**1821**

**To Madame Roux, née Bonnecorse, Dominicans Street, Marseilles.[[1]](#footnote-1)**

32:XIII in Oblate Writings

*The Missionaries would be happy to work in the service of the poor at Marseilles.*

L.J.C.

Roux

Aix,

Janu[ary] 3, 1821.

Madame,

My uncle and M. Deblieu have just informed me of all that your kind heart and the desire for good which animates you have inspired you to do, in spite of the bad weather and the state of your health. I thank you very sincerely for these things and leave to God, as in regard to very many other things, the care of rewarding you. At the same time my uncle informed me about the proposal of the Gentlemen of Providence. If I understood it well, these Gentlemen would want to know if we could undertake the direction of the poor people that their charity has gathered together in the former property of M. Allemand. That kind of ministry enters perfectly into our line of work; I was so convinced of that three years ago I took some steps to bring the poor of the city of Aix together and instruct them in their religious duties; certain difficulties obliged me to put off that plan to another time. Now it is all done at Marseilles. If those Gentlemen think that we can second the holy work that they have undertaken, we are at their command. Our good desire asks only that we can promote it, that we be supplied with the means to do good, that’s all we want; besides, to be truthful, they must then undertake to help us do the task well by praying very much for us, for we recognize that we are inadequate and so we count only on the powerful help of God who never abandons those who place their full trust in him.

Accept, Madame, the assurance of my respectful sentiments and the strong sincere wishes that I make for you and your respectable family in this New Year.

Eug[e]ne de Mazenod, p[riest], m[issionary].

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[2]](#footnote-2)**

58:VI in Oblate Writings

*Names of saints above doors at Aix and Laus.*

Tempier

[Aix]

January 9, 1821.

I have done more than simply remain close to you in your pious ceremony on Christmas Eve but justly ashamed of having provided the idea while leaving to you the merit of setting the example, I have drawn up right away the list of our rooms and have chosen the guardian saints that I wish to give to each dweller in them. Our patron saints would be already installed if we had found the pictures of all those whom we want to have as guests. I need not, after that, tell you how much I approve of what you have done, nor even add that it is truly with pleasure that I have followed you in your procession. Nevertheless, I must not omit to say to you that I would have preferred that you had not given to individual common patrons such as the holy Angels, the Blessed Virgin, the Sacred Heart, the Child Jesus. It is the common rooms which should have such patrons.

**To the Archbishop of Aix at Marseilles.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

33:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Re quests a blessing for the success of the Brignoles Mission. Father de Mazenod will reply to M. Rauzan that the Parish Priests of Marseilles prefer the Missionaries of Provence over the Missionaries of France.*

Bausset Archbishop de

Aix,

January 12, 1821.

Your Grace,

We are going to leave for the Mission at Brignoles.[[4]](#footnote-4) Your absence deprives us of the happiness of receiving your blessing which we have always regarded as a sure sign of our success. So, please make up for it by sending it to us from the holy altar the first time that you offer the holy sacrifice. I don’t hide all the difficulties of the demanding enterprise that we are going to start, but the prayers of our chief pastor will be heard and grace will triumph over man’s perversity. I entertain this confidence all the more because I have always shown an extreme repugnance for this mission and Providence has guided events in such a manner that does not let me put it off any longer.

Your Grace, I believe it a duty to finally break silence on a topic about which I have always hesitated to talk with you. Even though I didn’t know how to win your confidence and consequently my view would not have carried great weight, I was afraid to show it since that could very well have turned you against an establishment which at first glance you might have considered useful to your diocese. Now that a deeper examination and the opinion of the wisest men in the diocese have been obliged to make you aware of the drawbacks of this appealing plan, I am taking the liberty to speak to you about it; not as yet to let you know what I think about it but to let you know the position in which I find myself in regard to M. Rauzan. He calls me to let him know my viewpoint and that of the wise men of the diocese, and my viewpoint, in accord with that of the wise men of the diocese, is contrary to his outlook. I am all the more embarrassed because, if I am to tell him the truth, I must let him know that the Parish Priests of Marseilles would not gladly see the Missionaries of his Society come in, but that they have shown the “greatest” desire to have such an establishment of missionaries like ours in their city to which they would entrust the care of those members of their flock who are most abandoned. They have experienced the incalculable advantage of such an establishment, not only for the great many people of this great city, but also for all the sectors that they would successively evangelize, and that could thereafter be easily cared for. Some respectable people went further, formally proposing that I agree to make this establishment as soon as possible: I referred them to the decision that you will take when you are on the spot, because I cannot determine anything else than what you consider fitting. It is up to you, Your Grace, to decide the matter. It is not up to me to exert pressure on your solicitude; I know too well the desire you have for the good of your people and so I do not feel obliged to do anything else than expose the facts to you. It is easy enough to acquaint yourself with the parish priests of Marseilles, and after that you will let me know your intentions to which I will always be eager promptly to conform myself.[[5]](#footnote-5)

In the meantime, I will finally reply to M. Rauzan even though it costs me a lot to do so. But I think that he has been prepared for what I am forced to tell him, when he was made aware of how the parish priests of Marseilles think. Never will a letter be more carefully weighed.

Accept, Your Grace, the sentiments of profound respect with which I am your very humble servant, Eugene de Mazenod.

**To. M. Rauzan at Paris.[[6]](#footnote-6)**

34:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Father de Mazenod will accept Archbishop de Bausset’s decision about establishment of Missionaries at Marseilles.*

Rauzan

[Aix,

January 12, 1821[[7]](#footnote-7)

... All of us, you and we, work for the glory of God. May God be glorified! That is all I want. It matters little whether it is through our ministry or yours. For myself, I shall always rejoice over all the good you accomplish and all the blessings that come to you. I go where I am sent and take the place assigned to me. It is for the bishop who represents the Father of the family to determine what work is to be done and the portion of the vineyard where a given worker will do the most good and that in a way that is more or less useful. Come what may, I shall always be devoted to you and shall always attach the greatest value to the friendship you have kindly shown me.

**To Madame de Mazenod [at Aix].[[8]](#footnote-8)**

35:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Regrets he did not meet Madame de Mazenod before leaving for the mission at Brignoles. Request for prayers.*

L.S.J.C.

Mazenod Madame de

Brignoles,

J[anuar]y 16, 1821.

Good mother, I cannot tell you how sorry I was that I could not embrace you before leaving. I was very surprised when I asked where you were to hear that you had taken the road to Grans. I remembered then that you had spoken about it, but I didn’t know it was for that day. My regret increased when I learned that you had knocked at my door; but apparently I was at the other end of the second room and did not hear you. So it is that you are at Grans and I am at Brignoles. But, even though we are separated in body, we can be present to each other in spirit. Certainly, I greatly need you to be concerned about me before the good Lord: it is no light matter to be burdened with a ministry like that laid on me: to announce the day of the Lord to a large number of people, to a lost people, and in some way to respond for the immense treasure which will certainly have to be spent and that at the burden of the church; to fear lest the lack of virtue, the personal infidelity of the minister be an obstacle, intercepting, so to speak, the flow of those precious graces of salvation, those life-giving waters which are meant to reach the faithful through his channel. There is enough to be concerned about; and if it were not for the experience of God’s superabundant mercies and his compassion for the incapacity and weakness of those he sends, no doubt because he favors the people he wishes to save, there would be every reason to lose courage. However everything here is going beyond our hopes and God will be greatly glorified. I embrace you as well as my uncle.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[9]](#footnote-9)**

59:VI in Oblate Writings

*The cassock is to be given, without the rabat, on the day of entrance to the novitiate.*

Tempier

[Brignoles][[10]](#footnote-10)

January 18, 1821.

They cannot be novices without taking the habit of the missionary. Their sojourn among the guests will have to be prolonged, that is to say, outside the novitiate, until they have their soutane, which will be given to them the day they enter the novitiate, if they arrived without it. When anyone seeks admission who already has his soutane, he should keep the rabat as long as he is with the guests and then put it aside the day of his entrance into the novitiate, because the habit of the missionary is the soutane without the rabat.

**To Brother Suzanne at Aix.[[11]](#footnote-11)**

60:VI in Oblate Writings

*No hope of having a house at Marseilles. Difficulties. Success of the mission at Brignoles.*

Suzanne

[Brignoles]

January 23, 1821.

