epistle side, the *crucigeror* likewise on the gospel side, three assisting clerics on each side on the remaining steps, all facing the people with hands together. The seminarians come up four by four, and all receive holy communion in turn, after which they all return gravely one after the other to the choir from whence they had come to form a circle around the altar. It was 9:00 a.m. when we emerged from the Church. We returned at 10:45 for the second High Mass at which I was again *crucigeror*. The ceremony did not finish until 1:30. Vespers began at 4:00 p.m., then the sermon, then benediction, in short we did not get back to the seminary until 8:30. Adding up all these hours you will see it works out at twelve, but you would have a job to work out the amount of happiness I felt during this time that seemed to me to flash by like a minute. I was so happy, in the superb Temple I found myself in, at the sounds of joy that re-echoed in my ears and penetrated to the depths of my heart; I went in spirit through the churches of the whole earth, where at the same moment the vaults were resounding with the praises of the Risen Lord. I was in Aix, I was in Rome, I was in China, everywhere I encountered the same transports of joy for the same reason. Not content with this experience of harmony with every Christian scattered over the face of the earth, I dared to penetrate heaven itself. I was not slow to grasp that all that captivated me here below was but a feeble echo of the joy, the inexpressible happiness, that animated all the blessed on that day that the Lord had made. How great is the heart of a Christian, how many things it grasps simultaneously, it seems at first as if the least consolation will fill it and it is about to burst; not at all, it is always capable of containing more, when full to bursting it still wants more, but this insatiable appetite will be satisfied only in heaven.

I leave you with this consoling thought as I get ready for the parish. Less timid than in the provinces, we still observe here the ever-cherished feasts of former times with the same solemnity as before. This is perfectly in conformity with the Concordat and we abide by that. Do not fail, on these suppressed feast days, to go to the Cathedral, where the liturgy is still carried out, so as to be in unity with the entire Church. This does not mean you cannot, both before and after the liturgy, devote yourself to manual work, but the Church, while retracting in her wisdom the precept, has allowed the liturgy to stand. The Pope even provides in the Concordat for it to be celebrated always with the same solemnity inside churches; so let us yield to circumstances but not abandon the tradition of our fathers. I advise Eugenie to do the same, namely, not to be concerned about working but to give priority in her devotions to attending the liturgy at the Cathedral on feast days that have been suppressed and are no longer kept in the parishes. I would love to see St. Saviour’s packed on those days.

The bell is late, so I still have time to tell you that I have come through Lent in as good health as when it started, I got so used to not looking forward to meat that I did not feel any excitement at seeing it reappear on the table; I could quite easily give it up for the rest of my life. I am still waiting to hear how you and grandma are, after that forty-day fast. You are going to need to take, morning and evening, some really nourishing soups, and grandma must remember that Jaubert prescribed her broths; since she cannot take much in quantity, she must make up for it in quality. Goodbye, I am off to take up my cross, and carry it in triumph, since He who willed to allow himself to be fastened to it has conquered and come back to life.

5th

... Although it is not often I pass you on any news, still I want to tell you something today that you probably do not know about in the province, and that will I am sure give you some consolation concerning the path the Lord has inspired me to take, assuming that you still need to be consoled on the matter. The Minister of Police has in the last few days summoned a large number of young men, some say 200, belonging to the leading families of France; he asked them what they were doing with their time. He knew quite well that there could be only one answer, namely, they were doing nothing, for the public at any rate. The Minister then told them that living like that was not good enough, and so he invited them, a polite way of telling them, to accept commissions without delay and proceed to Fontainebleau to the military colleges and set about learning their trade. So here you have these Gentlemen, some among them only-sons and married, obliged to leave their mothers, wives and children, to serve in the army; I know some who come in that category who are already at Fontainebleau. But it will not be pleasant listening for a large number of young men in the provinces who are quite unsuspecting of anything like that happening. I am told that orders have already gone out to 800. Who knows, if I had stayed in the world I am so happy to have left, whether one fine day I might have found myself the recipient of such an order and had no choice but to obey. Then you would really have had something to get upset about, but as it is, instead of being upset, thank God in his goodness for calling me to an army which does not set out to kill people, but strives to save them. I do not think you should broadcast the second part of my news as it might well cause panic in some families. I just think Emile should not be too cocky about his good health but let it be rumoured, as many are all too ready to believe anyway, that his constitution is delicate. Sleep is coming on, I am going to bed. Goodbye until tomorrow.

April 6

My dear and wholly wonderful mother, someone has just delivered your parcel of March 28 and it is received with the pleasure that these kinds of presents always give me, but while I was happy to learn that you and grandma too have come to the end of Lent without too much damage to your health, I was hurt at the same time to see that it upsets you so much to see me entering the state of life God calls me to, and to see as a calamity something that should be a source of joy for you. It is a big mistake to think one can work out one’s salvation just as easily in a state of life where there are less obligations to meet when God destines us for another. The graces he gives are in proportion to the fidelity with which one corresponds with them, and if everyone reasoned as you are suggesting, it would be a sorry world we live in. Do you believe that a man strongly moved by God’s spirit to imitate J.C. in his active life of teaching his divine doctrine to peoples who were no longer disposed to receive it, perhaps even less than are the people of today, since despite the miracles that accompanied his work, etc., he did not succeed in three year’s of preaching to gather more than a small number of disciples, do you believe, I say, that such a man who had a clear vision of the needs of the Church and who, despite the attraction God gives him to work at helping her, and other signs of His will, yet opted to sit back with arms folded, sighing softly to himself about all these evils, but not raising a finger to awaken even in the least degree men’s hardened hearts, would rest in all good conscience? What an illusion. Once again, one can sanctify oneself only in the place where God wants us to be. “But there is little hope of success”; in the first place, that is not so sure as you think, and furthermore even if it were, it would be enough if in the course of one’s life one could help even a single soul to work out his salvation to make all one’s labours worthwhile. In a word, one must above all obey God’s voice, rely on his graces, and with them do one’s best, planting, watering, as St. Paul says, and leaving to the Father of the household the task of giving increase.

You tell me one must reflect for a long time before taking such a serious decision. No doubt, one must reflect and test oneself, but must this scrutiny last all one’s life? No decision was ever more carefully and lengthily discussed than the one I am taking. Come next Christmas, when I will probably be receiving the subdiaconate, I will have been discerning this matter for three years; more than a year of testing in the seminary, after consulting all the best directors available, and all to know if a vocation which dates back to my reaching the age of reason, that has led me to trample under foot the most seductive vanities and renounce all the advantages I might have found elsewhere, to say nothing of considerations that would have shaken a person less firm, to master finally all the feelings of a heart easily moved to emotion and so accustomed to get its way, to know, I say, if this vocation comes from God. Ah, my God! If the Lord had not inspired this resolution, could I have endured even the thought of causing you to shed one single tear? Answer me that, knowing my heart as you do.

So, dear mamma, do not be anxious on that account, and remember, grandma too, something I have told you over and over, that I will be far, far more close to you as a cleric than if I were married, for I repeat again it is in Aix and within the diocese I shall be working, and as I am quite resolved never, directly or indirectly, to make the least move towards becoming a bishop, in my whole lifetime I will not be budging anywhere, except to go and spend some months on the mission in the countryside, which will be my summer holidays. You will see that we are all going to be very happy, so let’s begin so today ...

**To Madame de Boisgelin, née Mazenod, at her house, in Aix.[[29]](#footnote-29)**

51:XIV in Oblate Writings

*He thanks her for details about her husband and sister-in-law and asks about her way of living out her faith. Frequent communion. Eugene does not yet know if he will go to Provence in the holidays, but his choice of vocation is irrevocable.*

Boisgelin Eugenie

St. Sulpice

[mid-April] 1809

... Everything you tell me about your mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and especially your husband makes me very, very happy because, my little darling, how could my cup of happiness be anything but full once I knew your happiness was complete. Never forget the gratitude you owe the Lord for the miracles he worked to bring about your happiness. He set aside, scattered, shattered the best-laid plans and designs of poor human wisdom, as he foresaw that the spouses proposed for you would turn out badly or saw that the reality did not match up with appearances. Remember that, dear, darling sister and be faithful to him all your life, this God who in his goodness has taken such good care of you for the simple reason that you were trying to please him.

You have told me a lot about many of the things I asked you about, I am waiting just as eagerly for an answer to the other questions, especially about how you are living out your Christian faith. What is your method, have you increased or cut back on what you used to do when you were single? It is wrong of you not to share with me your little rule of life. I could from here, not certainly by my own lights, but with the help of those of the Saints who guide us, correct whatever is defective, and make suggestions for improvements. We are all bound to tend towards perfection whatever may be our state of life. But we must be aware that the perfection of a married woman is not that of a young miss or a religious; she has obligations that are special and different. The kind of action that might rightly be regarded as an intolerable dissipation in a religious, is often an indispensable duty in the case of a married woman living in the world, so that what would be an obstacle for the former as to receiving the sacraments could be for the latter an extra good reason for going.

So my dear little one, do not imagine that because you move amidst society’s din you must go less frequently to the holy Table, I will bring all my guns to bear on you on this subject until you surrender to true principles; for the moment I will not make any other demands on you except that you not follow your director who was advising you a monthly regime. Remember what was said by St. Francis de Sales who is without question of all the Saints the one who has carried furthest the science of direction and the one who has understood it best. We read in his works that anyone who fails to communicate at least once a month is fooling himself if he imagines he has any kind of Christian piety. Ah! God’s Church would not be languishing in the state we see her if her children were not so deterred from receiving this heavenly food which alone can give Life and Holiness.

But let me stop there, before it takes me too far afield while I still have a lot of things to tell you.

