**1823**

**To Monsieur J. H. Guibert at Aix[[1]](#footnote-1)**

91:VI in Oblate Writings

*Guibert should write to his father who is opposed to his entry into novitiate.*

Guibert

Tallard[[2]](#footnote-2),

January 20, 1823.

I cannot persuade myself, my dear Guibert, that Monsieur your father is seriously threatening to go to revolting extremes that a Christian father would never permit. It is more likely a trial which he wishes you to undergo so as to be assured of your vocation. Otherwise it would have to be thought that he has an incorrect idea of paternal authority for it cannot proceed against God, he being your first father who without doubt can judge for himself how to dispose of us at will, especially when it is a question of calling us to a more perfect state and which brings us closer to the virtues of which his divine Son has wished to give us an example as well as counsel us. So write him respectfully that he cut short this trial that is unbearable for your heart and enable you, without anxiety and trouble, to follow the call of grace and fulfil the vocation which it has pleased the Master in his goodness to give you.

I say no more to you on this point because you are well enough initiated into the ways of God and you have before you enough lives of saints to know what to decide.

I much appreciate your having thought of writing to me; I did not expect such consideration in the very first days of your stay amongst us; it is that you had already understood that we form a family, of which all who compose it wish only to have one heart and one soul.

You know for your part what sentiments I have for you, and I assure you of them anew.

Eugene, priest, missionary.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[3]](#footnote-3)**

92:VI in Oblate Writings

*Journey to Paris. Hospitality at the seminary of the Foreign Missions.*

Courtès

[Paris][[4]](#footnote-4)

February 19, 1823.

We arrived at Paris Saturday morning[[5]](#footnote-5) at eight o’clock. Our guardian angel who guided our progress had procured for me the means of saying holy Mass at Chálons on Thursday and at Auxerre on Friday. I note this circumstance because hitherto the persuasion has been that one could not say Mass while travelling by post-chaise or diligence. Our travelling companions were very honest souls who fasted as carefully as we did, and who were most obliging to us during the whole of the journey.

... [At dinner, I placed myself] beside that [most] obstinate of mortals[[6]](#footnote-6) and behold, we became the best friends in the world, so much so that he lent his hat to my uncle and procured one for me from his store, which I will use proudly on all grand occasions while I am at Paris.

**To Father Courtès and the community at Aix.[[7]](#footnote-7)**

93:VI in Oblate Writings

*Desires to live amongst his family. May the novices give aid by their virtues to the Church in distress.*

Courtès

[Paris]

February 22, 1823.

Let our novices be happy to live in their peaceful refuge. I am envious of their lot and it is with sorrow that I resign myself to what is in store for me. Indeed I offer to God my situation as the direst penance. My whole happiness after the work of our missions is to come and taste a little repose in the bosom of the family wherein everything edifies me, everything charms me. Love one another. Let all agree in maintaining good order and discipline by fidelity to the Rule, obedience, abnegation and humility. The Church expects you all to be a powerful aid in her distress; but be well persuaded that you will only be good enough to achieve something inasmuch as you advance in the practice of religious virtues.

Write me in detail... Remote from all of you as I am, consider me as an exile who longs unceasingly to be at the centre of his affections and who can only assuage his boredom for a few moments by transporting himself (in spirit) into your midst.

**To Father Tempier at Lauzet.[[8]](#footnote-8)**

94:VI in Oblate Writings

*The priests Maurel and Caire could be named superiors of the seminaries of Marseilles.*

Tempier

[Paris]

March 4, 1823.

We are thinking of calling Monsieur Maurel[[9]](#footnote-9) to be superior of the major seminary. As for the minor seminary, we would wish it to be put on a better footing; for that, professors must be chosen who would establish themselves there. We have here a good man who is quite disposed to leave a lucrative post in order to devote himself to the education of young clerics. He has talent and appears to have also much piety; he is M. l’abbé Caire.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**To Father Courtès at Aix [[11]](#footnote-11)**

95:VI in Oblate Writings

*Joy at learning that Brother Guibert has returned to the novitiate.*

Courtès

[Paris]

March 6, 1823.

Let Guibert[[12]](#footnote-12) know what pleasure I felt on learning of his return to the house. His conduct will be remembered in our Society and he can be assured that it has gained for him in advance, so to speak, the affection that one ordinarily obtains only after much time and long trials. It will be appropriate to take this into account when he will desire that the time of his novitiate be shortened which I am quite disposed not to prolong more than a year because in time of war campaigns count double.

**To Father Sumien and to the Oblates at Aix.[[13]](#footnote-13)**

96:VI in Oblate Writings

*Joy on receiving news from Aix. May the scholastics follow in**the footsteps and emulate the spirit of their elders.*

Sumien and the Oblates at Aix

Paris,

March 18, 1823.

The tender sentiments of our dear Oblates, so well and keenly expressed, have produced in my heart the effect that you certainly must have expected, a renewal of love and of that affection which is, I believe, only too well known in our family.