You know we cannot count any longer on theprospect of Marseilles. The Archbishop has notified me that the matter is closed. TheMissionaries of France are coming under good auspices and through the front door. They will be in Marseilles in several months.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Your affection is a kind consolation amidst the disappointments which it pleases God to bestow on me. I need these trials; the more painful they are, the more meritorious they will be. It is up to me to profit by them.3

The mission of Brignoles is going marvellously well. The men are taking up all my time... The good God permits them to be avid for me yet I assure you that never was I less worthy of it. But if such must be so that some good may result, I give my consent.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[13]](#footnote-13)**

61:VI in Oblate Writings

*We would not have had enough members to open a house at Marseilles.*

Tempier

[Brignoles]

February 4th, 1821.

The idea of having two professors for two students[[14]](#footnote-14) is not to my liking especially in a Society where each ought to do the work of four. If the Archbishop had called us to set up the establishment that he has just given to the Missionaries of France, how could we have managed? Apparently the good God saw that we could not properly undertake this new responsibility.

**To Madame Roux-Bonnecorse, at the home of Masters Roux, brothers, Marseilles.[[15]](#footnote-15)**

36:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Difficulties encountered in the plan to found the Missionaries at Marseilles. God’s will.*

L.J.C.

Roux

Brignoles,

Feb[ruary] 11, 1821.

Madame,

You are acquainted with the work of a mission, the one in Brignoles even surpasses them; in my estimation, it is too much, so I have time for nothing, not even to reply to business letters nor to thank people like you, Madame, who give us so many marks of friendship. You know what that situation is, I bank on that. I am completely resigned to whatever Providence will decide for us. I would gladly have formed an establishment at Marseilles; if the schemes and self-love of men oppose it, I will not hold a grudge against anyone nor will I complain about it to whomever it might be. I seem to perceive in the resolution that you told me about in your last letter, that it might be a little manoeuvre on the part of those who place a great value on seeing the arrival of the gentlemen from Paris; they perhaps consider that if those gentlemen saw us established at M[arsei]lles before they came, they might possibly give up their plan and that is why they propose this extraordinary measure of taking a so-called indefinite time to decide the question; in the meantime, the gentlemen from Paris will come, then they will raise the negative reasons, which will be suggested by the Archbishop’s Council, against having two houses of Missionaries in the same city, etc., and that will be that! The good Lord knows our good will, the plans we conceive for his glory and the good of the people of Marseilles and its surroundings. Possibly we will not merit being the instruments of his mercy, or perhaps the people will not merit experiencing its effects. We are none the less grateful to you and to M. Roux whose good spirit and friendship I have felt in this circumstance.

They have informed M. Pére that the priests of Marseilles are starting a general retreat today, which clearly tells us that they are not too sure about the one that the Archbishop wanted the Miss[iona]ries of Paris to give and which had been announced to us by the aloof M. Damico[[16]](#footnote-16) who didn’t want to disturb me when he passed through Brignoles and was content to see and speak with M. Pére who was ten paces away and just as busy as I was.

I pray that God will keep you and your whole family. What does it matter that you bring daughters into the world if they are predestined to possess God for all eternity. You will always be a happy mother and I hope happy through your children.

I am writing to you bundled up in my coat from having just come down from the pulpit in order not to miss the mail which is about to leave. So forgive my scribbling.

I have the honor of being your very humble servant,

Eug[e]ne de Mazenod.

1

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[17]](#footnote-17)**

62:VI in Oblate Writings

*An amendment in the text of the Rule.*

Courtès

[Brignoles]

February 21, 1821.

Father Tempier would wish to suppress the words: ‘Although the house of Aix en Provence be the headquarters of the Society’[[18]](#footnote-18), not because he does not recognize this status as justified but because they would be surprised at Rome at seeing no approbation of the Ordinary for this house designated as the cradle of the Society. This remark is correct. We must therefore suppress this phrase for the moment.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[19]](#footnote-19)**

63:VI in Oblate Writings

*Preaching of the mission of St-Chamas. Authority of the superior. The community is not a republic.*

Tempier

[St-Chamas],

March 13, 1821.

I cannot confide to...[[20]](#footnote-20) the instructions, given that they ought be truly instructive. So I have begun to give the morning instructions and I will give them in the evening to the extent that circumstances permit (for one must observe the proprieties even on missions, by having my companions preach from time to time) but I will repair, in the announcements which follow the prayers, the omissions of my confrere. And who will give me the strength? The good God, I hope... I am quite tired, my voice is hoarse and only with an effort can I raise it but what else can I do? After all one has to continue. The good God knows our needs, that is what consoles me in our distress.

... But God knows what his people needs. We have to leave matters to him, without however ceasing to ask him earnestly: *ut in messam suam mittant operarios secundum cor suum[[21]](#footnote-21)*

... You must not put up with and still less authorize practices that are so contrary to good order. Have we become a republic or a representative government?[[22]](#footnote-22) Does it pertain to you to establish new usages and has the community of Notre Dame du Laus the right to deliberate, to present the least thing even in a body? Certainly not. So everything that has been done must be regarded as null, as an abuse and diametrically contrary to the spirit of our Constitutions. Each one is individually free in our Society to approach the Superior to communicate his thoughts on everything and even on the changing and improving of whatever is left to his disposition, local superiors are still more strictly obliged in this respect, but never will it ever be permitted to take the initiative of changing, improving, if you like, the usages practised in the whole Society, whatever condition or restriction you may put on it. The time of the Chapter General is approaching, if I am not mistaken, then it will be time to propose all you please. This assembly will have the right to discuss and deliberate and its resolutions will be valid; until that time, only what is ordained by the Superior General will be legitimate.

... I prescribe in virtue of holy obedience that you take every morning, except Holy Friday, either a cup of chocolate or better still a serving of salep.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[23]](#footnote-23)**

64:VI in Oblate Writings

*Rights and duties of the superior of the community.*

Courtès

[St-Chamas]

March 14, 1821.

Doubtless being the superior of the house,[[24]](#footnote-24) you have the right to obtain an accounting of what the bursar is doing, that is why I did not hesitate to tell you that you ought to watch everything, but your authority does not extend to changing the instructions which have been given him by your own superior. He should do nothing without telling you in advance even in matters in which he has been authorized to proceed. As for those he would propose himself, he owes you obedience and you yourself ought, in your decisions, to make them in conformity with the spirit which guides me in my administration because, as long as I am superior, it is I who must give the guidance which all should follow, whatever they may think. Otherwise there would be friction in the machinery, there would no longer be unity in government and consequently disorder would be the result. This is the case with any government of whatever kind. I will add that in those based on religious virtues, it is necessary to do something more, that is to say, that one should strive to acquire enough humility to believe that one knows less and has less graces than the superior and, in consequence, be not afraid to conform even one’s judgement to his.

**To Father Courtès at Aix [[25]](#footnote-25)**

65:VI in Oblate Writings

*Lenten fast of the Founder.*

Courtès

Saint Chamas,

March 31, 1821.

I reproach myself every day for having forgotten to take a precaution which would have kept my conscience tranquil on the subject of fasting from which I am abstaining during this mission. I have acted by reason and with the authorisation of my confessor while presuming the assent of the doctor; but I tell myself each day that it would have been more in order to provide myself with a formal decision of the doctor. Ask him therefore on my behalf if he judges that after having done the missions of Cháteau Gombert and especially of Brignoles which left me a little fatigued, and having to preach at Saint Chamas twice almost every day with some vehemence, and with only four hours’ sleep, I can eat in the evening a soup of rice or semolino with milk of almonds and an orange? If he thinks the soup will suffice, I will do without the orange that I have been inclined to take under the impression that it refreshes my blood which sometimes becomes overheated. Besides, anything else would turn my stomach on top of the soup which I always take with repugnance because of the taste In the morning I take only two or three spoonfuls of warm sweetened water before going into the pulpit. In the evening, as the instruction is longer and more spirited, I take a little warm wine with the sugar, because I find that this drink, which is a rude penance for me, strengthens notably my chest and my voice.