So far as I can see from what you tell me, during the holidays you are all going to be scattered. You are going to be at St. Martin, grandma at St. Julien, mamma perhaps at St. Laurent. How, with the little time I have to spend in Provence, could I get around to all these different places? I deduce too from what you say that mamma would not be averse to my putting off until next year my trip to Provence, both because of the expense and to spare me a 300 league journey. I attach some weight to the first reason, none at all to the second. As to what you add, about mamma being afraid that if I show up in Aix in clerical garb I will not have the courage afterwards to change my mind, that seems to me to be really odd.

How can anyone imagine that any human consideration could make me enter contrary to God’s will into any state of life, least of all the clerical state? Is it possible for someone to have so poor an opinion of me? Has human respect ever carried the least weight with me? Haven’t I given sufficient proof that for me people’s opinions are just so much dust to be blown away with a puff of breath?

But that question does not arise as, thanks be to God, I am not in a state of indecision about what I must do, and as for all the long reflections I am supposed to make, I do not think, when all is said and done, that one ought to wait until one’s deathbed to form the resolve to come to a decision. When I came to the seminary it was not to change my mind but rather to affirm myself in the holy vocation with which it had pleased the Lord to inspire me. A year at the seminary, at my time of life, is more than enough to know what’s what; and when one has stood up to this testing, one can be at peace. And so since I am irrevocably committed in the matter, there is no longer question of anything other than fixing the time for receiving the subdiaconate. It looks very much as if it will be Christmas, with a view to being ordained deacon at Trinity in the year following and allowing a little longer interval between this order and the priesthood.

In the light of what I have said above, you can see that it matters little whether I show up at Aix with or without my soutane ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[30]](#footnote-30)**

52:XIV in Oblate Writings

*In his prayer, Eugene asks but one thing: to do God’s will. Request for prayers.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice

April 23, 1809

... M. de Sannes, may he rest in peace. Certainly his death is not going to make me shed any tears over his son.[[31]](#footnote-31) On the contrary I shall offer up a *De Profundis* in thanksgiving as he was the reason or the pretext for breaking off the marriage. Every time I go over everything that happened over the years with regard to Eugenie’s marriage, I cannot help bursting out in a paean of praise to God for his goodness. While I’m on the subject of that little darling, I do wish that, when you remind her of what good care God has taken of her, you would urge her to leave entirely in his hands the matter of the children she is so ardently longing to have. I have got to the point of not being able any longer to ask for anything except that God’s holy will should be accomplished in all things, I think that is the best prayer a Christian can make. God knows better than we do what is good for us; so let us be satisfied to beseech that this holy and paternal will should be accomplished in our regard. I forgot to bring this up with Eugenie ...

I am very grateful for the good wishes from all the people who really want to keep me in mind. As you conveyed their greetings *in globo,* Ireturn my thanks in the same way. My only wish is that you personally ask the ones who know what prayer is to pray for me, and just pass on my good wishes to the rest. I hope my family is not forgetful of my needs before God’s goodness. If my prayers were heard, none of you would have reason to complain of a dearth of graces, for I ask for them with all my might for all of you, as well as for myself ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, rue Papassaudy, isle 56, n.21, in Aix.[[32]](#footnote-32)**

53:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Despatch of holy cards. Devotion to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

[end of April, 1809][[33]](#footnote-33)

I am annoyed that I have no commissions from you at all; [young Martin] would have taken them on most willingly. I think I will limit myself to giving him three hundred holy cards, which cost me no more than the printing charges and which will come in very useful eventually in Aix when, God willing, I am teaching catechism. It was a bargain I wanted to benefit from. The dealer was selling them at 3 sols each and I got them for 50 sols a 100. Please keep them in storage and don’t give them away to anyone. I had three done on vellum, one for you, one for grandma, the third for Eugenie. You have to cut them, that is to say you have each of you to separate your two cards and place them if you like in your prayer books as a reminder that in honouring the Sacred Heart of Jesus one is drawing on God’s love at the wellspring, and that in paying homage to Mary’s you are reminding her of all the tenderness she showed for us on Calvary, when her divine Son bound us to her to be her children ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[34]](#footnote-34)**

54:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Request for prayers that Eugene will place no obstacles to the graces the Lord wishes to give him with the conferral of minor orders. Meaning of each of these orders.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

May 10, 1809

I almost forgot to ask for your prayers as well as the family’s and those of all the saints of our Church of Aix, people like the splendid Isnardon, Denis, the Grey Sisters, religious of every order, etc., etc. It is only with the help of our brothers’ prayers that we can succeed in doing anything, and we must have recourse to them all the more in situations where the Lord, as he is about to give us some of the greatest graces, expects better dispositions from us too. So pray and implore others to pray that I put no obstacles in the way of the favours God in his goodness will soon rain down on me in abundance. Soon we are beginning our retreat in preparation for the reception of holy orders. I am only getting minor orders, called “minor” not by any means as if the Church regarded them as being of little importance, but in comparison with the sacred orders that are dubbed “major”, for in the eyes of faith, it is a great dignity indeed that, all unworthy as I am, I am going to be clothed with! There will be no stopping me if I get going on that subject. Charged in virtue of his office in the order of Porter to open the door of the temple of the King of heaven and earth to the faithful coming to adore him and chase away the unworthy whom the Church rightly compares with dogs, to uphold order in the holy precincts, attend to the cleanliness and decorum of God’s house. Every sweep of the broom earns the Porter a crown of glory and one has good reason to stand abashed when one thinks that there have been very great saints who throughout the whole of their lives exercised this function that serves today as but a step towards attaining the higher offices of the sanctuary. J.C. himself sanctified this office when he drove out with whipcords those profaning the temple of Jerusalem.

By the order of lector, one is empowered to read Holy Scripture and other ecclesiastical books in Church, and receives the grace of the Holy Spirit to do it well. “Receive this book, says the pontiff as he presents it to the Lector,” receive this book and be the lector of God’s word, and by faithfully and fruitfully acquitting yourself in this office, enter into the reward of all those who have duly served God’s word from the beginning.” How can one begin to describe the application required by the Order of Exorcist, deputed by the Church to cast out demons from the bodies of the possessed! What purity and innocence of life is required of Exorcists, so as to give no opening to demons and flee anything that might taint us with what we are charged to fight and overcome. What zeal, trust, humility he must have!

[May 12]

I had to break off writing and only now have I been able to make a fresh start. The day before yesterday I was in the middle of giving you some small idea of the importance and dignity of minor orders. I still had to speak about the one that one receives last of all and is the most important of them all, the order of Acolyte, by which one is empowered to bear lighted candles in church and present the water and wine for the sacrifice. This order brings you closer to the altar and authorizes you to enter with the higher ministers within the sanctuary, something that ought not be permitted to ministers of lower rank. One is also charged in virtue of one’s office to present the incense and one is specially commissioned to serve low Masses. All these functions, it is true, are sometimes carried out by the laity or simple clerics, but this is something the Church has tolerated out of necessity. Those who fulfil these offices without having been deputed to them accomplish, it is true, a good work, but they do not receive that sacramental grace which is given only to those who exercise the ministry which has been conferred on them in the prescribed rite. As to these graces, one only receives them in proportion to the disposition one brings to them. It is only too true that many do not receive any of them at all because they neglect to awaken their faith in them and form a right intention. It is to avoid a like misfortune that I am asking the help of your prayers and those of all good souls, it is so that the Lord may grant that I may never act without being imbued with a sense of the significance of my functions, their holiness, and the spirit of faith with which I should exercise them, that I am begging you to pray unceasingly. When I think that some very great saints considered themselves all too honoured by the simple order of Porter and sanctified themselves in the exercise of this order without ever wanting to go further, one has good reason to stand abashed, I do not say out of discouragement, for when one relies on God alone one cannot be deceived and one must not be afraid of not succeeding in anything ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[35]](#footnote-35)**

55:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Madame de Mazenod can sell the de Mazenod mansion on the Cours. Thanks for the present of a watch. Eugene is to stay in Paris for the holidays. He intends to be ordained priest in Aix. Account of the ordinations of May 27, with some reflections.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

May 29, 1809

I very much appreciate your show of confidence in me as to the offers you are receiving for the house on the Cours. My initial reaction is to say that you are the mistress and you must do whatever suits you best; if you insist on my telling you what I think, I will give you my total support without any hesitation, for several reasons; first of all, the Lord has given me the grace of calling me to his service, of so freeing me from attachment to every earthly good that it is all one to me whether I live in a hovel or in a mansion. There was a time when it would have cost me something to see the family home passing out of our hands, both because it *is* the family home and the place where I first saw the light of day, and because of the house’s situation which has always seemed to me one of the finest in the city; today it is all the one to me and I no longer cling to that pile of stones any more than to the land at St. Laurent which I would have liked to see already sold ...

... Thanks to auntie for the watch she sent. It may be old-fashioned but it will do as well for me as if it were in the latest fashion, presupposing as Bermond said that it works, that is all that matters. As to the gold chain, I do not think it would be any use to me. Ornaments like that are usually worn to be seen; as I do not expect to be wearing anything except the soutane, except when travelling, a ribbon will do just as well for me. When I was in the world, I would have very much liked to have a gold chain; today it would be an embarrassment. A cleric needs to have very different tastes from those of someone in the world, and in this matter God has given me the fullness of grace ...

May 30

I have always hung on to the thought of going and taking you in my arms during these holidays and I see now that God in his goodness lulled me with this thought only so that I might get more settled into the seminary and patiently put up with separation from my loved ones, for the thoughts you have shared with me today convince me of the wisdom of staying on here, and certainly I could not have accepted this three or four months ago. I do not pretend it is not going to be a big hardship; but all things considered, it is better for me to stay, especially seeing how you are all going to be scattered during August so that I could hardly spend more than a dozen days with each of you. So we must put off our meeting until August of next year. I shall then be a subdeacon, and I will give you the consolation of hearing me sing the Gospel at high Mass. I am curious to know why M. Beylot thinks I should leave the seminary after two years’ theology.[[36]](#footnote-36) Do they have some designs on me? In fact I have a good mind to tell them that when I return to Aix I want to go on studying, before taking up the ministry. If you have some inkling of what they have in mind, I would very much like to hear it. His Grace the Archbishop must have discussed me with you, and you must have been able to divine something of his; intention. But be careful not to let M. Beylot know that I asked you, he might misinterpret the motive behind it. The way I see things and what I would want would be to receive the priesthood in Aix, so as to have the consolation of saying my first Mass surrounded by my family; we will have occasion to talk about that again. I do not think our people here will like it, but it seems to me that I would have to see some serious drawbacks in this plan before I would abandon it.