As you know, you are the hope of our Society; so you can gauge my happiness when I contemplate you going forward in the ways of the Lord, full of ardour for good, burning with holy zeal for the salvation of souls, devoted to the Church, scorning and trampling on all that detracts from perfection and compromises salvation. Then it is that I exult with joy and congratulate myself at having you as children. Oh! I have no doubt that you will follow the footsteps of your elder brothers - see the prodigies that it has already pleased the Lord to work through their ministry! This is because, young though they be, they are filled with the spirit which vivifies everything. That is why we try to perpetuate it amongst us and it is through you, my dear friends, that this living and fruitful tradition will be transmitted to that other class of our Society, the novices, who follow along immediately after you. Continue to give them the example of all the virtues, of regularity, of fidelity to the Rules; live always in this intimate union which makes of our house a true paradise on earth and whenever you are enjoying your family life and speaking amongst yourselves of your happiness, the greatest that one can taste here below, think of your father who languishes far from you in a land which he could almost call foreign, for it will always be a real exile for him as long as he is far from you and all his other brothers.

**To my dear son, Guibert, acolyte, novice, missionary at Aix.[[14]](#footnote-14)**

97:VI in Oblate Writings

*Presentiment of the good that Guibert will do in the Church*

Guibert

Paris,

March 19, 1823.

I have not waited until today, my dear friend, to felicitate you; too much have I shared in your happiness and too much do I value it not to thank the good God first and then to rejoice with the family to which you have so suddenly betaken yourself as a result of the protection of God over you and over us. You see, my dear friend, that I do not hide from you this thought and that my heart yields. But did you not already know how much I loved you and hoped in you? It was a kind of Presentiment[[15]](#footnote-15) I had from the first day I saw you; it seemed to me to have found again something of myself which quite naturally had just fallen into place and what was most remarkable was that from then on you were considered by all the rest of the family as one who had belonged to it for a long time and had returned to it after an absence. All that augurs well for the good there will be for us to do together in the fold of the Church ravaged by so many beasts. So let us ever be united in the same spirit. Pray for me who loved you first. For my part, I think of you often before the Lord. Where rules his amiable heart, there let us meet.

Adieu, I embrace you with all my heart,

Eugene, priest, missionary

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[16]](#footnote-16)**

98:VI in Oblate Writings

*Ceremony of Holy Thursday at the Tuileries. Desires to return as quickly as possible in his community. Fast of Holy Friday.*

Courtès

Paris,

March 27, 1823, Holy Thursday.

My heart was sad, my dear Courtès, as I came back from the church where I had just offered the holy sacrifice with people I did not know, in a somewhat alien land, so to speak, far from you from whom I have never been separated on this memorable day. Yes, it is the first time since our coming together that I have not celebrated Easter with my brothers. I am inconsolable over this immense privation. To soften my grief, I said Mass quite close to the time that I knew you would be assembled, *Dominicam Coenam manducare[[17]](#footnote-17).*

But, although in the presence of the same Lord, my heart felt all the weight of the distance which separates us and while, thanks to the arrangement I had made, we were celebrating at the same time the same mysteries, we nevertheless did not celebrate together and my isolation in such a circumstance wrenched sighs from me even at the altar, seeing that I was not surrounded by my excellent and beloved family.

I have just returned from accompanying my uncle to the Last Supper at the Tuileries. After a very remarkable sermon preached by the Bishop of Troyes[[18]](#footnote-18) in which, as he commented on the saying of Charlemagne “God and my sword”, he gave the august assembly some forthright lessons of government to which they listened intently, we then saw, with astonishment beyond description, human grandeur lower itself, in imitation of the Word who humbled himself, at the feet of the poor and of the indigent. It was beautiful, impressive; one can utter on this subject fine phrases and moralize to the skies but what shall I say, my dear Courtès? This remarkable spectacle was in no way comparable to our touching ceremony. Nothing brought it to mind, save the routine action of the washing of feet, and there again with quite a difference. Nothing reminded us of the imposing lesson which the Saviour of men gave to the world. Neither the place or the persons or the spectators or even those who were the immediate object of the ceremony, nor the manner of doing it, nothing in a word spoke to the heart; mine at least felt not the least emotion: I only felt the regret that this spectacle naturally caused to spring in my soul by making me remember what we do.

Ah! hours later you could have said the same when, for consolation, I betook myself in spirit to that room that truly resembles the Cenacle where the disciples, prepared by the lessons they constantly receive in the Society, imbued with the spirit of the Saviour who lives in them, gather in the name of their Master to represent the apostles of whom Jesus Christ could say *vos mundi estis[[19]](#footnote-19)* and wait silently and devoutly for the representative of the Master amongst them, at the word of commandment of the Lord, *mandatum,* to kneel at their feet, washing and touching these feet blessed and mandated several thousand years previously by the prophet so as to be feet of evangelizers of good, of preachers of peace, touching, I say, respectfully his lips to these feet whereupon flames dart from his heart and envelope it as from a fount of living water which refreshes and spurts forth wherever eyes are turned. What emotion! What sentiments! What fervour! Here, led into the palace of an earthly king, I saw a vast gallery defiled everywhere by obscene statues, by tableaux representing the unseemly divinities of paganism, surrounded by all the vanities of the age, by all the pomp of the world, in order to gaze on the truly pious prince who was about to give a great example of humility, I had to turn my eyes from a thousand objects that normally should have been modestly veiled for the circumstance. What reverence could be expected from such people?