On Saturday, I fast according to the rule, because I do not preach in the evening and because on the following day I take a cup of chocolate after my Mass.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[26]](#footnote-26)**

66:VI in Oblate Writings

*Confidence and friendship in his regard*

Tempier

[Saint Chamas]

April 1, 1821.

... As for you, I have nothing to add to what you know of my sentiments in your regard; I love you as much as myself and my confidencein you is such that it would be impossible for me to hide the least of my thoughts from you. I would think I was committing a theft, a crime of *lèse-amitié* for which I could not forgive myself.

**To Madame Roux-Bonnecorse at Marseilles.[[27]](#footnote-27)**

37:XIII in Oblate Writings

*The Missionaries of Provence will establish themselves at the Oeuvre de la Providence, but will not accept the stingy conditions that a minority of the administrators wanted to lay down.*

L.J.C.

Roux

St-Chamas,

April 11, [1821].

Madame,

The parish priest of St-Laurent advised me the very day of the meeting[[28]](#footnote-28) of the decision taken in our regard; so as not to miss the mail, however, he wrote only a few words. The details you added please me greatly for I consider it very important to miss nothing of all that is going on and to be informed about everything.

It seems that among the gentlemen of the minority[[29]](#footnote-29) there are some Administrators who had imposed on the Brothers of St. John of God certain conditions which made them flunkies of the work that they intended to serve.

I have always held that the Church’s ministers should be the most disinterested men in the world; but no one, however, professes more loudly than I that is impossible for them to do the least good if they do not give honor to their ministry first of all by the virtues that they must strive to practice, and then by never allowing anyone to debase their person by demanding shameful concessions which lowers them in the eyes of those very people in whose favor they made them.

It is already a great drawback, a rather humiliating circumstance that we were not called by a unanimous vote without this minority, as lacking in zeal as it is uncivil, still wanting to lay down conditions which give the impression that they are doing us a favor, which we can accept only if we debase ourselves.

Notice the impropriety. At the same time as they kneel before the gentlemen of Paris (I’m writing only for you and your husband) to beg them to accept a house as property and all the rest, they seem to scorn our gentlemen to the point of laying down ignominious conditions on them if they want to come and occupy a corner of the house of the children of Providence, leaving to individuals the care of providing table, chair and bed to furnish their room. I swear that had I been in these gentlemen’s place, I would never have acted like that. The whole Society should have regarded as a precious opportunity the founding of an establishment deemed useful by all the city’s parish priests, and it should have done it in a manner required by politeness and civility. In any case, I am resolved to pass over whatever one might have wished or expected from a group of religious and learned men, I will ignore everything that was crude in adopting a plan in which I seek only the glory of God and the good of neighbor; as to the conditions, however, I will never consent to accept those of little honour for the Society of which I am the superior and consequently the guardian and defender.

I will not respond to the reflections of those gentlemen who pretend that it will not be I who will go to Marseilles but some young apprentice missionary. What do they know about it? If this establishment were to take the stability that I ask the Lord to provide for it, why would I not be involved to a great extent therein? Do they know the value of all the men we have so as to scorn everyone else besides myself or M. D[eblieu]? Let them know that I have several co-workers whom I prefer to M. D[eblieu]. Besides, do they think that M. Rauzan or M. Guion will come and establish themselves at Marseilles?

I will be at Aix on Monday, consequently, take this into account when writing to me. Don’t let anyone read my letter: someone could misinterpret it if he didn’t know me; to you however, I owe the truth.

Eugene.

**Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation**

Oblate Writings XVI

*April 13: death of Paulin Bouvier: his eulogy.*

Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation

Aix

April 13, 1821

Death of Paulin Bouvier. His simple life, tranquil and uneventful, discloses few facts of note. Even so he was angelic in virtue, as dear to God who poured out his graces on him as he was to his fellowmen he never ceased to edify. His piety was always fervent, his gentleness constant. It was written on his countenance, and to my knowledge none of his comrades ever had a quarrel with him, his modesty and regularity influencing them to the point that one can say he had their respect. No one understood better than he the advantages a young man of good will can obtain from the rules and exercises of the Congregation. He was not only constant in attendance at meetings, but he made it a duty to practise all the counsels that are given to the congregants to avoid evil and make some progress in goodness. Nothing could ever deter him from frequenting the sacraments. He thought nothing at the height of summer of proving his love for Our Lord by heading off at the crack of dawn from his farm to arrive in time to go to confession before the Mass of the Congregation at which he would take communion every Sunday. Often the holy ardour of his beautiful soul remained unsatisfied and he had to be allowed to alleviate his hunger by going more frequently to the holy Table. I certainly did not hesitate to accede to such just desires. Who can tell the fruits he drew from this heavenly food!…His parents who never had anything to reproach him with, his fellow disciples who more and more wondered at his commitment, kindness, modesty and fidelity in fulfilling all the different kinds of duties he had to fulfil, and lastly I myself, the confidant of his most intimate thoughts, the witness of his holy virtues, the admirer of his wholly supernatural and holy life. He was ripe for heaven, the Lord did not delay in summoning him, but wished to spare him the horrors of his imminent dissolution. He thought up to the last moment that we were making a fuss over nothing on his account, and in the course of the most painful crises while we with all too good reason were fearful of losing him, he would smile and try to reassure us, surprised without being afraid that we did not share his sense of security that nothing could disturb. At that moment I was obliged to leave town to give the mission in St. Chamas[[30]](#footnote-30), I could not hold back my tears as I embraced this dear child for the last time. He had no idea of it, but I knew that he would not last the month. I entrusted him to that confrere who stayed on alone in the house during my absence and, in placing him in his care, I unburdened myself of all my concerns. It was the best solution for fulfilling the most exacting requirements of charity and zeal and guarding against being surprised by a death that seemed every day more imminent, without depriving the dying boy of any of the spiritual helps at all of which he stood in need in his sad situation and which he put to such good use. He duly received the last sacraments, and the day after he had received this precious pledge of his blessed immortality, he fell asleep peacefully in the Lord, leaving to the congregants, who had cared for him during his illness with their usual charity, both the example and the encouragement of serving God throughout one’s life in such a way as to merit bringing it to an end with so holy a death. His funeral took place in accordance with the customs of the Congregation. And as it has only happened on one occasion (when Victor Chabot died, that is before the Mission was founded), that the Reverend Parish Priests have had the courtesy of inviting the Director of the Congregation to perform the liturgy, he accompanied the coffin in soutane and long cloak up to the cemetery. Which is what was done by the Missionary who was standing in for the Director in his absence.

**To the Gentlemen Directors of the Oeuvre de la Providence, at Marseilles.[[31]](#footnote-31)**

38:XIII in Oblate Writings

*The Missionaries of Provence will live at the Oeuvre de la Providence to provide spiritual direction for the orphans.*

Directors of the Oeuvre de la Providence

Aix,

April 20, 1821.

Gentlemen,

When one[[32]](#footnote-32) of your respected associates came to me on your behalf to sound out my attitude towards the project you were envisaging, I had to tell him that I gladly shared your views, for they were in perfect harmony with the spirit of our statute and with the desire we entertain to cooperate as much as we can in the welfare of a city whose population is so dear to us.

It was a matter of establishing a house of our Society under the roof[[33]](#footnote-33) which serves as shelter to the children of Providence, so that the members of this house, while attending to the different works of their ministry, could also apply themselves to the *spiritual* direction of these children.

It was all the easier for me to accept in advance the proposal presented to me because I felt confident that, in agreeing thereto, I would be responding to the wishes of all the persons of good will in Marseilles, and especially to the desire expressed by the parish priests of this city. When consulted about the proposal to set up an establishment of Missionaries, the latter honoured our Society with unanimous support.

In answer to your letter of the 17th instant that you did me the honour of writing wherein you sent me an excerpt of your deliberations of April 16th, in which you propose that I establish a house of our Congregation on your premises, I have only to ratify the consent I had given previously.

With thanks, therefore, I accept the offer you make to me and the premises you provide for our accommodation in your establishment.