We had six first Masses on Sunday. The men concerned were ordained priests on Saturday by His Eminence Cardinal Fesch who also conferred minor orders on me. It was a superb ceremony for the onlookers. There is no way I could describe the feelings of the men who were the object of this wonder, the various reactions of amazement or even contempt on the part of those drawn into the church of St. Sulpice out of curiosity or piety. If only you could have been there, dear mama, and grandma and Eugenie. You would have seen your son raised to dignities that lift him infinitely higher than all earth’s potentates. Responsibility for the Lord’s temple was entrusted to me; the holy Eucharist itself has been placed in my care; the Church has conferred on me the power of casting out demons from the bodies of the possessed and preparing the matter that is to serve at the holy Sacrifice. If only you could have been there, dear mamma. How fervently you would have beseeched the Lord to grant me the grace of making a worthy response to so many favours, and to deserve still more of them for what is still in store. I must confess that I feel a sense of confidence that astounds me; as it does not rest on my own strength but is based solely on the merits and mercy of Our Saviour, nothing can shake it. The thought of my sins seems now only to stimulate me to make reparation, as I devote myself wholly to the service of Him whom I have so offended and who has loved me still more. I am still going to wait, as I said, until next Christmas to receive the subdiaconate, and it will be at Trinity I will be made deacon; I will defer fixing a date one way or the other as to the priesthood, according to what we fix with His Grace the Archbishop.

If you go to St. Laurent, I think it would be a good idea to bring back the chalice and vestments as they will not be used up there, as I do not plan to make a stay up there. Your purple and black dress would make a very fine vestment and some of the other things I know are in your wardrobe would also make very fine ones. You cannot have too much of anything when it comes to the most holy Sacrifice, it is not in that area I plan to economize.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[37]](#footnote-37)**

56:XIV in Oblate Writings

*President de Mazenod hears about Eugene’s entry into the seminary and Eugenie’s marriage from Alexandre Amyot. Advantage of getting surplices make in Paris. Sufferings of the Church.*

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice,

June 1809

I cannot imagine how they arrange to get letters through in the country where Victor and Alexandre are living.[[38]](#footnote-38) I understand still less how the latter could take it on himself to inform my father about the state of life I have decided to adopt, without being asked by me. It did not take this fresh incident to convince me of his lack of discretion and ignorance of basic good manners. Did my father have to learn from someone other than myself about the grace the Lord has given me, and should not some trouble have been taken to break the news gently since from a human point of view he cannot have found it very pleasant? Will it not look as if I have been deliberately keeping my intentions from him? If, he will say, he could take Alexandre into his confidence, how come I am the only one not to know about it? Could he not have used the same means as he used to communicate with a mere acquaintance to write tohis father? This is all very unpleasant. But as well as that why did dear auntie have to gossip so untowardly? The same goes for Eugenie’s marriage, although this second indiscretion is less annoying, as she was not communicating anything that was unpleasant. Even so, it would have been a lot better if the meddler had left to us, either you or me, both the responsibility and the consolation of being first with the news. However, the deed is done, it remains only to see how the damage can be rectified and that is going to take more than a half-page letter, but I will do my best to sugar the pill, to put it bluntly. Again, really I should speak only about myself, but in fact I will have to speak about Eugenie’s marriage too, to stop them imagining in Palermo that I left my mother’s house as you had sacrificed me for the sake of my sister, so as to be able to provide better for her. I bet they have got this idea into their heads, and it is important that I scotch it; nonetheless this is what Alexandre’s lack of discretion entails, God bless him for all the trouble he is putting me to ...

... Write and let me know the price of the best linen in your shops, so we can work out whether I would do better getting some sent here to make up two or three surplices before I leave, as they do a much better job of making them in Paris, and the seamstress at the seminary is famous. As I write this, it strikes me that his Grace the Archbishop could easily intend to appoint me an honorary canon when I am ordained priest. If that were to happen, I would not need to have a surplice, for the canons do not wear them. In any case, I should not be thinking so far ahead, for who knows what will happen before it is time for me to return to Aix. Let us devote ourselves to prayers, and pray with all the more ardour now that we are better children of the Church, and more attached to the centre of catholicity. We must not let a day go by, or ever say our prayers, without beseeching the Supreme Pontiff to watch over his Church, and to strengthen more and more his earthly representative. and uphold him in the painful circumstances he is in.[[39]](#footnote-39)

... Since you never tell me who thepeople are who take an interest in me, I cannot ask you to pass on my respects to anyone, except for Beylotand Denis, and the good sister whose prayers I ask. As to all the people who keep me in mind, I always give them a general mention in my *memento,* and those who criticize me lose nothing on that account as I pray to God for them too, even if it is only to obtain for them a better idea of what religion is and the generous resolutions that it alone can inspire. The more a good mother suffers, all the more must her children run to her help; those at least are the feelings that God plants in the heart of those whose service he really wants to accept.

**[To his sister Eugenie, in St. Martin-des-Pallières].[[40]](#footnote-40)**

57:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Advice to Eugenie on her spiritual reading and lifestyle. It is essential she go more often to communion.*

Boisgelin Eugenie

D’Issy,

July 12. [1809] posted

... That is no excuse for neglecting pious reading, but I think it could be shortened, and in my opinion Nicole has to be sacrificed for a time, not because there is anything wrong with him, but because where there is a choice to be made one must not hesitate to give preference to books that touch the heart with love of God, arouse our desire and suggest ways of practicing the virtues that are best suited to our state of life, etc., over others that do indeed provide food for a cultivated mind but with their dry and scientific approach are quite unable to touch anybody’s heart. The question I put to you is whether in your situation it is your mind that needs to be convinced, or if it is not rather your heart that needs to be aroused, stirred, warmed? For this reason a chapter from the New Testament, a chapter from the Imitation of J.C., especially Book IV, and then St. Francois de Sales, here you have the books from which you must take your spiritual reading. You can alternate St. Francois de Sales with Rodriguez and the *Combat spirituel,* that is, one on one day, the other on another, but altogether spiritual reading should not go beyond the half-hour, and it would be a good idea to divide it up, I mean that at one point of time you could read the chapter from the Imitation, and at another time the chapter from the New Testament, and at another time a quarter of an hour’s reading from one of the works I cited above. You understand that to find time to do all this reading (for you must every day do an hour’s literature and an hour’s history, and this every day, every day), you will, I say, have to give up your passion for knitting, give it up entirely ...

It is not enough to do things for a day, you have to keep it up, it is only by perseverance that one succeeds. And to ensure fidelity to one’s resolution, I know no better method than making out a programme for oneself in writing and one makes it an iron law to reread it every week, at first, and later on every month. The programme should include everything: pious exercises, study, social studies, time of rising, time for going for a walk, for making social calls which should be as short as possible, for it is time wasted ...

So far, my dear Eugenie, I have been giving you the counsels that are suggested by human procedure; I am still left with the most important thing, for what do all the gains derived from them amount to in comparison with those that the faithful practice of religion and a devout and pious life can win us. We must not neglect the former as, since it is a duty of your state of life to live in the world, you must know its weapons, and use them to keep it captive, but after all God requires something more again from us. My dear darling, how can I find words to describe the different feelings aroused in my soul by your letter; feelings of real sorrow at seeing how far you have gone in your neglect of the sacraments, that is to say, that you have distanced yourself from the source of graces at the very moment you most have need of them; you have refused the bread at the moment this viaticum was most necessary, you have refused the walking stick when your legs were getting weak. My child, you have spent three whole months without the nourishment of the flesh of J.C., without slaking your thirst with his precious blood, although you should never let a single week go by without strengthening yourself with this heavenly food. Since when has it been the practice to disarm oneself at the approach of the enemy? Tell me then whose help it is you dare to count on amidst the dangers of the world when you refuse your soul Him who is our strength and our life? Have you forgotten the anathema aimed by J.C. precisely against those who, whether as an insulting gesture or from a misunderstood humility, do not participate in his Body as often as the symbols under which he hides himself seem to invite. “If you do not eat the flesh of the Son of Man, you will not have life in you”, that is to say our soul, fainting for want of food, will lose all the strength and vigour that it can draw only from the author of life, and will succumb to an incurable languor resulting in death as it opens the door to sin. But, you say by way of excuse, the carnival was a source of dissipation this year; that is precisely why you ought to draw near to your Saviour. Do you not think you would have been much more interiorly recollected on finding yourself in the world if you had that morning received communion? I reply: yes: ten, twenty times you would have raised your heart towards him whom you had had the happiness of receiving that morning, and although dissipation surrounded you on every side, and exteriorly you would not have been noticeable in any way, your heart would have been in solitude, and Jesus, in his goodness, would have responded even as the violins played away, for he would have recognized that you were only listening to them because you had to, with repugnance and solely to satisfy one of the most painful duties that the state of life in which it pleased the Lord to put you imposes. “The more you are in the world, the more you need help”, says the Venerable Liguori, who by the way was going to be beatified just when Rome’s hour of desolation arrived: “the more you need help because you have greater temptations. So make it a rule to receive holy communion every eight days, (You find this in the programme he outlines for people obliged to live in the world) with the firm resolve never to omit it on account of any worldly business; for there is no business more important for you than your eternal salvation”, that is to say, this holy Bishop, who only wrote his works after exercising the ministry for 28 years, seems to link eternal salvation to this frequency of holy communion, and he is not wrong, for it is the opinion of all the saints who have written best on this question, and the custom of the early Christians (who had their imperfections just like ourselves) is evident proof that that was the intention of Our Saviour which was handed down to them by the Apostles. You are aware that the early Christians received communion every day, which did not stop them having, or to express it better, even though they had their little quarrels, jealousies, in a word their imperfections as we see in Acts and in St. Paul’s letters, and also from what the holy fathers tell us on the matter. I am anticipating here what you might say about your faults, etc., and even though there are still fifty thousand million things to say on the subject, I will finish up with what the Council of Trent said, which far from giving us to understand that the venial faults we commit as a consequence of the fragility of our wretched nature should distance us from the sacrament of J.C., invites us on the contrary to go and consume these faults in this sacrament of love, and teaches us that communion is an antidote which delivers us from venial faults, and saves us from mortal ones.