Dissipation and curiosity were depicted in all faces. It was in such a setting that the prince approached a troupe of children ranged on a dais high enough so that he could pour water on their feet without stooping. These children, very well dressed and as little in keeping with the mystery as the undevout spectators, ill represented, it seemed to me, the apostles of the living God; they were not even members of the suffering God. So, I repeat, my heart remained unmoved; my indifferent mind presented to me no image, recalled no souvenir; it had to go elsewhere to dwell on the mysteries of the day and it is to Aix that it went to join your gathering; would that I had been able to be there entirely!

I come from the tomb where I have spent several hours to compensate myself for all I am losing and for so many privations that I experience in this precious week.

Adieu. This letter will be common to you all. If Fr. Tempier and Fr. Suzanne are at Marseilles, send it on to them. I want you all to know that Paris gives me no illusions, nothing within its walls impresses me; in a word, away from you there is no happiness for me. I embrace you, adieu.

March 28.

My uncle greets you. I could not prevent him today, Good Friday, from following our usual customs which I always observe in all places; in consequence he ate during the whole day only bread and a little soup. I thought you would be edified to learn this.

**To Father Jourdan at Aix.[[20]](#footnote-20)**

99:VI in Oblate Writings

*Advice to Father Jourdan regarding his scruples.*

Jourdan

[Paris]

March 30, 1823.

My dear, good Jourdan, may the peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you! What’s this? Could you be without this precious peace that the divine Master came to bring to the world? Ah! if that were so, my good friend, it would indeed be your fault. Why do you allow your soul to be troubled by scruples which torment you and cause such great detriment? Dear friend, trust in my experience. I know this kind of trial, pay no heed to it. Remember that our Lord wishes that his children be led by the way of authority and obedience; it is thus that he manifests his very holy will: *qui vos audit me audit[[21]](#footnote-21).* Now, I declare to you in the name of God that you are in his friendship. It is not the thoughts and all the other miseries which obsess you which will make you offend God; you sadden his paternal heart only by lacking confidence in his goodness, in thinking too little of him as a good father who cherishes you and wishes to save you. Rely in this matter on the decision given to you by our dear brothers who love you so much and whom you sadden, as you do me, by the obstinacy you show in not relying on their decision about the situation which it pleases God to let you undergo. Courage, my dear friend. Very great saints have been tried like you, but they became saints in spite of these circumstances because they did not cease to obey; courage, once more, my dear friend, we are all down on the floor praying for you so that you will bear this hard trial like a valiant soldier of Jesus Christ. This so amiable Master, our model, did not yield to despair in the garden of Olives[[22]](#footnote-22); into what an agony he was plunged nevertheless! Hold on to him and fear nothing, drink the cup of his bitterness since he deigns to let you share in his passion, but do not doubt that he will soon fill you with his sweetest joys. Until then you must keep your peace and obey.

Beware of staying a single day away from the holy altar; it is there you must replenish your strength. At the moment of communion, tell him lovingly about all your sorrows: *vim patior, responde pro me[[23]](#footnote-23).* Embrace his feet in spirit, protest that you will never separate yourself from him, that you wish to love him for ever, then take him into your heart and be not troubled about anything. That is what the Lord orders me to say to you. Adieu, I embrace you very tenderly while commending you to our good mother Mary.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[24]](#footnote-24)**

100:VI in Oblate Writings

*Father de Mazenod has not developed his talents, only his qualities of heart. Books should always remain in the same house. Calm, not noisy, joy making of the novices.*

Courtès

[Paris]

April 2, 1823.

I will begin by telling you that you rarely acknowledge receipt of my letters... I will then beg you not to mock me any more. I am wholly incapable and far from being the giant that your imagination, prompted by your heart, represents to you, I am really nothing but a pygmy. If God placed in me the germ of certain talents, which circumstances have not permitted me to cultivate, it has remained undeveloped and has never produced anything worthwhile; all that I have derived from it is an affinity for good yet without the ability to produce it. If that is the case, it is not entirely my fault. The little that I have, is what I have made and even then I have not gone to great trouble, wherein I have been in the wrong. As for the heart, that is another matter, I would argue that to all and sundry, now and in future. Also when I say to you that I love you, you can be assured that you could not be as much (loved) by anyone else...

I have written to Father Tempier that I approved your conduct in refusing to turn over to him the books he asked for the house of Marseilles. I would have blamed you very severely if you had yielded to his request. It is very expressly forbidden for us to transport from one house to another, not only a work like Bourdaloue and Massillon, but a single volume however little it may be. It makes no difference if these works might have belonged or not to the individuals who change houses... This is all the more rigorous at a time when the house of Aix has no local superior.

Far from being troubled by what you tell me about the wildness of our novices, I am quite at ease. Be firm and do not let anyone dissipate them with talk which whirls them off into the world or which brings the world closer to them. It is not worth anyone’s trouble, in fact, to be concerned with it, wretched and hateful that it is. Advise Fr. Deblieu also to take care not to be dissipated with them. We must have joyfulness amongst us, but let it be joyfulness that is mild, not noisy, at least not uproarious; it is essential that our novices acquire at an early stage the habit of maintaining a certain reserve and exterior modesty which is very edifying and which helps to keep one in the presence of God and control one’s actions...