However, while I admire the fine tact in your procedure, which tact keeps you silent about the condition that you can consider as burdensome to us, I have no intention of backing away from this obligation: not only because it is quite right that, by calling the missionaries to be so near to the children whom your charity is nourishing, they relieve your concern of a responsibility which by nature must rest upon them, for it is an integral part of their holy ministry; but also because such is the formal intention of His Grace the Archbishop who gave me an order in this sense when he gave his consent that I could accept your proposal. Besides, the proprieties are eloquent enough on this point to let us feel its necessity, independently of the peremptory reasons I have just exposed, which determine the nature of our duties and which, consequently, have to be the rule of our conduct. When I spoke of the direction of the children, I meant to speak only of the direction of their conscience and of giving those instructions that the Church reserves to her ministers. Nothing is more edifying than to see good Christian laity teaching children the basics of Christian doctrine. Such good work cannot be too much encouraged and deserves the greatest praise.

My plan is to come to Marseilles on Monday. I venture to hope that in my eagerness to respond to your invitation you will recognize the sincere desire I shall always have to share your views and to cooperate in your good works.

Gentlemen, I am respectfully your very humble and obedient servant,

Eug[e]ne de Mazenod, priest, missionary.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[34]](#footnote-34)**

67:VI in Oblate Writings

*Invitation to found a house at Marseilles.*

Tempier

[Aix],

April 26**,** 1821.

I have come from Marseilles to conclude the matter of our establishment there. The gentlemen of Providence[[35]](#footnote-35) have sent me the deliberations of their meeting whereby they invite us to go and take possession of a part of the house used for their work. They support their request with the solemn consent given by His Grace the Archbishop, the vote of their directors and the unanimously manifested assent of the parish priests... But how will our community live there? I have no idea.

**Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation**

Oblate Writings XVI

*May 3: procession of the cross*

Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation

Aix

May 3, 1821

I forgot to put down, under the heading of May 3, that His Grace the Archbishop having decided to pay homage anew to the cross, went to our church where he had called to be present the major and minor seminaries, the Congregation of Christian Youth and that of the Sacred Heart. He went in procession with these elite groups to the mission cross singing canticles and hymns. Arrived at the foot of the cross, there was sung five times the Trisagion: *Sanctus Deus, Sanctus fortis, Sanctus et immortalis, miserere nobis,* followed each time by a *Pater* and an *Ave Maria*. His Grace the Archbishop then recited the prayer of the day and the procession made its way back again through the centre of the *Cours* to the church of the Mission where His Grace brought the ceremony to an end with Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation**

Oblate Writings XVI

*May 6: refusal to enter Mr. Alexis in the necrology.*

Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation

Aix

May 6, 1821

Mr. Alexis informed the Council of the death of Mr. Paulin Alexis, his cousin, who passed away suddenly in Lyon: he requested that the usual suffrages be accorded to the deceased. The Director strongly insisted that the Council refuse, seeing that the late Mr. Alexis, although definitively received in the Congregation, had always acted as if he did not belong, and had even subsequent to his reception taken on commitments that were contrary to the obligations of congregants and had not attended its exercises for more than a year. The Council took a decision in accordance with the wish of the Rev. Director and firmly decided that Mr. Alexis would not be inscribed in the necrology and that no public liturgy would be held for him in Congregation; however, moved by a feeling of charity, on the proposal of the Reverend Director, it agreed to have three low Masses said for the repose of his soul.

**A Striking Thought**

Mr. Alexis is not the first congregant to die after quitting the Congregation, and he came to the same end as the apostates who preceded him. A remarkable thing: they all died without being able to receive the final helps of religion. Surely one might say that in them is verified the terrible threat several times repeated in Holy Scripture. So what graces they spurned in renouncing the Congregation where God had called them to assure them of their salvation. No one has ever left it so as to become a better person. But one does not mock God with impunity, and the frightful comparison that we are as it were compelled to make in considering on the one hand the blessed end, the truly precious death of all those who die as truly of the predestined in the Congregation, laid by her so to speak in the very bosom of God, and on the other hand the dreadful catastrophe which prematurely terminates a life of infidelity and sins and hurls these culpable souls into the depth of hell there to burn for ever, brings us to feel more and more and emphasize that final perseverance in our case is linked with our fidelity and inseparable union with the Congregation.

**Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation**

Oblate Writings XVI

*June 17: Ordination of Mr. Alexandre Dupuy. His first Mass.*

Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation

Aix

June 17, 1821

I will be on the watch this time as I enter in this register the occasion of the ordination and the day of the first Mass of Mr. Alexandre Dupuy, priest of the Mission and a congregant for six years. He was ordained on June 16 in the seminary church and said his first Mass the next day in that of the Mission at eight o’clock. The congregants made it a duty to be there on that day in the Congregation and they certainly got a lot from the graces which from the new priest were poured out on the whole assembly. After the High Mass all those officiating entered the choir where the new priest imposed hands first on the priests and then on the other clerics, then on all the congregants who came forward two by two to his feet while the choir sang the psalm: *Credidi propter quod locutus sum* inserting after each verse the one that begins with the words: *quid retribuam Domino*. This ceremony reawakened fervour in all hearts; one really could not see anything more moving and at the same time more impressive.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[36]](#footnote-36)**

68:VI in Oblate Writings

*Advice regarding the formation of novices.*

Tempier

[Aix],

June 18, 1821.

... Have him[[37]](#footnote-37) make a good novitiate, do not be satisfied with appearances, make him practice every kind of virtue, train him in the love of poverty, obedience and entire abnegation of himself, in the spirit of mortification, in humility. What I say regarding him, I equally recommend for all the others. I am annoyed that the whole time of the novitiate or at least an entire year is not exclusively devoted to the study of perfection. It is a drawback that during this time we are obliged to tolerate profane studies and even theology. At least instruct your novices with more care than you have been able to use until now, because of being greatly occupied. Steep yourself in the lore of a good master of novices. If they do not acquire religious virtues while in novitiate, it is all up for the future. One must also teach them the elements of Christian doctrine, give them what they call a reasoned catechism, continue to have them learn by heart several verses of the New Testament every day, oblige them to give answers at the lesson of catechism which should be done twice a week, or at least once, but twice is not too much.

**Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation**

Oblate Writings XVI

*July 8: procession of the Blessed Sacrament.*

Diary of the Aix Christian Youth Congregation

Aix

July 8 1821

The procession was postponed this year to the octave of the Sacred Heart because of the secular feast that occurred in Marseilles on the actual feast day of the Sacred Heart[[38]](#footnote-38). This ceremony had emptied the town, and the retreat that preceded it in a number of the churches of Marseilles having occupied the services of a number of our priests, His Grace the Archbishop judged it right to allow us to have our procession eight days later. It was as always brilliant for its beauty and sanctity. The Blessed Sacrament was carried by the Very Reverend Vicar General Guigou.

**To the novices and students at Notre Dame du Laus.[[39]](#footnote-39)**

69:VI in Oblate Writings

*Regrets not being able to live with his children.*

Novices and students at Laus

Aix,

August 15, 1821.

My dear children,

Never have I parted from you with greater sorrow[[40]](#footnote-40); so great it was indeed that I feared to let you see how afflicted I was for I realized that it was very imperfect of me. It seems to me that I ought to wish that you loved me less, although truth to tell I would not be further ahead because I would love you still as much, since my extreme affection for you is principally founded on your virtues and on the finequalities with which the good God has favoured you.

My dear friends, believe only that I am absent in body; my heart and soul are with you. Shall I tell you? The house seemed deserted to me, I sought you all day without being able to findyou and yet I still spoke only of you. Adieu, my good dears, adieu, beloved family! I press you all to my heart and embrace you as tenderly as I love you.

**To Father M. Suzanne at Notre Dame du Laus.[[41]](#footnote-41)**

70:VI in Oblate Writings

*Is anxious about Suzanne’s cold. Affection.*

Suzanne

Aix,

August 21, 1821.

My dear Suzanne, Coulin[[42]](#footnote-42) willtell you of my misfortune on this day agreat part of which I spent thinking of you. I will not tell you about it again so as not to lose a moment of the little time I have left; I have betaken myself deep within the house so as to be quiet for a few minutes but the candle goes down and I am threatened with soon being in the dark; this is an additional misfortune to heap on the others of today of which I’ve spoken to Coulin.