May God accompany my words with his powerful grace so that they produce on you the same effect that the letters of one of our seminarians had on a father he cherished, but whom he saw with sorrow persisted in Calvinism. The letters brought the Calvinist back to the bosom of the Church. I am not asking God for so much as that, but only that he make you feel the need to yield to the arguments[[41]](#footnote-41) that my zeal for your salvation compels me to expound, or rather the holy resolution to put into practice my counsels, since I see by your letter than the arguments have already begun to have their effect. I will not finish without telling you I was deeply moved by the admission you make that you spent 3 months without receiving Holy Communion. This sincerity I find wonderful. Please keep on giving me an account of your conduct. I hope that God will be glorified by our correspondence, and that your soul will benefit from it, provided you decide to put into practice what the Holy Spirit tells you through my mouth. Goodbye, I send my love with all my heart ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[42]](#footnote-42)**

58:XIV in Oblate Writings

*An excursion to Rouen. Eugene unmasks some fraudulent revelations. The Pope passes through Aix. Mass in the Carmelite Church.*

Mazenod Madame de

D’Issy,

September 1, 1809

So here I am back from my travels, my very dear and darling mamma. I left Paris on the vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, with the companion I spoke to you about,[[43]](#footnote-43) and we celebrated the feast of the Assumption in Rouen. The object of our journey was to go and meet some alleged saints living in a village some 14 or 15 leagues from Normandy’s capital. Everything we had heard about them was so extraordinary that it really was worth the trouble of going to see them close-up, which we did. God may have given me a very ordinary share of brains but he did endow me, thank goodness, with quite good judgment; I made use of it on the present occasion to uncover the most odious imposture imaginable; it is in all truth a great shame, for these freshly minted saints, who every night hold converse with their guardian angels, had already, through their inspiration and following their orders, proclaimed me for a saint of the firstclass to such an extent that they had seen the angels holding my elbow at the moment I was raising the priest’s chasuble at the Mass I served the day after my arrival, and at which I received communion, surrounded by blessed spirits, angels, archangels, thrones, dominations. What more is there to say? I will tell you a lot more about it as soon as we meet. For now I will just say that it is a good thing I went, as if by inspiration, without having planned it in advance, to the place where all these alleged revelations were taking place, so as to undeceive a good pastor, and a large number of other people too, including two priests who would perhaps not have been undeceived for a long time, perhaps indeed never, if I had not been on the spot. My young travelling companion who very much wanted to believe, and who would have believed like the others if he had been alone, gave me a little bit of trouble on the first day; but then when I had given him tangible evidence of the imposture, he changed his tune and helped me to undeceive the others, which was not in all truth an easy thing to do, for, as they had believed without looking too hard, the precautions I had taken not to be taken in showed them clearly the trickery involved. Piety and religion were really compromised in all those sly tricks.

Thank you for the details you give about the Sovereign Pontiff. I felt for you not having the happiness of kissing his hand and receiving his blessing, but even so I am not letting you off from telling me all you still can on the subject.

I am quite satisfied with our Archbishop’s Pastoral Letter, I am very grateful that you procured me the pleasure of reading it; now it only remains to know whether the Reverend Pastors read out the letter attached to it, and of which there is no mention in the pastoral letter. The vast majority of the Parisian pastors, or to be more accurate every single one with the exception of two or three. did not judge it opportune to read it out ...[[44]](#footnote-44)

September 3

If my memory were a little better, you would have received this letter a few days sooner. Yesterday I went to Paris with several of my colleagues to receive communion in the Carmelite Church on the very spot where, on that very day, a large number of martyrs shed their blood for the Catholic faith ...

[margin p. 1]

P.S. What you say about the Pope’s passing through Aix greatly interested me, but the details we have about the rest of his route are more limited; so please write and tell me a little more about his stay in Aix. Did the people, as they did in other place, display their enthusiasm? What did the Holy Father say? etc., etc. All his words should be preserved and his actions imitated.

**For Grandma.[[45]](#footnote-45)**

59:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Pilgrimage to the Calvary on Mont Valérien. He strongly urges frequent communion.*

Joannis Catherine

Issy,

September 15, 1809.[[46]](#footnote-46)

I have just come back from the most enjoyable and edifying pilgrimage I have ever experienced, and now I want to give you the pleasure of hearing about some of the highlights from my lips, for I know quite well that this will appeal to your sense of piety.

Some two leagues outside Paris you will find a hill called Mont Valérien, on whose summit you will see the ruins of a monastery, once the home of Hermits. The ownership of this pleasant spot, after changing hands several times during the revolution, was acquired by the Parish Priests of Paris who wanted to restore the representation of Calvary that had been there in former times. I don’t know how they managed it, but they were so lacking in foresight that they didn’t have the wherewithal to pay and were obliged to forfeit their deposit and relinquish the property. It was painful for the faithful to see a place that was dear to all the good people of Paris fall once again into impious hands and what had once been a place of pious pilgrimage revert again to being a rendezvous for drunkards from all around.

At that moment the Abbot of La Trappe enters on the scene and counting more on Providence than on any funds he might have had he secured the purchase of this holy place with a view to restoring it to its former usage and entrusting it to the guardianship of some of his brothers, charged to bring back to life the first fervour of the hermits of old.

This pious plan succeeded beyond all expectation, the stations of Jerusalem, otherwise known as the *Via Crucis,* were re-established and the Cross planted anew on the hill’s terrace where you can see today larger than life O.L. crucified, with Longinus on horseback leading a group of Roman soldiers, and piercing him with his lance, on one side, and the Most Holy Virgin followed by the holy women on the other side in an attitude of sorrow, these personages all being life-size models in coloured terracotta.

The Parish Priests of Paris observed this moving act of restoration, and made it their business to reinstate the former custom by which each parish was bound to come in turn on pilgrimage to the Calvary on a day in the octave of Holy Cross.

The parish of St. Sulpice has its day like the others and this day is fixed for Tuesday in the octave of the Exaltation. On that day his Reverence the Parish Priest invites along 14 seminarians, and naturally he invites them to dinner on the mountain, and the clergy of his church too. I was one of the 14 elect, without having asked for it, as I had no idea of the consolations that awaited me in that holy place.

The general rendezvous is Suresne, a village at the foot of the mountain. The pious Parisians, having been alerted on the Sunday preceding, all find their own way there, along with the members of the major catechism group and the association of young ladies, the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and the parish clergy. The seminarians too find their way there, but by another route, for as you know we are away in the country. So we left Issy at 5:00 a.m., passed through Sévres where they make the beautiful porcelain of that name, we crossed the park of St. Cloud, imperial property, and arrived at 7:00 a.m. at Suresne. All being ready and departure time having arrived, we set out in procession, the sign of our redemption at the head, the people singing canticles and ourselves the *Miserere,* then the *Vexilla Regis* which it was really moving to sing as we went up the mountain side, a reminder of the place where our divine Saviour consummated amidst the most awful torments the work of the redemption of mankind. Once arrived at the top, we adored the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Church, of which a big section is actually only a tent, and then emerged again in procession, to make the stations. At each station we had some edifying words relating to the episode of the Passion we were to meditate on, which were heard in profound silence by 3 or 4 thousand people arranged like an amphitheatre on the hillside, which constituted the most picturesque and edifying sight you could imagine. What could be more ravishing in effect than to see the flower of the capital’s Christians dragging themselves along with faith and compunction in the sorrowful footsteps of the Saviour, receiving in exchange, from their generous Master, such an abundance of consolation that each one of us I felt would have refused to exchange a crown for the Cross we clutched and desired to clutch still more closely, while beneath our feet we see, and in our mind’s eye trample on, Paris, horrid cesspit of every vice, scene of the triumph of the sworn enemies of this crucified God to whom we had come to offer our homage, in reparation for the outrages he daily receives from them.

At the end of the Stations of the Cross, we went back into the Church to sing high Mass and hear a sermon. Everyone took communion so as to gain the plenary indulgence (there were more than 600 communions) and I can assure you, darling grandmamma, you were not forgotten. I find it very consoling to remember my dear relatives at the moment I am offering God my feeble acts of homage, I feel my prayers must be heard by One who was the best of sons when my prayer is for the sanctification and happiness of my darling mothers, my father, my sister, in those moments when the soul is emptied in an abyss of joy as it contemplates its lovable Saviour within itself, where he has come and taken up his place so as to identify himself in some way with it, and fillit with his gifts and graces. My God, is my constant prayer, may those I love so tenderly experience the ravishing effects of your holy presence, and to that end afflict them with an insatiable hunger for this heavenly food which is the only thing that can produce effects so powerful. How can anyone go a whole month without slaking his thirst with this precious blood which is there on the altar for no other reason than to provide us with nourishment virtually every day? How can souls that fear God and hold mortal sin in horror and would prefer death to offending their God and thus risk the death of their souls, how can these souls I say keep their distance in a way so hurtful to Our Lord who cries aloud to them from the altar where he is waiting for them: Come to me, fear nothing, am I holding a thunderbolt in my hand? do you not rather see in me your souls’ physician, hidden under the species of bread to give you proof that it is as necessary for you to feed on my flesh, to restore your exhausted strength, sustain you in virtue and make reparation for the faults that are inseparable from your nature, as it is for the body to be nourished with its daily, material bread. What a terrible account there will be to pay on the day of judgment when O.L.J.C. reproaches us for our lack of eagerness in responding to his pressing invitations and when we see with our own eyes that we might have been spared a prodigious number of faults had we been ready to make use of the remedy that the Saviour procured for us in his immense charity. If only we really grasped that truth that the holy Council of Trent teaches us: that communion is a salutary medicine that delivers us from venial sins and preserves us from mortal ones.