**To Father Tempier at Marseilles.[[25]](#footnote-25)**

101:VI in Oblate Writings

*Advice regarding the canonical visitation.*

Tempier

[Paris]

April 3, 1823.

It is urgent to establish the Rule as having to be observed everywhere and by all. Besides other things, do not neglect the prescribed registers, in one of which you will trace the history of our establishment at Marseilles going back therein as far as the mission[[26]](#footnote-26).

**To Father Suzanne at Marseilles.[[27]](#footnote-27)**

102:VI in Oblate Writings

*Affection. Reproaches him for exceeding his strength. He is to remain at Marseilles.*

Suzanne

Paris,

April 13, 1823.

When I have to write to you, my dear, good son, I am obliged to hold in check at the outset the affections of my heart in order to remain master of my expression, more perhaps than I am of my sentiments which I am inclined to believe are too tender and too lively if, for that matter, I can reproach myself for loving too much someone whom I have so many reasons to love and who ought to be, indeed, incomparably more loved by me than by any other. *Satis est* on that subject, for fear that my letter will contain nothing else but that, when I have something else to say to you.

Before all else, whatever the precautions you may have taken to ward off the blow, I must scold you and very seriously. Do you want then to be the misfortune of my life? Destined to precede you to the tomb, what would I become if you condemned me to survive you? What sorrow would be comparable to mine? Who could console me? You know full well, I would have no more happiness on this earth. *Eh bien*! why do you behave in a such manner as to shorten your days? How is it that after the hard exertions you made at the mission of Tallard, after the fatigues and sufferings of the mission of Lauzet, where you had to struggle against hell and all the elements as well, the inclemency of weather being so rigorous that the people of that region could scarcely bear it, you go back to Tallard and rest yourself by preaching again twice a day and forget the care of your health to the point of confessing thirty hours without stopping! And you would wish me, my child, not to be appalled by such behaviour! You may very well say you are not tired at all, that you eat and sleep well, that does not suffice to appease me, such excess is destroying your existence. I do not wish you to expose yourself to the consequences that can result. That is to be understood in the future once and for all.

You see from what I have just told you that you have not interpreted my mind badly by staying several days more at Aix; only I would have wished you to be moderate in undertaking to hear confessions, so as to be able to take the rest that I had prescribed to you very authoritatively. No matter if you feel no more fatigue, you have nonetheless used up your health in the remarkable missions and retreats which have been accomplished. At Marseilles it is I who will take care of you; yes, you must have some intimation of my secret, I am placing you there because I must make it my own habitual place of dwelling. I would have to be convinced that the greater glory of God and the good of our Society demanded your presence elsewhere in order to have the strength to impose the sacrifice on myself of living in separation from you...

**To Father Sumien at Aix.[[28]](#footnote-28)**

103:VI in Oblate Writings

*Death of Father Jourdan. Persecution and suffering are a pledge of the good being done by the Society.*

Sumien

[Paris]

May 2, 1823.

What shall I say to you, my dear child, about the misfortune which has brought consternation to us all[[29]](#footnote-29)? I am dumbfounded and can scarcely believe it but I do not share your fears about the salvation of his soul. I finished yesterday in a most confident mood the five Masses that our Rules prescribe and, as our other Fathers will have done as much, I hope that the good God will have delivered him from purgatory and that he is enjoying at this moment the glory of heaven. His was a very beautiful soul. Who knows? Perhaps this poor brother had never sinned mortally. Oh! I repeat, I have the greatest confidence that he is saved.

You speak to me, my dear friend, of all the crosses and persecutions that I have experienced since the beginning of the Society. I would have been quite annoyed if such had not been the case. Do you not know that it is the seal of the hand of God upon us? And how could it be otherwise? How can you expect the demon not to make every possible effort to shake us and arouse at the same time all the tempests from without when he sees his kingdom attacked and so many spoils snatched from his ferocity? It could not be otherwise. It is ever thus that he has acted from Abel down to us. One must read on this subject the admirable epistles of Saint Paul, one finds therein many subjects of consolation for he passed by all the trials, as other saints have. Let us be firm in goodness, walk ever in the paths of the Lord by practising exactly what our vocation prescribes for us. Let us encourage each other, be united and all will go well because we will accomplish the will of God.

**To Father Tempier at Marseilles.[[30]](#footnote-30)**

104:VI in Oblate Writings

*Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod wishes to name Father Tempier as Vicar General of Marseilles. Motives for this choice.*

Tempier

[Paris]

May 21, 1823.

I had thought of the project which you proposed to me. M. [Ricaud][[31]](#footnote-31) is certainly well apt to inspire confidence, but I will not hide from you that my uncle has eyes on another, and this other is you. I understand all you would reply to this but such is his idea. After all, no one would have had anything to say had he brought with him a Grand Vicar from here; besides one must get accustomed to seeing him do what he judges to be suitable. Bishop Cicé must have made this doctrine clear to those who no longer know what a bishop ought to be... My uncle will give enough proof of his good will for the clergy of Marseilles by forming his whole chapter from members chosen amongst them. He has resisted to that end all the solicitations of most notable persons, of his friends, of a number of Bishops...