You tell me your cold is over, but that is not enough to reassure me. You will tell me this, I hope, once more again in the next post by way of confirmation. Know full well, kind friend, that it is impossible for me to stand the idea of seeing you suffer; my nerves constrict and I feel more ill than you certainly do; it is always like this when I have reason to think you are suffering, so intimately united am I to you whom I love more than you could ever think. I should not tell you this any more but it always seems to me that you do not know this sufficiently or you do not understand it as much as you should. For the rest, if you were not virtuous, I would not say so much about it; this is for me an excuse for the excess of tenderness towards you for which I sometimes reproach myself but which I cannot bring myself to repent.3

**To the Pastor of Brignoles.[[43]](#footnote-43)**

39:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Complains to the pastor for not appreciating and for speaking badly of the mission given by the Missionaries of Provence.*

Pastor of Brignoles

Aix,

August 23, 1821.

Dear Pastor, possibly I have been too sensitive in regard to your behavior; it may be that I have expressed too honestly a reaction that is too strong. If that is the case, I do not intend to justify myself. What man, however, would not feel badly wounded when he saw you apply as much care to keep us away from your parishioners (at the time of the return mission), as everyone else in like circumstances would have applied to bring us close to them. Do not think that the righteous discontent I express has any other motive than the duty our character lays on us. If we consider the matter from a human point of view, it is of little importance to us to reappear at your place for a return mission; we wanted merely to consolidate by renewed effort a work so happily begun. If I asked you for it, it was for a greater good and contrary to my own inclination and needs which rather have led me to take a rest. If you had some good reason for putting off these exercises which are considered everywhere as necessary after a mission, it was easy for you to tell me so politely without having recourse to a veritable defamation. Wasn’t it at your insistent demand that we went and sacrificed our rest and health for two whole months in order to be of some use to your people? You were in a position to notice our constant attention to render you, I don’t say merely all the respect that politeness demands, but a continual deference which made us renounce in some circumstances some of our customs only out of consideration for you whose ideas we wanted to counter in the least possible way. And how come you are not sensitive to the feelings of frank and affectionate friendship, of which I never ceased to give you proof all the time that I was with you, as well as to the repeated manifestation of respect and deference that I showed for your person, eager to express at every encounter the sentiments I had vowed to you. You reproached me for my rancor, a baseness that has never had a place in my heart, even in regard to those who wanted to harm me most. That has reached a point that I don’t have any great merit when I forgive injuries.

You tell anyone who is willing to listen that: “the fire left only cinders”. If that were the case, you would have succeeded in filling us with deeply felt sadness; and even though we certainly knew that we were not responsible for such defection, we would be nonetheless afflicted by it; but, thanks be to God, I find something in your own letter to reassure me. First, you told me that no girls went to the feast-day ball; that is already something, that half of the population remembered the principles that we had inculcated in them. Who knows if the young men in great number would not have followed the example of the girls if, supported as they should have been, they would have found the necessary help in a Congregation? That was our view. Moreover, you tell me that the dissipation did not nearly produce the results that I seemed to fear; this is due to good things remembered from the mission.

As to the calculations you make about the number of Easter Communions, we must remember that reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance does not give impeccability any more than justification in baptism does. We cannot avoid groaning with bitterness when we consider the instability of resolutions and the extreme misery of human weakness. Alas! Fortunately for us! O [our] L[ord] knew the sad condition of our corrupt nature; that’s why, in instituting the sacrament of Penance in such a way that it may be worthily received several times by the same person, he has reassured in advance the priest who administers it according to the rules, and at the same time has held back the poor sinner from the despair to which he might have given in without this provident mercy. Your comment, therefore, gives me no scruples, and I continue to believe that even what did not last was still real and not just apparent, as you think.

Allow me to quote you the following incident, in order to soften the pain that you rightly feel at the defection of a great number of your parishioners. One of the most respectable pastors of Marseilles, after noticing all the good that came to his parishioners during the mission, said to our Missionaries: “I am very happy at the present good result; but I will be very happy if five percent continue; then I would not consider our efforts lost”. - Six months later, beaming with joy, he told us: “I am more happy than I had hoped; for your return mission you will still find more than 15. And what did he not do to achieve this result?” And so, according to your figuring, you are much better off than he, since, by your admission, you found 50percent at Easter; and you would undoubtedly have had more, if you had been able to get a sixth priest you were asking for at that time, for you were not able to take care of all the great number of penitents with your four assistants.

There remains only to reject your blaming me for not speaking enough about the Sunday Mass. If your age and infirmities had allowed you to take part in the morning instructions, which gave an explanation of the Commandments, you would be aware that we said everything we ought to about this matter.

Your letter will stay with us as a memorial of man’s ingratitude. It will teach our missionaries that they should not expect any other reward from men for their work except insults and scorn, and that they should place their trust only in God. I apply this lesson to myself. I believe I can say that, insensitive as I am to all praise because of the poor opinion I have of myself, ever since I have been working in the holy ministry, I was elated only by your approbation; I was also counting on your esteem and friendship. God has enlightened me; I am grateful to him.

This letter will seem severe to you, especially if you have forgotten the content of your own. It is not, you should see it only as the necessary response to what I have received from you. In conscience I had to refute the charges which outrage my ministry and the group of which I am a part; but I have done so only in the interest of truth... I am no less filled with veneration for you all of whose merits I know and appreciate, and I am no less disposed to prove to you now and always that you do not have a more devoted friend; these feelings are sincere and not incompatible with my desire to freely use the right to say what I think when someone unjustly attacks our conduct or intentions..

**To Father H. Bourrelier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[44]](#footnote-44)**

71:VI in Oblate Writings

*Urges him to be sorry for even thinking of leaving the Society.*

Bourrelier

Aix,

August 27, 1821.

You could not please me more, my dear Bourrelier, than by writing to me and laying before me the troubles that disturb you and which you have fashioned for yourself in such a bad way. What good is there in tormenting yourself as you do over trifles? Had I not sufficiently reassured you in the interview we had at Notre Dame du Laus and how is it that, after these explanations, you have allowed thoughts to enter your heart as criminal as those which you reveal to me? I will not dwell on the expressions in your letter, I have shed tears of sorrow over them. My friend, have you thought whereof you speak? Can a priest speak in this manner? You have not a remote idea then of what you have become through the priesthood? I still tremble because of what I have read, of what you can say in cold blood. Would it be possible that in wishing to do you good I might be a lost man? So you have no virtue left? When I proposed you to His Grace the Archbishop for ordination, *I forewarned him that you were profoundly ignorant, that it would not be possible to have you undergo the least examination,* that you could not, in a word, be a priest or even a simple student outside a community, but I made myself the guarantor of your virtue, I would answer to him for your good will and I advised him that being irrevocably bound to our Society, your would always find therein the help that was indispensable to the feebleness of your learning, to the nullity of your knowledge. These reasons decided him to ordain you. In effect, you could not, without exposing yourself to sinning mortally, do the least priestly function outside the community. I thought you were convinced of that, I thought you also were imbued with the nature of your engagements in your Society, engagements so essential that you could not entertain in your mind thoughts which are contrary to them without sinning most gravely. However, you speak to me of separating, you speak to me of aversion for the Rule, that is to say, the obedience which you have vowed as well as stability.

My friend, my dear friend, how have you let yourself be seduced to this extent by the demon? Ah! I hasten to address to you the same words which were addressed in the Apocalypse to a bishop who was not fulfilling his duty, see how heavily you have fallen and do penance.[[45]](#footnote-45) Yes, my dear, do penance because you have sinned greatly. Renew yourself without delay in the spirit of your vocation. Remind yourself that we no longer belong to ourselves, we all belong to the Society to which we have pledged ourselves, we belong to the Rule which must control us, we can only belong to God through it, outside everything is a sin for us. Surely if anyone ought to congratulate himself on belonging to her, it is clearly you, my dear friend, who more than anyone needs the help of your brothers. How then did you not perceive at first sight the trap which the demon was laying for you by persuading yourself that you could lead a much more regular life without being subject to a Rule and without submission to the will of a superior? This idea would be the most absurd folly if it came into anyone’s mind. But for you, bound by vows to our Institute, it is not only a folly, an absurdity, but also, if you have consented thereto, were it only for an instant, it is a very great sin, truly a crime. I cannot believe that you are as perverse as that; I exhort you then, I abjure you, I fall at your feet in the name of Jesus Christ whose minister you are and whom you betray, do penance and learn what it is to be a priest, what a religious man ought to be. Remind yourself what has been said to you on this subject and which you have no doubt forgotten. Your salvation is at stake and my responsibility is compromised before God, before the Church and before men. Write me quickly to let me know about your position, to let me know of your return to the sentiments which ought constantly to animate you.