However, I see I have somewhat wandered from my topic. After our thanksgiving, it was one o’clock and time for dinner. Soup, beef, mutton and a cold plate, as wide as your hand and as long as the table, were what we had. At 3 o’clock, vespers and benediction, then a little talk from the parish priest for his pilgrim parishioners, delivered at the foot of the Cross and listened to with piety and recollection, sentiments that had prevailed throughout the day with this chosen flock. After satisfying our piety and that of the faithful with a kissing of the relic of the true Cross, we came down to Suresne in procession, as in the morning, singing compline with joyful strains; and so the countryside re-echoed with the praises of the Saviour, and the Cross, soaring high over Paris, triumphed over its ferocious enemies. As we came to Suresne we intoned the litanies of the Blessed Virgin in thanksgiving to herself and in testimony of our filial devotion, and to include her in the triumph of her Son, she who had shared so much in the sorrows and torments of his passion. At Suresne we parted, and each went his own way, blessing God for the graces and consolations he had willed to bestow on us, and echoing in the joys of our hearts that a day spent in the tabernacles of the Lord in the midst of his holy solemnities is incomparably better than a thousand, what am I saying, than a thousand million days spent in the false joys of the world’s foolish children.

My little tale has brought me to my page’s end and I make use of this little space to give you a thousand kisses, with all my soul.

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[47]](#footnote-47)**

60:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Eugene answers Madame de Mazenod’s objections to his vocation. His state in life will allow him to stay close to her. If he had stayed in the world, as a diplomat or in the army, he would have been constantly separated from her. One can work out one’s salvation only by following God’s will.*

Mazenod Madame de

Issy,

[September 1809, end of].

... So what are these thoughts that are troubling you, darling mama, and how in the world, after all we have said, can you still be paying attention to the wicked insinuations the evil spirit is intent on evoking within you about my vocation to the clerical state. Heavens above! Is not the Lord the master of his creatures and who are we to dare to stand in his way?[[48]](#footnote-48) If ever a vocation was tested, mine certainly has been. I have given you so many and such good reasons that I think it is quite useless to go over all that ground again. I thought you had reconciled yourself to the sacrifice, under the influence of your religious sentiments, but how can I talk of sacrifice? I have shown you as clearly as two and two make four that far from making the least sacrifice, your maternal feelings have everything to gain by my entering the clerical state. I beg you not to create monsters of your own imagining just for the pleasure of doing battle with them. What an illusion to think I could work out my sanctification in a state of life God clearly does not want for me! Once and for all, get it straight! You cannot get the idea out of your head that I could quietly work out my salvation in the lay state. That is not so, since, I say it again, one can work out one’s sanctification only in the state of life God wants for us. But even if I conceded that, how would your tender feelings be any better off? Do you really think that if God had not in an act of mercy, that I can never sufficiently bless him for, and that you ought equally to bless him for, inspired me to enter the clerical state, do you really think, I say, that I would be the sort of man to grow old sitting in a corner and planting rape and cabbages? I would have taken up another career, one more dashing if you will in the world’s eyes, but one that would have transported me 3, 4, five or six hundred leagues away according to the good pleasure of the government, or as my ambition or that of my friends thought fit to seek out ministerial positions. One fine day perhaps I would find myself secretary at the embassy in St. Petersburg, or a minister in some remote corner of Germany where perhaps I’d find some position more advantageous than those on offer in Provence, which would have meant a permanent separation from your side. But let us suppose that, abandoning myself to shameful sloth, I decided to spend my days in lazy idleness, do you imagine that even then you would get what you want? Today’s a fine time to think that are you not aware that in three quarters of France they are recruiting a large national guard for which everyone is eligible, to say nothing of the fact that they are calling up as officers precisely the men who are most on the lookout for a quiet life? What has happened in all those departments could happen tomorrow in ours, as the law is a general one. So, I ask you, what would you have to say if you saw me forced to tote the gun over my shoulder (substitutes are out of the question) to go off to fight and probably be beaten and killed, for today life is cheap, I ask you what would you say then? What price your tears then? Would you make bold to offer God something that was not intended for him, and where would your having a son in the army have got you? If blows there must be, isn’t it better to get them in the service of our God and for our God who did not grudge giving his life to save us ... If it weren’t 11:00 p.m., I could go on for another three hours on this though it wouldn’t take me that long to shut the mouth of anyone who tried to chop words with me about my vocation. So I will just repeat that not only the concern you ought to have for my sanctification should make you want me to enter as soon as possible into the clerical state, but the tug of your maternal feelings as well. You can read grandma’s letter, you will find the description of our pilgrimage edifying ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[49]](#footnote-49)**

61:XIV in Oblate Writings

*There are many seminarians. Few children from the leading families give their lives to the service of a Church “terribly abandoned”. Madame de Mazenod will be glad on the day of judgment that she gave her son to God to save souls; so she must stop lamenting Eugene’s departure, he is only doing God’s will. Annual retreat. Subdiaconate at Christmas. He asks for prayers.*

Mazenod Madame de

Paris,

October 11, 1809

... The number of seminarians has risen considerably this year; I really think we are close to a hundred. Among the candidates we pride ourselves on, we can point to a Polish aristocrat of the same age as myself, the eldest son of an immensely rich family; his father has 24,000 vassals or serfs.[[50]](#footnote-50) Religion finds here some small consolation for the sheer panic, or to speak more plainly, the utter dismay with which our self-styled good society fled its sanctuary: she sees ranging themselves beneath her forsaken banners a few individuals who, over and above thepriestly character of J.C.’s ministers, naturally command respect in view of their education and birth. So do not grudge, dear mama, do not grudge this poor Church, so terribly abandoned, scorned, trampled under foot but which even so was the one who gave birth to us all in J.C., the homage that two or three individuals out of the whole of France (a small number I count myself happy to be one of) wish to pay her of their liberty and life. And what reason could you possibly have for wanting me to delay any longer from committing myself, and devoting to the Spouse of J.C., which this divine Master formed by the shedding of all his blood, every moment of a life I received only to use for God’s greater glory.[[51]](#footnote-51)

Dear mother, if you really grasped a great truth, that souls ransomed by the Man-God’s blood are so precious that, even if every human being, past, present and to come, were to spend, to save just one single one, every thing they have by way of talents, wealth and life, it would still be time well, nay admirably well spent, then far from lamenting that your son is consecrating himself to this divine ministry, you would be forever blessing God because, in his mercy, he has graciously willed to call me to so high an honour by a vocation which so obviously comes from Him. So dismiss all the thoughts and anxieties that are plaguing you as being temptations of the evil spirit: that is what they are; that implacable enemy of all that is good cannot bear to see the holy religion of J.C., which he is always trying with renewed fury to make more odious and despicable, rise again one day in the hearts of many by the quality of the individual who devotes himself to its service. By submitting yourself joyfully to the designs Providence has over me, you will have a share in all the good I hope to accomplish one day by God’s grace; and, on the day of judgment, you will be able to say with confidence to the Sovereign Judge: yes, it is true, I have offended you, but I gave you a son you kindly wanted for your service to save a large number of souls who without him would have cursed you eternally in hell; so place, place in the balance of my good works, the sacrifice I made you of my only son, a willing sacrifice or at least one made with truly Christian resignation and which, for that reason, must count in my favour.

But if instead of that you continue to persist in seeing as something evil the greatest grace that God could give me, and refuse to join me and trample under foot all the repugnance your injured nature feels, your heart’s flightiness will cost you an untold treasure of merit, without retaining even the feeble human consolation that the devil prompts you to desire, for since I know what is the will of God, who is sovereign master of all his creatures, I must without further delay submit to it and obey him. And when I reflect that his choice of me is a choice of mercy and special predilection, I am appalled that my whole family, beginning with my darling mama, won’t join me to thank the good God with demonstrations of gratitude and true joy.

By receiving the subdiaconate at Christmas, I will get the diaconate at Trinity at the latest and become priest perhaps during the holidays at Aix; but as there is still time between now and my receiving the priesthood, we will sort everything out in the meantime, doing everything so as to assure for everyone every consolation.

12th]

We have been on retreat since yesterday evening; but I am finishing off my letter so as to be able to send it off this morning to the person who will deliver it to you. It must be evident to you from the handwriting, how much of a hurry I was in when I wrote it; but provided you can read it, that’s all that matters.

Father Charles is leaving the day after tomorrow with a young man from Marseilles who used to be in our seminary[[52]](#footnote-52) and who has to go to Marseilles because his father is ill. He is the son of a watchmaker. He will give you news about me as he passes through Aix; I am getting him to see Eugenie too.

Goodbye, dear, excellent mama. Please pray for me and remember me especially in your communions, which I wish were more frequent. Ask all the good souls you know too to pray for me, that God in his goodness will give me all the graces I need and do so little to merit. I am thinking at this moment of dear Madeleine; she must be really happy to see me a cleric. It is simple souls like her who take God by storm. My affectionate greetings to you, darling mama, and to our Eugenie too. Love me as I love you, and pray for me. I for my part do not forget you. Goodbye.