The strongest reasons for opposing would be those we would decide or, after reflection, would be in the interests of the Society; but I do not hesitate to believe that after we have got together, we will all fall into agreement that the circumstances and our situation demand that we consent to make this breakthrough, if indeed it is one; for, properly speaking, one cannot so name something foreseen by the Rule and that the Superior General can authorize by his assent. As a general thesis, I would not willingly approve such a measure; in this particular case, I can only agree that it is wise and very appropriate.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[32]](#footnote-32)**

105:VI in Oblate Writings

*Do not be discouraged by failures and be careful of his health*

Courtès

[Paris]

May 27, 1823.

Coupled to all that in itself is bitter in the lacerating thought of this new betrayal[[33]](#footnote-33) is the fear of evil that you feel in consequence, you who are so keenly sensitive and the suffering of whose soul can overwhelm a body so frail. Suppress, in the name of God, all that can enfeeble you, all that can be hurtful to health, to a life which is so dear to me, so precious, so indispensable. Oh! yes, if I wish to experience the anguish and sorrow of death, I have only to think of that which I ought to avert with all my will each day and how many times a day! Adieu, good and tender child, I press you against my heart.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[34]](#footnote-34)**

106:VI in Oblate Writings

*Sufferings caused by the death of Father Jourdan and by the defection of a member of the Society.*

Courtès

[Paris]

June 1, 1823.

The announcement of this apostasy[[35]](#footnote-35) has sensibly affected me more than the death of Father Jourdan... To be obliged to turn over as it were to Satan the one whom I set and directed on his way to heaven, how frightful that is! One is struck by blows like this as by lightning and one finds oneself in the state of mind of these princes of our days who, after a new defection, look once more about them to see who will be the next to leave.

It would perhaps be as well if we were to compare ourselves, in this circumstance, with our divine Master who asked the disciples who still remained beside him, after the shameful defection of the Capharnaites: “and you also, would you wish to abandon me?”[[36]](#footnote-36) However sorrowful our position, I pity infinitely more the traitors who, not having been stopped by the infallible word of him who said that anyone who turned back after having put his hand to the plough, is not worthy of the kingdom of heaven,[[37]](#footnote-37) secretly meditate, consent interiorly and finally commit an execrable perjury. Civil laws used to punish very severely similar behaviour. Today divine justice delays applying the penalty. A crime like this is so alien to my mind that I truly do not know how to prevent its execution. I could only implore the Lord during the whole course of the procession today to avert this calamity from us and still more from him who thinks of doing it and by the fact itself is not innocent of it.

**To Father Tempier at Marseilles.[[38]](#footnote-38)**

107:VI in Oblate Writings

*Father de Mazenod has had his uncle named to Marseilles for the good of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence. The latter ought in return to seek the good of the diocese.*

Tempier

[Paris,

beginning of June 1823].[[39]](#footnote-39)

You can surely think, my dear friend, that all the reflections that you communicate to me on the subject of the project of my uncle had been present in my mind (I speak of those which have to do with the Society); and you understand that they are of a nature as to have made a great impression; so I have pondered and reviewed them and have not hidden from myself all the disadvantages of such an undertaking. It would be too long to enter here into all the details of the motives which determined me not to oppose the resolution that my uncle took *by himself*, as if be had read my thoughts. There are matters that one can only explain in conversation but it is as well for you to know that it is I who made my uncle a bishop, not only the first time on coming to Paris in order to make them think of him for they ignored his existence; but a second time, by pressing letters and reasons which I could urge opportunely on the one whom it concerned, at the moment when they had really put him aside and had thought they would gain from the change by putting me in his place, not on the see that had been destined to him, but in the episcopate[[40]](#footnote-40).

Without doubt, I had to be inspired, in the steps which I took, by the spirit of justice and equity which was revolted at the thought alone that they could inflict an outrage as unjust as it was dishonourable on an estimable man who, far from not being worthy, had on the contrary still increased his claims by his exemplary life and his excess of zeal, of which we have all been the witnesses. But it also must be said that the good of the Society has motivated a great deal the steps that I believed I had to take. One must also give credit to my uncle in that this same motive has always weighed much with him and, if he has been able to feel happy over his promotion, it was only in great part in the hope of bringing benefit to us. It is certain for that matter that he would never have accepted the burden, really too heavy for him, if he had not really counted on my devotedness and on that of the whole of our Society.

You will understand that for my part I would not have been able, in conscience, to make the slightest move in his favour, if I had not been resolved to devote myself to him, together with all of us and all the resources that our Society can furnish.

To sum up: I have made my uncle a bishop in order to provide our Society with the means to do good in the Church, to consolidate its existence, etc. I cannot, in conscience, after having contributed so powerfully to its rise, not provide it with the indispensable means to fulfil its task worthily. It cannot succeed therein without my help; I ought therefore to devote myself to it. But this obligation weighs on me only for having wished to achieve the good of the Society; therefore the Society owes to me the assistance which is necessary to fulfil my duty as best I can.

I hope there is no one amongst us who does not understand the rightness of these reflections. In regard to yourself, I will prove to you in a *tête-à-tête* that it was indispensable that you be associated with me. I do not claim that you have been invited to weddings and feasts; but you will share my solicitude and you will concur with me in the accomplishment of the plans of God on the diocese and on us.