All that I have just said to you is drawn from the love that I have for you, you know that I have always regarded you as my cherished son, ever since the Lord confided you to my care, since I engendered you in Jesus Christ. You are the first fruits of my ministry[[46]](#footnote-46), it is most likely you who were the first to be converted by virtue of the words of life that the good God put in my mouth, on the first day of my first mission. Judge for yourself how concerned I am to see you succeed, but also how grieved I am in seeing you stray from the right path after so many graces, so many favours on the part of God, so much care, so much affection on my part. But it will only be a momentary error. It is with such confidence that I embrace you with all my heart.

**To Father Bourrelier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[47]](#footnote-47)**

72:VI in Oblate Writings

*Be of good heart. Grandeur of obedience.*

Bourrelier

[Aix]

September 19, 1821.

Steep yourself more and more, my dear friend, in the grandeur and sublimity of your holy state; but never lose sight of the obligations which it imposes upon you. Read and reread our holy Rules, fully convince yourself that you are quite happy to belong entirely to Jesus Christ. No, my dear brother, you are no longer your own man in any way and you ought assuredly to congratulate yourself much about this. You know only too well the use, or rather say, abuse that you made of your freedom when you had no other master but yourself. Now it is Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, who is your Master and he manifests his will to you through the Rule that you have embraced with love and through the voice of the superior who stand in his place. Open the lives of the saints, you will see how they understood this truth and especially how they put it into practice. It is them you ought to take as your models; with such examples one cannot go astray. Oh holy obedience! Sure road which leads to heaven, may I never deviate from the way you mark out for me, may I ever be docile to the least of your counsels! Yes, my dear brother, outside this path there is no salvation for us. But, thanks be to the goodness of God, you have already understood this and your letter allays the concern that was rightly aroused in me.

How much I could tell you about the grief you manifest about not being useful. What an error! Were obedience to put me at a door to open and close to those who come and go, I would consider myself very happy and I would believe, not without reason, that my salvation was more assured by this situation in which I was forced to be against my liking. One always does enough when one does only what obedience prescribes. It is only a matter of doing it well, not only exteriorly, but with heart and soul, and then one cannot be other than saved. So, my dear friend, cease to be grieved in the slightest on this subject...

**To Father Tempier.[[48]](#footnote-48)**

73:VI in Oblate Writings

*Sorrow at the death of Amédée and Victor de Saboulin, sodalists.*

Tempier

[Aix,

October, 1821].[[49]](#footnote-49)

Who would not wither away with grief on learning within the same hour of the illness and death of a sodalist such as Amédée de Saboulin, then on seeing the family arrive two days after, upset because I had not had the heart to visit them as if I had judged their affliction to be utterly beyond consolation! It was still little enough. Victor took to his bed that very evening, having caught the same malady, and during thirteen days, I could scarcely stir from his bedside, count his sighs, quieten his cries, soothe the cruel pains which racked him beyond all that I can express, see this child deteriorate under my eyes, fully conscious and sentient, in frightful torment, without uttering a complaint or a word of rebellion, and finally succumb and leave me with all the concerns that Christian charity never begrudges to grant to our dead, thus helping to make my sorrow as keen as ever. Today once more I said the office for him. But do not believe that I have said everything. You expect me perhaps to dwell on the lamentations and grief of a mother, whose soul was pierced with a sharp sword. No, my dear; if I had the time, I should rather make known to you in this case the heroism of virtue, the triumph of grace over nature in direst straits; it is uplifting and depressing at the same time. But listen and judge if I ought not myself to be in a state of agony. I have just heard the sister’s confession, herself condemned to perish like her two brothers, without hope of coming through in spite of the care lavished on her by the best doctors of the city. But enough said on this subject. If I did not turn my thoughts away, I think I would go mad.

**Retreat Notes.[[50]](#footnote-50)**

155:XV in Oblate Writings

*Reflections on the observance of the Rules, fear of death, responsibility for the salvation of souls, spirit of poverty, etc.*

Retreat notes

Aix

[end of October] 1821[[51]](#footnote-51)

Reflections. Beauty of the office psalmody. Thoughts it gives rise to, sublimity of the end of our institute. At the acts of humility, reflection on the excellence of these acts, the wisdom of the saints who exemplified them, on the fruit one may draw from them. Happiness of living in the society. Explanation of the reserve I showed sometimes as to prescribing or insisting on observance. Apologies to make over the misplaced fear that someone might have said that it is easy for me to insist on something I am exempted from because of my position. Manifestation of my real opinions. At adoration offered the brother who commended himself to my prayers, pray the Lord to give him the strength to overcome the temptations that the demon sifts from his character to deflect him from his duty. At oraison, repugnance for death, brought about by the sight of my infidelities, imbalance in my accounts compared with the talents the Lord confided to me. Frightening responsibility for all the good I have not done or which has not been done on account of me. Everything that is done, however consoling the thought of it may be, will not save me from the reproach of not having done more. I will not miss anything so much as or perhaps nothing at all except my spiritual family. I do not hope ever to reach the point of loving it less, I love it though too much. Think more often about death. It seems really close to me, although I feel young, strong and in good health, but the years go by so swiftly that I think I am bordering on the age of senility, supposing that I do not die still sooner yet. However it seems to me that what most chiefly keeps me going is the Society’s good, if, as is said, my existence may contribute to it. At Mass, a thought about St. Peter. I do not know how he did not have a farthing to give to a poor man. I thank God for giving me this spirit of detachment; I despise money, I make no use of it for myself. But I must foresee the needs that others may have in the future, make provision without attachment. At the sharing, esteem for the Rules, finding them eminently suitable to bring us to our end. I was waiting for the Father to remind me of my obligations, the little outline given gave me much joy; I had given that a lot of serious thought myself. Resolution henceforth to stop at nothing in getting them followed and to take steps to dispense myself as little as possible. My heart’s desire to be rid of the slavery of my dealings with the world. Happiness I experience during these days of retreat, living only with my brothers in the practice of obedience. Examen for confession. The idea came to me of formulating the desire like St. Peter on Tabor, that it might last forever, but I repulsed it with the words of St........ on the occasion of this rash wish of the prince of the apostles: *Descende, labora, etc.*

The beautiful retreat of 1821:[[52]](#footnote-52) Why didn’t I write something down? I find only the few lines jotted down above. When I think of all that happened then, how I regret not having kept a record; what a lot of good I would have derived from reading it today when I have so much need of animation.

**To Madame de Mazenod, Papassaudy *Street,* No. 2, Aix, Bouches-du-Rhone.[[53]](#footnote-53)**

40:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Good start of the mission. News.*

L.J.C.

Mazenod Madame de

La Ciotat,

November 6, 1821.

You would probably be sad, dear Mother, if I did not give you some news about myself. So, I am writing a few lines to say that we arrived safely, in marvelous health.[[54]](#footnote-54)

We are very pleased with the beginning of our mission. Continue to pray that some good is done and that everyone may profit from such a precious grace as that which is now offered to the inhabitants of this city. As I must treat you as a mother, I won’t forget to tell you that we are eating excellent fish here and are lacking nothing for our bodily needs.

I had no time to tell you more yesterday and today I am going to make a short trip which hinders me from writing to the Mission as I had intended to do. I embrace you wholeheartedly, as well as our whole family.

Eugene.

**To Father H. Courtès at Aix.[[55]](#footnote-55)**

74:VI in Oblate Writings

*Thanks for the prayers of Fr. Courtès on the occasion of the Feast of St. Charles. Fraternal charity.*

Courtès

[La Ciotat[[56]](#footnote-56)]

November 8th, 1821.

I thank you, dear friend, for all that your heart inspired you to do for me on the occasion of my Feast Day, but permit me to say you did too much. It was not a *Te Deum* that was called for but a goodly *Miserere* toask pardon of God for all the sins that appal me. So do not cease for your part to ask mercy for me who have so much reason to fear divine justice which does not go by appearances.