**Annual Retreat.[[53]](#footnote-53)**

62:XIV in Oblate Writings

*No progress in piety because of lack of recollection. Resistance to grace. Resolutions.*

Retreat notes

Saint Sulpice

October 11-16, 1809

It isn’t hard to see that I have made absolutely no progress in piety since I entered the seminary; it will not be difficult either to uncover the origin of this very deplorable disorder. It comes indefinably from a lack of a spirit of interior recollection. That is the fundamental vice, the blight that gnaws at the bit of good in all my actions so that it is true to say that I find myself at this moment bereft of good works and that I must reckon as naught everything I have done up to the present because I did it badly.

Alas! What a sorry thought! I have spent 27 years in this world, and here I am with nothing to show for it for the next life. I cannot however blind myself to the fact that I was created and placed on this earth only to serve God, and acquire by my works sufficient merits to reach heaven.

When I look back over my past life, I see only disorder, iniquity on my side, a pouring out of graces on God’s side. The most signal of all these is to have pulled me back from the gutter to set me at the foot of his throne in his sanctuary.

You would think after that that nothing could stop me from running in the path of salvation. However nothing could be farther from the truth, for I dawdle rather even than walk. What then must you do, my God, to get something out of me?

Let us at least try to get something from his holy retreat to renew me a little in the spirit of my state of life. And since I know the source of the evil, the remedy is to hand.

To think of the account I will have to give of all the means of salvation the Lord provides me with in this house!

1st resolution. So far as in me is, not to waste one single minute of the day; everyone’s time is precious, but it is incomparably more precious for a cleric. There is no need to spell out why.

2nd resolution. Never to lose the sense of God’s holy presence; to lift up my heart to him often and perform all my religious exercises with the greatest attention, and with profound feelings of grief, love, faith, gratitude.

3rd resolution. To remember at every moment the sublimity of my vocation. The reasons that brought me to the seminary and that keep me there, God’s disgust for the tepid and for those who do God’s work negligently, lastly, to chase promptly away any thought that could distract me from my good resolutions, slow me down on my way, with all the more reason any that could leave me with an uneasy feeling; not to do anything childish, or light-headed, that contains even a hint of the dissipation I must flee from as it were the poison in every good work.

4th resolution. Curb the excessive tendency to talk at large about everything, be sober in speech, and especially be attentive about avoiding speaking about certain topics that get rather too close to the corruption of worldlings, *nec nominetur in nobis.*

5th resolution. Since I am unable to respond to the great grace the Lord has been so kind as to give me ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[54]](#footnote-54)**

63:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Study of theology. Eugenie’s friends and the spirit of the world. Advice to his sister about life in society. Draw strength from the sacraments.*

Mazenod Madame de

St. Sulpice,

November 11-14, 1809

Darling mama, you must have had some kind of an accident, it is so long since I had any news from you... Do please take it into consideration that you do not have the same justification as I do for putting off writing. It often happens that I want, and want very much, to have a chat with you, but I cannot. The tract of theology we are looking at just now, treating of God, and religion and so of the countless proofs of their existence, and the prodigious number of adversaries who oppose these two fundamental truths, those who like me want to study the question in depth are obliged to consult as we go along a lot of authors who deal ably with these questions, and so there are not enough hours in a day of 24. As well as that one has to study moral to prepare the next morning’s class. So there is no time left over for oneself, except the times of recreation that are so short, and I think so necessary, that I have made it a rule always to take full advantage of them. And so, dear mama, from the fact that I write but rarely, you cannot argue that you have to do the same ...

I am delighted that you got on well with little Icard. I knew that his visit would make you happy and that he would tell you everything you wanted to know about me, that is why I asked him to go and see you and Eugenie as well. That little child’s lady friends don’t seem to have been much use to her during her confinement, as they left her with time on her hands to get bored. Apart from that, I am far from upset at her having so few ties, I find it hard to imagine who is really suited to be her friend. The young things of today are worldly to the marrow of their bones, so much so that everywhere they go they exude its spirit and taint everything with it. They give themselves airs of being experts in things they know nothing about, and make themselves so ridiculous that it would make you laugh if they weren’t such a sorry sight. Our Eugenie isn’t a bit like that, she clings to the good principles God gave her the grace of learning with her mother’s milk, and when I say that her conduct is such as to bring consolation to the whole Church, it comes as a surprise only to those who know nothing of the intimate relations and divine bonds that unite in one and the same spirit all the members of J.C.

For myself, I declare I am overjoyed when I reflect that, by God’s grace, she has given the lie to all who thought that once she was free of her mother’s watchful eye, she would be like everyone else. I am so happy for you, darling mama, that you should have such a consolation before your very eyes. No dancing, no theatre, these are the two points to be held on to like the faith; not that by any means I put them on the same level, but because of the high importance these two points of moral teaching have, as so many other things hang on them. This is not to say that Eugenie must not go to places where there is dancing taking place. She is by no means obliged to stay away from social circles where this dangerous and unchristian pleasure is permitted; I go further, she would be wrong, given her position, even to entertain such an idea, and I think that you would be at fault if you were to lead her to avoid such gatherings altogether. But she must here apply the teaching of St. Paul, and use the things of this world as if one did not use them, lament the fact that her state in life compels her to be present in the midst of fools who gamble their souls for so small a gain; every so often unite oneself interiorly with the saintly souls who serve God and praise him in their solitude, with the holy angels and all the heavenly court, and especially our darling and tender Mother Mary, who alone gives more glory to God than all the blessed put together. If she continues like this the world will be the constant occasion of merit for her, and in that way she will sanctify the duties of her state in life. How wonderful it would be if God in his goodness were to send her a likeminded lady friend, which means a right-minded one, how nice it would be from time to time to whisper into one another’s ears edifying words, about what was going on around them and was hateful to the Christian heart. The angels would find more satisfaction in these little, short God-centred moments than in any long prayers a hermit might make. In the absence of such help, she should address herself, for a minute or two every quarter of an hour, or perhaps half-hour, to her guardian angel, with these or similar words: “My good angel, my body may be here, but my heart is with God. You who are constantly at the foot of God’s throne, offer him my intentions, tell him that I love him above all things.” At another time she might address the guardian angels of people she sees are most forgetful of the good God; offer some ejaculatory prayers, short ones, it doesn’t have to be out loud, for the conversion of sinners, etc. Lastly, she must not let go the sense of God’s presence any more than she can possibly help, but without getting anxious, or distressed, and taking care that no one can guess what she is doing. My God, my God, let us grasp once and for all that one can and must achieve sanctity in every state of life, and that our heavenly Father gives each of us the graces that are necessary to achieve our salvation in that state he has placed us in, but one must make use of all the means that his goodness suggests, and above all we must go and draw strength from the wells he has given us for that purpose, I mean in the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist, and that should be often, very often, yes, very often, do you hear me, very often. Reject all teaching to the contrary as being diametrically opposed to the Church’s intention and that of our adorable Saviour. The more enemies one has to fight, the more armour one must put on; the harder the road one has to take, the more nourishment one must take to endure the weariness. I will not be happy until I see a change on this matter. It is the only quarrel I have with my darling family: O.L.J.C. is not being honoured in it in the way he wants: mother, grandmother and sister all give me cause for sorrow on this matter. But here I am at the end of the page and although I am writing at top speed so that you can hardly decipher what I am saying perhaps, even so my time has run out. I did not mean to say so much when I started. It was at God’s inspiration, accept it in that vein, for it is the pure teaching of the Catholic Church, and coming from the mouth of a son and brother it has perhaps some extra weight, for clearly there is no one else in the world who cares so much about your salvation. There goes the bell for particular examen, and I have to finish and forgo the rest as I must get the usual envelop ready immediately, unless I want to go without eating, which goes beyond the bounds of duty ...

**To Madame de Mazenod, in Aix.[[55]](#footnote-55)**

64:XIV in Oblate Writings

*It is a source of merit for Madame de Mazenod to busy herself with purchases for the seminary bursar. Dimissorials. Meaning and obligations of the subdiaconate. Eugene is committing himself freely to the clerical state for the whole of his life. He asks to be remembered in the prayer and fasting of Saturday in quarter-tense. He urges Madame de Mazenod to put into practice her son’s advice on frequent communion.*

Mazenod Madame de

Saint Sulpice,

November 29, 1809.

I think the figs in question are as good as those from Marseilles last year. Don’t forget while you are being so obliging as to make these purchases [for the bursar] to direct your intention in such a way as to make this act one of meritorious charity. Remember that if, as is very true, even the most trivial act done in the name of O.L.J.C. will count for us, with all the more reason will the services one renders to communities dedicated to the service of the good God and which make it a rule to pray every day for their benefactors. You know that St. Paul says these very words: whether you eat, or whether you drink, whatever in fact it is you are doing, do everything for the glory of God [I Cor. 10,31 ].

...The Superior ... has asked [the Archbishop] for dimissorials for the subdiaconate so that by receiving this order at Christmas, I can be made deacon at Trinity and sing the Gospel for you these holidays. If Eugenie’s time were to have been due then I could have had a dispensation to administer the sacrament of baptism to her child. The diaconate is a sublime order, a second priesthood; the common opinion is that it is even a sacrament. The subdiaconate is only a step on the way to it, one that one must take, and how I am on fire to take it. Some people make a monster out of this first step, and in the world especially it gives rise to dread. As for me, it is the one I fear the least. The priesthood is the order you have to stand before in holy fear and trembling. But in the case of the subdiaconate, what is there to be afraid of? Is it the vow of chastity one takes? But in all conscience, think for a moment. Isn’t one bound to be chaste in every state of life, on pain of damnation? And chastity is much more difficult to keep in other walks of life than in the clerical state, where one is surrounded by a whole environment and continually accompanied by the most powerful of helps. But marriage, someone says ... No thank you very much, I have such an aversion and distaste for marriage that the very idea makes me ill; I would sooner spend my life in the hulks. But it is instituted by God, sanctified by O.L. who made it a sacrament. St. Paul says that whoever gets married does a good thing ... Who denies it? Marriage is a good thing for those who are called to it; and these very people have to agree that this good thing very often gives rise to some rather bad things. But, with all that, one must be chaste in marriage too, and I have always heard it said that it is more difficult to be chaste by halves, than it is to be totally chaste.