**To Father Courtès at Aix[[41]](#footnote-41)**

108:VI in Oblate Writings

*Consultation with Father Richardot, S.J. concerning the vocation of Brother J H. Guibert*

Courtès

[Paris]

June 15, 1823.

However much I felt sure that the demon was laying a trap for him[[42]](#footnote-42) I was pleased to know the opinion of a man experienced in the ways of God, absolutely independent and consequently in no way influenced by any particular consideration or attachment[[43]](#footnote-43). Having listened attentively to the very exact account I gave him and to the reading of his letter, he repeated to me perhaps twenty times: *There is no doubt that he is called, no doubt that he is called; let him refrain from leaving, it is a trap of the enemy.* He told me on this subject the wisest, the most reasonable things in the world. *Tell him clearly that there is nothing more common than such doubts, that he chase them away as he would chase thoughts against the Faith or against purity*.

**To Brother Guibert at Aix.[[44]](#footnote-44)**

109:VI in Oblate Writings

*Encourages the novice Guibert not to hesitate in pursuing his vocation Temptations of the demon.*

Guibert

Paris,

June 26, 1823.

I admit, my dear good Guibert, your letter had palpably affected me. This was to the point that I did not have fortitude enough to write to you and that I needed to pour my heart into the bosom of our mutual Friend, the only confidant I could choose in this anguish that I might describe by calling it excessive. How could you wish, my dear friend, that it be otherwise, persuaded as I am that the good God has given you to us in answer to our prayers, that he has called you like the apostles with the most evident signs of a truly divine vocation to follow him and to serve him in the ministry which resembles most that which he prescribed for his apostles, with whose work he willed to associate you. Could I have seen you yield to the perfidious promptings of the spirit of temptation, the eternal enemy of all good, without my heart being rent? Apart from the sincere affection that I have for you and which made me dread even more the danger to which you were going to expose yourself by not responding to your vocation, and the malediction which is attached to him who turns away after having put his hands to the plough, I was distressed to see that the demon was still powerful enough to penetrate into the granaries of the Father of the family and that, not content with burning and consuming the straw which by God’s just judgement has been ceded to him, he insists on taking even the good grain, seizing the sifter and violently shaking it to shake out again the seed of the elect and cruelly devour what was reserved for eternal life. I repeat, this thought rends my heart. The cunning and malice of the enemy revealed themselves to me with greater evidence than any other because I saw his rage unmasked and all the more visible because of the circumstances. The spread of our Society is unacceptable to the hatred which he has vowed against the souls that we strive to save and of whom we are snatching so great a number from his tyranny. He saw two and even three bishops make overtures to call us to their sides[[45]](#footnote-45); the war was going to be more deadly for him than ever. Already guardians of a shrine of the holy Virgin, there was question of confiding to us another. There was serious thought of our founding an establishment on the tomb of a holy missionary who had been all his life and after his death the terror of hell. What is to be done to ward off so many blows? The demon is never at a loss; he will foul the sources; he will exert every effort to render sterile the bosom which gives birth to the giants who ravage his empire; he will strive to stifle the seeds which promise to develop more promptly and vigorously. It is thus that he has beset you with so many assaults and that he has used most seductive auxiliaries to draw you astray. It sufficed to him for the moment to turn you away from the path which the Lord had traced for you; you would have thereby, without knowing, perfectly complied with his plans; he would reserve for you after that the consequences of an infidelity of which he alone could calculate the depth. Would not the sight of such abysms make my soul shudder? I am not so impervious as that! Overwhelmed, I put my trust in God, I invoked his holy name and, although I could not doubt what policy I should follow, I was inspired to have recourse to the principal superior of an Order to whom the ways of God are not unknown. You know the result of this initiative. The conclusion permits not the least doubt, leaves not the least anxiety. Your conduct is entirely mapped out and it is not I who speak; but I must say, what is said is just as I thought.

Oh! if you refer to my decision, dear friend, it is known to you, I could not speak otherwise without betraying my conscience, the interests of the Church and those of the salvation of your soul. If it is costly to your nature, count yourself happy to have something to offer in exchange of all that God is granting us, in thanksgiving for all that he wills to effect through you.

The letter which you have had the courtesy to write to me and which Fr. Courtès inserted in his has consoled me somewhat because I discover amongst the expressions and good sentiments that you utter clearly marked signs of the prevenient grace which is yours and to which you do not wish to be unfaithful. Courage, my very dear child, do not be surprised that the demon overwhelms you with the clouds of his fury, that he disturbs your soul as during a storm. This power would not have been given him had you repulsed him with greater energy at the first onslaught that he made on you. He has made great gains when he has succeeded in blocking the light; one is then certain to be shipwrecked; but the good God has granted you a new grace, that is of understanding that in such a state (to which, for that matter, saints have very often been subjected) you ought to rely on the decision of those who are there to direct you. What advice can you expect of him who wishes your ruin and that of those you are called to save? Courage once again! The enemy would aim fewer blows at you, he would be less relentless in seducing you, if he did not fear your ministry. Although, properly speaking, he does not know the future with scientific certainty, his natural perspicacity reveals events to him which depend from secondary causes in a way as not to be mistaken. He has concluded from the calibre of soul with which the good God has endowed you, the particular and prevenient graces which his goodness has willed you to have, of the vocation to which he has called you and which places you, so to speak, fully armed in the enemy’s camp with the warriors of the faith who gain in the name of Jesus Christ as many victories as the battles in which they engage; he has concluded, I say, that you also would be formidable to his empire; and stalking around you, as the Apostle says[[46]](#footnote-46), he has perceived the weak point and has taken hold on it in order to try and penetrate your soul with the most subtle poison, that which all sensitive souls should dread most and which alone would be sufficient to neutralize all the good which could be done in the Church. Happily this strategy is not new and we have the example of the saints who teach us what we must do. Hold on therefore to their precepts; do as they have done, and we will obtain the same results. Saving your modesty, would that you obtain the same kind and as complete as those which they have obtained. However it will not be otherwise if you do what they knew how to do. That depends on you since the grace which is offered to you is the same.