Get together often and live in the most perfect unity. When I say unity, it is not that I fear that you quarrel, this thought does not cross my mind, but I wish to speak of that cordiality that fusion, if I use that expression, which ought to exist amongst all the members of our Society which ought to have but one heart and one soul.

**To Brother Honorat and the Fathers at Aix.[[57]](#footnote-57)**

75:VI in Oblate Writings

*His joy on learning that the Fathers of Aix are working with zeal*

Honorat and the Fathers at Aix

[La Ciotat]

November 17, 1821.

When we are so busy, far from complaining, let us bless the Lord for deigning to employ us thus in his service, we who are only useless servants.

Oh! my dear children, what joy can be compared to mine on seeing you entering into the fray with such dispositions. I cannot prevent myself from shedding tears of consolation. You know that all you are doing for souls has a repercussion on my heart. So I bless God for what he is doing before my eyes by the ministry of those who surround me.

**To Father H. Courtès at Aix.[[58]](#footnote-58)**

76:VI in Oblate Writings

*Father de Mazenod is no longer concerned with the choice of the future bishop of Marseilles*

Courtès

La Ciotat,

November 21, 1821

I regard with pity the stupidities and fooleries of all those of whom you speak to me.[[59]](#footnote-59) But what I am told of the disagreement between the uncle and the nephew is a fairy tale. I scorn all those braggarts who give me a reputation that is so ill-founded. The knowledge and conviction of what I am, coupled with the esteem and the love of a small number of friends, is all that I need; I disregard all the rest and all the others. For a long time now, I regard the affair of my uncle as lost. All they may do at Marseilles means nothing. I let my heartbeat rest over that and over many other things and, if I must say this to you, men in general and especially those who act and cause themselves to be spoken of inspire me with such disgust that nothing matters more than the very supernatural views needed to prompt me to be concerned about the good of some of them.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[60]](#footnote-60)**

77:VI in Oblate Writings

*The mission at La Ciotat. Details.*

Courtès

La Ciotat,

November 28, 1821.

According to the last census, there are 398 widows and 97 widowers only. Youths are almost in the same proportion... The fishermen are delighted with the proposal I made to them to go and plant a cross expressly for them on a neighbouring island where they hang their nets to dry. If the weather continues to be as fine as it has not ceased to be since our arrival here, this excursion on the sea will be splendid.

**To M. Adolphe Tavernier at Aix.[[61]](#footnote-61)**

41:XIII in Oblate Writings

*Friendship. Mission.*

Tavernier

[La Ciotat,

November-December 1821][[62]](#footnote-62)

If I didn’t give any sign of life to my dear Adolphe, what would he think of me? He would think me insensitive, ungrateful. Even as I write him these few lines he will know that I am not responding to him because I don’t trust my heart which would be too tempted to take away from the duties of state a moment that it would find so sweet to spend with him. I embrace him wholeheartedly. May this dear friend be pleased by this short note that I am writing him in the midst of combat, on the battlefield. still armed with every weapon against hell against which we are powerfully striking, with God’s help.

**To J. J. Marcou at Aix.[[63]](#footnote-63)**

78:VI in Oblate Writings

*Encourages him to respond to Gods call to religious life.*

Marcou

La Ciotat

[November-December][[64]](#footnote-64) 1821.

I have never lost sight of you and have inwardly regarded with satisfaction the direction that the Spirit of God inspired you to take; nevertheless, whatever consolation I might have permitted myself to feel in directing your firststeps towards the sanctuary, just as I had directed you as a youth in the paths of virtue, I purposely wished to stand aside so as not to risk being an obstacle to divine inspirations in the choice you had to make by revealing to you my desires which might have influenced in perhaps too human a manner the decision that you ought to take. Now, just as much as I took precautions to let the Spirit of God act within you, under the direction of the infinitely estimable men in whom you put your confidence, just as much I will make haste to second your vocation since it leads you to a state still more perfect and which ought to assure you a greater recompense.

**To Father Tempier at Notre Dame du Laus.[[65]](#footnote-65)**

79:VI in Oblate Writings

*End* *of the mission of La Ciotat*

Tempier

Aix,

December 28, 1821.

We have finished the mission of La Ciotat, one of the most tiring we have done. I am giving you no details: the blessings have been abundant but we were four confessors less than were needed, which is a very great misfortune. His Grace the Archbishop came to give Confirmation and took part in the erecting of the cross which was magnificent. The weather only ceased to be fine when we no longer needed its help.