For the rest, it isn’t my affair, as marriage and I are at opposite poles. So what is there to be afraid of in the subdiaconate? Not the vow of chastity; it would on the contrary be very easy for me to show its great advantages. But there is the fact that by the subdiaconate one is irrevocably bound to the clerical state. That is just where you are wrong. It is not the subdiaconate that binds me to the clerical state; it is my full, entire, voluntary and well thought out decision. This properly speaking is what binds me; the subdiaconate is but the means I employ to arrive at the accomplishment of this decision. God calls me to the clerical state. I want to be a cleric and I want it very much. And note that I don’t want to be a cleric for eight days, six months, a year, ten years even; I want to be one for the whole of my life. Now, for that, I must be tonsured, porter, lector, exorcist, acolyte, subdeacon, deacon, priest; these are conditions necessary to attain my end. Now what would be the folly of a man who, called to the first storey where his happiness awaits him, wanted to get there, but instead of mounting the staircase, sat down quietly at the bottom of the steps! If the Emperor commanded me to go to Versailles, there to assure me of my fortune, and the only way to get there is by coach, and I say: my one desire is to get to Versailles so as to enjoy the good fortune that awaits me there and obey the prince’s commands, but I cannot make up my mind to get aboard the coach, you would rightly reply: you want and you don’t want, for since you wish to go and yet you refuse to get aboard the coach, which is the only means of getting to your destination, it is just as if you said: I want to go and I want to stay.

If only they knew in the world how sweet it is to serve the Lord, there would be none of this great trembling over those who commit themselves to serve him all their lives. So pray for me, dear mother, that I may serve him as I should, this good Master who is so rich in mercy, so powerful with his rewards. Pray especially next quarter-tense, a fast day, as you know, established to ask God for good ministers for his Church. Add holy communion to this fast on the Saturday of the ordination, for the intention that God might grant me all the graces necessary for me; clearly this communion won’t stand in the way of your communicating on Christmas Day. Remind for me Sister Hylarion of our communion of prayer, and ask her and her Sisters to make a novena and receive communion for me on the day of the ordination. Ask Father Denis to remember me in a special way, and all good souls who seek God’s glory ...

I am very happy to hear that Eugenie is better. Thank you for your kind words on my sermons; but the best compliment you can give them is to put them into practice; it only means correcting a few of your ideas. You live a life so conformed to the Gospel that it only remains to take the steps required to derive from it all the advantages it offers you. That is my heart’s desire for the ones I love so tenderly. Affectionate greetings and love with all my soul ...

**Conference for ordination day [subdiaconate].[[56]](#footnote-56)**

65:XIV in Oblate Writings

*Emotion felt by the onlookers, and especially the ordinands, during the ordination ceremony. Sadness at seeing the Church in bondage. Vocations are few because the Church is persecuted. Those who have the grace to be ordained commit themselves to her defence to the death.*

Conference for ordination day

Saint Sulpice,

December 23, 1809.[[57]](#footnote-57)

If today the casual spectator who is drawn by idle curiosity into the Temple should find himself entranced at the sight of a host of Levites drawn from every part of this vast empire pressing forward in holy rivalry to beg with insistence, some for admission to, others for promotion in, the saintly ranks; if dulled hearts, their sensitivity blunted by the cold egoism with which the world is imbued, could not refrain from tears at the sight of so many clerical students prostrate on the ground, waiting thus humbly for the Bishop to induct them into a vocation that promises sometimes a little short of ignominy to those who have the course to accept initiation; if, astonished by a devotion which makes them doubt the evidence of their own eyes, they remain in wonderment that men should run to embrace the cross of the Saviour with more joy today, when this sacred wood offers but bitterness and sorrow, than they did in the days when on taking it for one’s lot one shared much more in the glory than in the sufferings of Jesus; if in a word, in a first movement of enchantment and surprise, these souls dull to all that does not bear the imprint of the flesh, could not refuse to God, unknown to most amongst them, a spontaneous tribute of praise and blessing; what then must have been the feelings of the men who were at that moment the objects of the Lord’s special love, and as it were flooded by the heavenly dew of the most abundant gifts of the sanctifying Spirit; those who, enlightened by a ray of the supernatural light that the merciful Lord makes to shine in the eyes of those it so pleases him, were by a wise and free choice leaving to the world its vanities and honours and committing themselves inviolably to the one who alone is holy, alone is just, alone is worthy to be loved; those who were trampling under foot and treating with disdain the most seductive promises of this corrupting world to count only on the inviolable word of him who ever faithful knows how to recompense so generously the slightest sacrifices; those finally who utterly despising the repeated threats of an aroused hell, were thereby but all the more intent to offer to the Lord, with all the sincerity of their hearts, the most precious gifts they hold from his liberal hand, what he had given them that was most precious, their liberty and their life.

Who, sir, could express what we experienced in those happy moments? The holy thoughts crowding in on top of one another with lightning speed, the multiplicity of divers affective movements that at once both disturbed and fulfilled our souls: our hearts seemed ready to burst and in the demonstration of gratitude that such a great profusion of graces inspired in them, forgetful of the earth, they ascended through the impetus of love right to the throne of the Eternal God to mingle their thanksgivings with the canticles of praise of the angelic choirs and the whole heavenly court.

What happiness if this joy had been without alloy. But alas! At a time when the Church, our Mother, was bountifully opening her bosom for us to draw from there all the riches of which she is the depository and faithful dispenser, how could we not but reflect with grief about her as we considered her sorrows and sufferings, how could we not be moved with sympathy for the condition of abandonment she is in. What! at the sight of this Queen of the Nations fallen from the throne of the universe into the purest serfdom, denuded of all that contributed to her glory and splendour, reduced to mourning in silence the Spouse who was her dearest delight, could we refrain from mingling our tears with hers?

No, no, these deeds that rend our Mother have penetrated deep into our souls, and we cried out in accents of sorrow: *Facta est quasi vidua Domina gentium, facta est sub tributo:* bent beneath the yoke of the nations, her own children have become her cruellest enemies, *facti sunt ei inimici.* Pressed on all sides they lay snares for her, surround her with pitfalls to fall into, *omnes presecutores ejus apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.* Despoiled of all her beauty, sullied by those who surround her, she sees still afar off Princes who were the first ornament of her throne: *Egressus omnis decor; sordes in pedibus ejus, facti sunt principes ejus velut arietes non invenientes pascua: abierunt ante faciem persequentis.*

Ah, Lord, Lord, look upon her sadness and remember your mercy. *Recordare Domine quid acciderit nobis: intuere et respice opprobrium nostrum: innova, innova dies nostros sicut a principio.*

Alas, those happy days are no more, when by a kind of divine enchantment, at the same moment, several times in the course of the same year, there went forth from all points of the Catholic world as it were so many armies ranged in battle to combat the enemy, when one counted in their thousands the valiant soldiers to whom at each change of season the Church gave birth for her divine Spouse. That once so fecund womb today seems struck by a shameful sterility. The ranks are thinned, and there is no one to replace those who have gone ahead into glory. I will out with it! The reason no-one replaces them is that the Church in its poverty no longer offers those who devote themselves to her service anything except what was the lot, the glory, the riches and the happiness of the first disciples of the Gospel.

Ah, what has become of generous hearts! Must sordid avarice be always the great mover of men’s deeds? The Church at bay cries aloud to her children for help in her distress, and does no one respond?

No, no, tender dear Mother, not all your children desert you in the days of your affliction; a group, small it is true, but precious for the feelings that move it, draws close around you and wipes away the tears that men’s ingratitude provokes in the bitterness of your sorrow. Look, we are here, fix your gaze on us. We came to birth but moments ago, with a generation however wholly divine. We feel in our hearts the fullness of life, all the strength of virility. Issue your orders, there is nothing that the prospect of your needs will not move us to undertake. We know, and if we should be unaware of it, our faults and the example of our forerunners in the faith would soon apprise us of it, that strength does not consist in numbers, but in unity. Yes, united by the bonds of the same charity, anointed by the same spirit, tending to the same end, we will form that sacred Legion, that mystical phalanx that the world and hell cannot crush, we will march ahead carrying on high the standard of the cross, this divine sign around which we rally and which will emerge always victorious from every combat where battle is joined, and which by an unheard of privilege, has the virtue of procuring the immortal palm of victory for those who fall in its defence.

Animated by this heavenly Spirit, which you have just called down upon us, alone we will have the courage to combat your numerous enemies, to brave all dangers, face every spirit, form with our bodies an impenetrable barrier to your cruellest persecutors, die, yes die if needs be, to preserve you intact.

These are the feelings which the grace of ordination has given birth to in our hearts. Let us go, my brothers, and place them at the foot of the crib of Jesus who will soon make his appearance. Let us be the first thing that catches his attention at the moment of his birth, and at the very instant that Mary presents the world with its Saviour. Let us swear to him with one voice that we will be eternally faithful to the oath we have just taken to give our lives a thousand times over in defence of the inviolability of his Church.

Amen, amen.