Adieu, my good and dear friend, I pray God that after having felt the sorrows of giving birth, I may rejoice at the birth of a man and of a saint in this cherished family of God, and of which the father loves you to the same extent that you are costly to his heart.

Eugene, priest, missionary.

**To Father Tempier at Marseilles.[[47]](#footnote-47)**

110:VI in Oblate Writings

*Consecration of Fortuné de Mazenod al Issy.*

Tempier

[Paris]

July 5, 1823.

This time I will use a right of which I scarcely remember the name, having lost to such an extent the ability to use it, (that is) I opt for my freedom. With a place in the gallery, I will enjoy at my ease a spectacle so touching for me[[48]](#footnote-48) and I will abandon my soul to the spirit of God so that he may direct its sentiments according as he pleases in the hope to derive therefrom as much profit as consolation.

**To Father Tempier at Marseilles.[[49]](#footnote-49)**

111:VI in Oblate Writings

*Religious ceremonies of the new Bishop at Paris.*

Tempier

[Paris]

July 15, 1823.

Since the consecration, we no longer have a moment for ourselves; there is no way to do anything, we are always starting over again. To all the previous interruptions are added the solicitations that are ceaselessly being made for different ceremonies, consecrations, solemn masses, benedictions, confirmations; of all that, nothing can be refused. Again this morning, July 15th, the sacrament of confirmation had to be administered at the other end of the city, for the good Brothers of the Christian Schools whence we returned only at two o’clock. There is no end to it, in any event we were extremely edified by this valuable community composed of nearly one hundred brothers. The Superior General, a fine man, has spent twenty years in the houses of his Order at Marseilles. So we talked much of the relations that they have with this diocese which is so well served by this worthy Congregation.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[50]](#footnote-50)**

112:VI in Oblate Writings

*Annoyance caused by the Missionaries of France and their supporters at Marseilles.*

Courtès

[Marseilles]

August 13, 1823.

I will not launch into a chapter of regrets and sorrows, it would be unending. Marseilles might have been too much to bear for me if they had seen me coming with a favourable eye and if they had rendered me the justice I know is mine; you can imagine what it must be when I consider that Lucifer would not have been more damnable, if he had come to take away their souls... But do not believe that his hullabaloo intimidates me nor everything with which they threaten me. It is to the Princes, to the King, to the Pope that they should write; the liberals have undertaken this last step. All this noise is made in support of three priests, I almost say three rebellious ones.[[51]](#footnote-51)

**To Brother Guibert at Aix.[[52]](#footnote-52)**

113:VI in Oblate Writings

*Joy on learning that Guibert is more serene and resolved to persevere in the Society.*

Guibert

Marseilles, Bishop’s House,

September 30, 1823.

I cannot, my good and dear friend, hide from you the effect your letters have had upon my heart when you speak as you have done in that to which I reply[[53]](#footnote-53). It is something delightful. The fact is you cannot form an idea of the affection that the good God has given me for you and of the price that I attach to seeing your future inseparably united to ours. It gives me pleasure to say this to you, dear friend: you are worthy of this family that the Lord has provided in advance with so many blessings; and, were there need to associate you with it this very day, I would press you against my heart and give you the sweet name of son and all it implies.

This is all I have time to tell you today. Adieu, I embrace and I love you.

Eugene, priest, missionary

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[54]](#footnote-54)**

114:VI in Oblate Writings

*Sorrow and first reactions on learning of the imminent defection of Father Deblieu.*

Courtès

Marseilles,

October 9, 1823, at midnight.

Although I was expecting for a long time, my dear friend, the apostasy whereof you announce the imminent explosion, this infamy is so monstrous that I can scarcely persuade myself that it be possible. This is the end result of so much patience and support given to a member more imperfect than it is possible to conceive[[55]](#footnote-55). The circumstance that this man chooses is a refinement of perfidy. God will finish by making (him) an example for I do not know of a greater outrage to divinity, to fidelity to an oath, to religion which is treated as a plaything. The doctors of [Fréjus] will decide what they wish; the Bishop will do what pleases him; I, if God does not give me other insights, will not unbind this guilty one... Vows made at the foot of the altar and in the presence of Jesus Christ whom one takes as witness, vows renewed in circumstances that not one of us is able to forget, after considerations and protestations which have never been made by anyone, vows ratified a third time in the greatest joy and peace which is shared with everyone, such vows are not pronounced by surprise and without reflection. I repeat, let whoever dispense from them who wishes; as for me, unless the good God gives me other insights, I will do nothing.