1. Orig.: Marseilles, Archives of the Archbishop’s house. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. YENVEUX, IV, 127; VII, 54; REY, I, 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Orig.: Aix, Archives of the Archbishop’s house. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The mission was preached from January 14 to February 25, 1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Bishop de Bausset authorized both Societies to be established at Marseilles, cf. J. Leflon, *Eugene de Mazenod,* Vol. II, pp. 170-184. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Rey 1.261: Rambert 1,329. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. A passage copied by Rey and Rambert without date. The Founder most likely wrote it at the same time as the previous one to Archbishop de Bausset: he left the day after for Brignoles where he stayed till the end of February (Rey 1. 261). We possess only the end of this letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives. Boisgelin Collection I, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. YENVEUX, VIII, 39. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. From January 14 to February 25, 1821, Fathers de Mazenod, Deblieu, Maunier, Mye and Touche preached the mission of Brignoles in the department of Var. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. REY, I, 263; YENVEUX, V, 68, 142. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Archbishop de Bausset announced on January 19 to Father de Mazenod that the Missionaries of France would soon be established in Marseilles. As for the Missionaries of Provence, they already had permission to go to that city. In fact negotiations were then in progress for the latter to reside there. According to this letter to Suzanne, the Founder no longer intended to pursue the matter further since the Missionaries of France had got there first. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. REY, I, 263 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Father Tempier was asking for an assistant at Notre Dame du Laus. “Judge for yourself”, he said, “I am superior over spiritual and temporal matters for a large community, rector of a parish, chaplain of a shrine and alternately professor of theology and philosophy” *(Missions O.M.I.,* 1897, p. 179). Fr. Simonin wrote *(ibid* p. 183) that the community of Laus had 24 members at the end of the year 1821, amongst whom there were a few fathers (Tempier, Touche, Courtès) and some coadjutor brothers. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Orig.: Marseilles, archives of the Archbishop’s house. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. M. Damico, assistant priest at St-Martin, had with Madame Emedgon, organized a campaign to have the Missionaries of France established at Marseilles as soon as possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. YENVEUX, VII, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. This phrase is found in the first French manuscript of the Rules which were ceaselessly modified and improved in view of their approbation by the Pope. It is noteworthy that in the summer of the year 1819, Father de Mazenod was already thinking of going to Rome for this purpose. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. YENVEUX, I, 231; IV, 127; V, 83; VII, 159; IX, 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The Founder was then preaching the mission of St-Chamas (March 4 to April 8). Deblieu was certainly with him (cf.: Roze-Joannis to Madame de Mazenod, March 27, 1821), but it is not known if he had other companions (he writes: “my companions”, “my confrere”) and of whom he is speaking in this letter. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mt. 9, 38: *Rogate ergo Dominum messis, ut mittat operarios in messam suam* I Sam. 13, 14: *Quaesivii Dominus sibi virum juxta cor suum* “Pray then the master of the harvest to send workers”... “after his own heart”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. 4 To what is the Founder alluding? This is not easy to determine, even if Brother Coulin was sending news of Laus several times a month. Father Simonin wrote *(Missions O.M.I.,* 1897, p. 178) that Father Tempier had adopted the practice of exchanging between novices and Oblates objects which were for their personal use, a practice of which Father de Mazenod disapproved. Father Simonin adds that, contrary to the practice elsewhere, Oblate priests were addressed as Père (though still called *Messieurs).* The Founder recalled to Father Tempier that he alone and the Chapter had the authority to introduce this innovation. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. YENVEUX, III, 115; VII, 50. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Father Courtès was still only the pro-superior of the house of Aix. He was named superior in 1823 after the definitive departure of Father de Mazenod for Marseilles as Vicar General of the diocese. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. RAMBERT, I**,** 350. The Founder returned ill from the mission of Saint Chamas, which finished on April 3rd. On the 16th, A. Coulin wrote to him from Notre Dame du Laus: “Ah! my very dear father, do not think that we know nothing. You are ruined by the missions of this year, your chest is in very bad condition... You are always piling on fatigue. So is it unreasonable that the children whom you love so much beg you to spare yourself and not continue to destroy your health and exhaust your strength?... but let us not ask God for miracles by asking him to keep up your strength while you are doing everything to waste it! What of the future? Ah! it will be frightful if your life continues to be a sequel of tasks and fatigues capable of undermining the most robust of men...” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. REY, I, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Orig.: Marseilles, Archives of the Archbishop’s house. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. The general assembly of the administrators of the Oeuvre de Ia Providence pour les orphelins. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. A rather small but active minority were in fact fighting the plan to confide the chaplaincy of the Divine Providence Orphanage to the Missionaries., objecting that this spiritual ministry would encroach on the authority and prerogatives of the lay administration, cf. J. Leflon. *Eugene de Mazenod,* Vol. II, p. 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Mission of St. Chamas: March 4 - April 8, 1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Orig.: Aix. Arbaud museum, 2687-A3. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. M. Dugas, a friend of Father de Mazenod's. cf. J. Leflon, *op.cit.,* p.180. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. De Lenche square, in the former hotel of Riqueti de Mirabeau. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. REY, I, 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The gentlemen of Providence were members of the Council which managed the Work of Providence, located in the *Place de Lenche,* which existed for the purpose of taking in orphans, giving them a moral, Christian, education and training them to work. These gentlemen sought to have as chaplains of the Work the Missionaries of Provence whose success with the youth of Aix was known to them. At the last moment, Archbishop de Bausset also confided to the Missionaries serving of the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre close to the Calvary. Their ministry at the Calvary began on May 6th and their installation at the Work of Providence took place on the 13th. Father Deblieu was named superior. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. YENVEUX, VII, 24\*; VIII, 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. This reference is doubtless to the Abbé Augustin Viguier who began his novitiate on April 22, 1821. There were then several other novices who were finishing their first year of novitiate (A. M. Sumien, J. L. Saurin, G. Carron). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Feast celebrated in fulfilment of the vow made by the municipal magistrates of Marseilles on May 28, 1722, on the occasion of deliverance from the plague, cf. M. de Regis de la Colombière, *Fêtes patronales et usages des corporations et associations…á Marseille…*Marseille, 1863, pp. 112-114. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. REY, I, 278; YENVEUX, V, 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Father de Mazenod spent some time at Notre Dame du Laus in the month of August. He made a canonical visit. The Acts thereof have been preserved, dated August 12th. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. 1 JEANCARD, 377-378; REY, I, 457. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Jeancard’s text indicates only “C” but this could only be Coulin who corresponded regularly with the Founder. This letter of Father de Mazenod to Coulin has not been found. In his reply, Coulin does not speak of this misadventure. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Yenveux (I, 132-136; V, 66) does not say which pastor is involved. Brignoles was the only large parish evangelized during the missionary campaign of 1820-1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. YENVEUX, VIII, 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Apoc. 2, 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Bourrelier was born at Grans where the Founder preached his first mission in 1816 (February 11 to March 17). [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Yenveux, III, I I I-I 12; VIII, 190. Father Bourrelier and Fathers Tempier, Touche and Viguier made their annual retreat at Aix at the end of October, 1821. Cf. *Missions O.M.I.,* 1897, p. 185. Bourrelier left the Congregation in May, 1824. The Founder wrote, under his name, in the Register of admissions to the Novitiate, No. 12: “Bourrelier is an apostate.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. RAMBERT, I, 133-134. Father Tempier could either have been at La Chapelle (mission which he did from September 16th to October 14th) or at Chabottes where he preached a retreat in the course of the month of October. Cf. *Missions O.M.I.,* 1955, pp. 645-646. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. This letter, which Rambert has cited without giving the date, has hitherto been considered as written in 1817 because the Youth Sodality’s Journal mentions, for March 16, 1817, the death of Alphonse de Saboulin. But Rambert speaks of Amédée. According to the findings of Father J. Pielorz there were four Saboulin brothers, members of the Youth Sodality. Léon, who became an Oblate, Alphonse, who died in March, 1817, Amédée, who died on September 19th, 1821, and Victor, who died on October 7th of the same year. This letter is obviously written shortly after the death of Victor and before the arrival of Fr. Tempier for the retreat and the Chapter (October 21st to November 1st). [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Orig.: Rome, arch. de la Post. DM IV-3. These are simply notes, written in a very fine hand and difficult to read. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. The month is not indicated by the Founder, but at that period the annual retreat ended on November 1. In 1821 almost all the Fathers and Brothers took part in the general chapter held, no doubt, on October 24 (Rey I, 278) and followed by the retreat. It was decided during the chapter to make the vow of poverty obligatory for reception into the Society: cf Pierlorz, *Les Chapitres généraux au temps du Fondateur*, Ottawa, 1968, I, 22-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. These last lines were written later [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Orig.: Rome, Postulation Archives, Boisgelin Collection I, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. The Mission at Ciotat was preached from November 4 to December 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. YENVEUX, V, 142, 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. The Founder was then preaching the mission of La Ciotat (November 4th to December 23rd, 1821). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. YENVEUX, V, 47, 165. As the Founder says “My dear children”, he is therefore speaking not only to Brother Honorat, but also to the Fathers who were at Aix: Courtès, ordained on July 30, 1820; Suzanne, ordained on September 22, 1821, and Honorat who will be ordained on December 22, 1821. The work at the house of the Mission was always made abundant by the services at the Chapel and the care of the Sodalists and Novices. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. REY, I, 275-276. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. They were saying that the episcopal see of Marseilles was finally going to be re-established but there were very heated discussions at Marseilles and Aix for and against the nomination of Fortuné de Mazenod. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. REY, I, 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Copy in A. Tavernier, *Quelques souvenirs sur Mgr C.-E. de Mazenod...* Aix 1872, p. 81; [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. An undated letter, it is placed after the one dated July 29, 1821. It seems to be written during the first mission that the Founder preached in the autumn, namely the one at La Ciotat, from November 4 to December 23. It is probably a reply to the last letter we have of A. Tavernier, written on October 9, 1821, in which Adolphe describes the state of his soul and praises the Founder’s virtues: “Affectionate friend, do you want us to deplore together the inseparable vexations of our condition? Never has my heart been more disposed to complain of all the evils that we meet ceaselessly at every step; and here I am speaking more to the one whom heaven has given me as a support in the way of virtue than to a friend whom my heart has chosen. Why does it happen in life that what we have detested, what appeared to us as being most hideous in our sight, reappears in our thoughts with a charm we did not think it had and awakens in the depths of our heart something that we thought extinguished? Why is there this power of evil? Why does virtue often attract us less than vice? Why do we sometimes find ourselves reduced to not finding even in prayer the peace we had been looking for? I have already replied to all of these questions, but is your voice that I wish to hear. You know what it can do for my soul. It is possibly from you that will come the peace that I am seeking. Ah! How often has it happened that I placed you before my eyes, to see you as you were, generous, strong, guiding your great soul through the midst of seductions that you despised so much. Before such a beautiful model, who would not blush at not sacrificing himself? Who would not blush to follow with such slow steps where you had run so rapidly? Who would not have been afire to get where you are? My soul doesn’t know how to resist the enthusiasm sparked by a whole life wherein the force of the first days equals the holiness of those spent in the ministry. And the one whom I admire, I can call him my friend! Stop at that last thought if the others have displeased you: consider also that, if my heart often needed to tell you that it loved you, it also often felt the need to describe you as you really are. Adieu! Adieu! *(ibid.* pp. 67-68) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. YENVEUX, VIII, 22. Jacques Joseph Marcou, born at Aix, began his novitiate at Notre Dame du Laus on December 21, 1821. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Yenveux says that the Founder was present at the mission of La Ciotat (November-December) but does not indicate the date of this letter. In the register from which he took his excerpts, it is found on page 65 before the letter of November 8 to Courtès. It seems that Marcou had not yet arrived at Notre Dame du Laus. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. REY, I**,** 283. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)