1. Orig.: Postulation Archives, DM N‑5a, cahier n.2, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. An undated notebook containing 13 topics of “meditations and instructions”. The content indicates that they are notes written at the seminary and taken, for the greater part, from spiritual works. Some of the notes, like the one given here, seem to be personal reflections. For a similar text, see doc. 7 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM IV‑7. Many of Eugene’s reading notes or personal reflections are undated, like the ones here. On January 6, 1810, he wrote his mother: “Try to read, once a week, these little spiritual counsels ...” Does this refer to the following text? If so it was written during 1809. Is it an extract from some book or his own work? Whatever the answer to this question, it contains ideas he often expressed in his seminary days: the desire for perfection, the seriousness of sin, the love of God, the importance of prayer, the Saviour’s blood, the practice of the presence of God by ejaculatory prayers (he often speaks of this to his sister), etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ms. has “fifty” written over “five hundred”. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I‑7. We omit a large part of this letter in which Eugene describes various excursions, mostly on his mother’s errands. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I‑7. We give practically the whole of this short letter in which Eugene’s attachment to his family, one of the main sources of his suffering at the outset of his stay in Paris, is very evident. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ms.: 1808. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Orig.: St. Martin des Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit several paragraphs from this letter. Eugene is happy at having got some news and tells his mother he does not use the recreation periods for writing; he expresses his gratitude for gifts of provisions for the seminary bursar and talks of his health, linen, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit some paragraphs from this letter in which Eugene speaks of various errands and business matters. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Paul de Magalon (1784 - 1859) who will be a member of the Aix Youth Congregation in 1815, a postulant with the Missionaries of Provence in 1816, and later a hospital Brother of St. John of God. Cf. P. Pralon, *Paul de Magalon, capitaine et hospitalier,* Lille, 1893, p.57ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit a part of this letter where Eugene speaks about Madame de Mazenod’s problems at St. Laurent and about a parcel that has gone astray. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. From this point the text is written in the margin of the first three pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit a large part of this letter in which Eugene speaks of letters received and sent, of his expenses since he came to Paris and the worries raised by M. Serre in St. Laurent du Verdon. He has consulted a theologian about this. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Canon J.J. Beylot. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In this long letter, of which we publish only two extracts, Eugene makes the proposal that his mother sell the lands at St. Laurent-du-Verdon, speaks of his visits in Paris and asks why his sister does not write. On the same day he wrote to Eugenie mainly to inquire into her life with the Boisgelins and to find out what was being said in the family circle about Eugene’s plan of holidaying in Provence. Eugenie replied at some length on March 28, saying that while Roze-Joannis thought he would not come, Madame de Mazenod would be happy to see him but thought he could save the 400 francs. In general there was a lot of apprehension about him coming dressed as a cleric as then, wrote Eugenie: “You are leaving yourself open, so to speak, to not being able to draw back, seeing that having taken this first step in such a public fashion, you would feel a certain shame were you to change your mind, whereas if you did not appear in your new dress you would keep more freedom and give yourself more time to do the necessary reflection. There, my dear friend, you have everything I have heard on the topic.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM V I. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Undated. The opening phrases would indicate that it was written after the reception of tonsure, December 17, 1808. Eugene comments on John 8, 46-54, the gospel read on Passion Sunday. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Written over: “is not my discouragement justified? [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I7. We omit in particular the opening of this letter in which Eugene thanks his mother for several letters and explains the high cost of living in Paris, hence his expenses are high. He advises selling the land at St. Laurent, gives various items of news and speaks of various errands. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Charles Bretenière, superior of the boarding school of the Fathers of the Christian Retreat, or Greyfriars, founded by Father Receveur and set up in Aix after the 1801 Concordat. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Canon J.J. Beylot. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. M. Duclaux, Sulpician. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Father Augustin Magy (17261814), former Jesuit. We still have some extracts from letters of Father Magy, copied by Eugene, cf. Postulation Archives, LM Magy. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Miss Julie de Glandevès de Niozelles, who corresponded with Eugene 1808-1809. Rey copies several of her letters, I, 84-87, 89-90, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Madame de Mazenod was referring to the Greyfriars, cf. supra, note 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. “Retreat” here seems to mean: Fathers of the Christian Retreat, cf H. Verkin, in *Etudes Oblates* 26 (1967) 385-388. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. Only a few paragraphs of this letter are omitted, in which Eugene speaks of letters received, the Wednesday breaks, and the land at St. Laurent. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. We omit the beginning of this letter. Eugene thanks his sister for her long letter of March 28 and says that, apart from her spelling mistakes she writes well. He wants to know what his grandmother thinks of his taking holidays in Provence. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section of the letter that is omitted, Eugene speaks of his correspondence and various commissions that take up a lot of his time; he tells his mother that, short though the days are, he is going to study Greek this year and Hebrew the following year; he confirms the news that the Emperor is requiring many sons of leading families, even though married, to enter the army. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. One of Eugenie’s first suitors. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB I-7. We omit the beginning and ending of this short letter. Eugene avails of an opportunity to say he is well and to send a parcel. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. There is no date at the beginning of the letter but Eugene says: “I wrote to you no more than three days ago.” His last letter was dated April 23-25. The last three lines are headed: May 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Orig.: St .Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the section of the letter that has been omitted, Eugene speaks about commissions for Madame de Talleyrand, his health, some ideas about medicines he received from a colleague, his holidays in Provence, and Eugenie who is to entrust to Providence her desire for children. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs that have been omitted, Eugene speaks about the conclusion of the ordination retreat, an unsuccessful attempt at finding work for a man with a family to support, the small numbers coming to church on Easter Monday and Tuesday, and his underwear that is wearing out. Impending trips into the city. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. In her letter of May 4, Eugenie asked Eugene not to spend more than two years in Paris. “A number of priests worthy of credit, she added, have told us that that would be quite long enough ... as, when you entered the seminary, you were already as well prepared as most are on leaving.” Did this opinion really originate with “a number of priests”? It was really the opinion held by Roze-Joannis who wrote several times in this vein to Madame de Mazenod: cf. letters of July 9, 14, and 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the paragraphs that have been omitted Eugene speaks about Eugenie’s pregnancy, M. Bernard’s visit, his health and the high price of surplices. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Victor and Alexandre Amyot, Eugene’s second cousins. We still have a letter from Alexandre to Eugene’s grandmother, dated November 21, 1809. He was then living in Amsterdam. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Relations between Napoleon and Pope Pius VII were going badly. By a decree of May 17, Napoleon incorporated the Papal States into the French empire. The Pope responded with a bull of excommunication. On July 6, the Pope was taken from Rome and imprisoned at Savona. Eugene speaks of this in his letter to his mother dated August 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part of the letter that has been omitted, Eugene says that his sister must keep up her studies and gives advice on this and on how to conduct oneself in the world. During her pregnancy he trusts she will follow especially her mother’s advice. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The rest of the letter is written in the margin of the four pages. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Orig.: Postulation Archives, FB I-7. In the omitted paragraphs, Eugene speaks of a fall his grandmother suffered, the plan to sell the lands at St. Laurent, the expenses of his trip, his health, Roze-Joannis, etc. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Charles de Forbin Janson, cf. Eugenie to her mother, August 16, 1809. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Pastoral letter occasioned by a letter of the Emperor concerning the Pope. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 16. In the omitted section Eugene says the academic year is about to open and that his not having gone to Aix means that he is spared the pain of a “fresh separation.”

On the receipt of this letter, the grandmother wrote to Madame de Mazenod on October 9: “The letter that dear Eugene wrote me filled me with consolation. I could not hold back my tears as I read this edifying letter. His love for God is ample proof of the grace of his vocation and that it is no human motive that makes him embrace so holy a state. His perseverance and zeal must be an assurance for us that he has a good vocation.” [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Letter begun on the 15th, but finished after the 19th, the day of the pilgrimage. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, FB 1-7. In the part omitted, Eugene talks about the difficultyof finding safe ways of sending letters, and says he sleeps “like a log” and enjoys good health “like the Pont Neuf’. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Most of Madame de Mazenod’s letters, written in 1809 and 1810, are not in our possession, but it is evident that she persisted in raising objections to her son’s vocation. In all probability she passed on Eugene’s letters to Roze-Joannis who wrote to her on January 3, 1810: “The day before Christmas Eve, I thought all day about Eugene and yourself. I want that child’s great zeal to be always in accordance with knowledge and truth. His invincible prejudices make me tremble. Laxity is so enormous and prevalent amongst today’s Christians that a minister of religion needs to have the rules continually in his mind if he is not to be carried away on the flood of human customs. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part omitted, at the beginning of the letter, Eugene speaks about money he has received from his mother and of his sister’s recent pregnancy. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Father Joseph Szadurski, cf. J. Pierlorz, in *Etudes Oblates,* 28 (1969) 248-253. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Roze Joannis seems to have read this letter. He wrote to Madame de Mazenod on February 22, 1810: “Poor Eugene wants to have it known that it is the deplorable state of the Church of J.C. that fires his zeal, and that he is going for the priesthood so as to come to its aid. It has the semblance of a praiseworthy and edifying motive, but it is no justification at all for someone who has not been called by God to push his way into the ministry. Uzzah saw that the ark of the covenant was going to fall from the wagon and was in danger of being broken; he reached out his hand to support it and his rashness was punished with death. God is powerful enough to look after his work ...” [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. M. Icard, cf. Eugene to his mother, October 12 and November 14, 1809. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, CM IV I. Eugene left this text incomplete. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Orig.: St. Martin-des-Pallières, château de Boisgelin. In the part left out, Eugene says he is not getting any letters, then he says the letter dated the 3rd has just arrived. He ends up with greetings. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Orig.: Aix: Hótel Boisgelin, MJ I-I. In the omitted paragraphs, at the beginning and the end of the letter, Eugene speaks about his recreation, visits to the Cardinals, Hebrew studies and the patrimony required by the Church before subdiaconate. He makes a list of various fruits and nuts the seminary bursar would like and passes on what he has learnt of Raoul de Boisgelin’s misconduct in Paris. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, DM VI. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Eugene received the subdiaconate on December 23, 1809. This undated text was certainly written at that time, some months after Napoleon had made Pius VII a prisoner at Savona. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)