Adieu, my dear beloved, your sentiments are for my heart truly a consolation; but, in this painful circumstance, it costs me much not to be surrounded by all my true children so that we may help each other mutually to bear a misfortune which is common to us, since it weighs on the Society.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[56]](#footnote-56)**

115:VI in Oblate Writings

*Vows made in the Society are valid*

Courtès

[Marseilles]

October 10, 1823.

It is a great crisis of which the consequences can be terrible...; but His Grace the Archbishop[[57]](#footnote-57) was not unaware that we were making vows. Was he not presumed to approve them when he continued to employ us as he did? I would be curious to know if our Frejusian casuists consider the vows that St. Ignatius made at Montmartre with his companions to be null!

How many religious bodies have begun by thus engaging themselves before the formal approbation of the Church! The whole archiepiscopal administration knew of our engagements and made no complaint. I had spoken thereof to M. Duclaux who saw nothing other than what was quite edifying in that. All that proves there was no precipitation. The Society of M. Coudrin[[58]](#footnote-58), spread over several dioceses of France and of which the headquarters is at Picpus, at Paris, makes vows as we do; never have the bishops complained about them; apparently the demon is more hostile to us than others. Do not worry much. I fear lest this may do you harm. It is a new worry for me for, at present more than ever, I ask God that he will keep you as the apple of his eye.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[59]](#footnote-59)**

116:VI in Oblate Writings

*Accusations of the Archbishop of Aix against the Founder who does not defend himself lest doing so might hurt the Society of the Missionaries of Provence.*

Courtès

[Marseilles]

October [23-25][[60]](#footnote-60) 1823.

I have found it quite easy in my heart to pardon the Prelate for the calumnies of which I am willing to believe he is only the echo, one would say one has to do only with an imaginary person. Oh! thank God, it is an imaginary personage whom the Archbishop portrays as me! But this is a trial hitherto lacking to me: hypocrite, wretch, whitened sepulchre, etc. My God! what graces I would owe you if you had permitted them to add that I am possessed by the demon; this trait of resemblance with my Master would give me still more hope of recompense!... I am not cast down. If I only had to defend my person it would be easy for me to do it with all the advantages which my position gives me, but I would suffer much more so as not to give the slightest pretext for renewed persecution against the Society. She is strongly assailed by the tempest but let us not lose courage... It is not difficult to perceive in all this a kind of aversion for the evangelical counsels and that makes me hope that He who, the first, made them honourable will take in hand the defence of his work.

**To Father Courtès at Aix.[[61]](#footnote-61)**

117:VI in Oblate Writings

*The Founder is grieved but not cast down. The vows pronounced by him and his associates cannot be annulled by the bishops.*

Courtès

[Marseilles]

October 29, 1823.

Let us not lose courage, we can only be destroyed if we allow it and that we will *never* do. I groan to be far from you. I grieve that you are alone in moments when we would need to share mutually our sentiments and our energy. It is too true that we are afflicted, profoundly afflicted, but we will not let ourselves be beaten... Even were we to be dispersed, we would not be less united.

A bishop has not the right to prevent us from making vows especially when those who make them do not seek to revolt against the orders that he can give them, and while waiting for the Holy See to pronounce itself. He cannot dispense those who do not have recourse to him for that, still less can he declare them null. I regard all that they threaten us with as an abuse of power. What reason have we given to the complaints of His Grace the Archbishop? There are no priests in the diocese who have lived in a greater spirit of submission and in a more absolute state of dependence. Can anyone accuse us of a single act of insubordination or revolt? What? Because, in order to live more saintly lives and render ourselves more worthy of our ministry, we wish to follow and practice the evangelical counsels, we become criminals? We would have jeopardized the prerogatives of the episcopate? We would deserve to be anathematised and proscribed? That would be giving too much scope to the *Promitto.* What does it matter to me if they regard my vows as null? They are not so, notwithstanding; now, if they are not so, who will prevent me from renewing them a thousand times a day? Yes, until the Holy See decides to the contrary, I believe myself to have the right to deprive myself voluntarily of the ability to have recourse to the authority of the bishop to dispense me of the vows that I willed to contract in perpetuity, I believe that the bishop cannot annul my engagement; that if he claims to dispense me and I am convinced that there are no legitimate reasons, I shall regard his dispensation as without effect. I will faithfully keep my vows while trying to conform my exterior conduct to what the bishop prescribes in order not to disturb the public order.

**To Father Mye at Notre Dame du Laus.[[62]](#footnote-62)**

118:VI in Oblate Writings

*Gratitude for his letter. Sorrow over the levity concomitant with infidelity to vows. Judgement of the Archbishop of Aix regarding the Founder.*

Mye

Marseilles,

October 31, 1823.

I thank you, dear Mye, for the consideration you have had in writing to me concerning the affliction in which you could only suppose I find myself So many blows were struck from without, I simply was not paying attention. But today now that Satan has succeeded in putting us through the sieve and, shaking his sifter with violence, has made to pass with the straw some of the grain which ought, it seems, to remain in the granaries of the Father of the family, I am affected to the point of saying like Our Lord: *tristis est anima mea usque ad mortem[[63]](#footnote-63).* I cannot reconcile myself to the idea that one can trifle with what is most holy under frivolous pretexts and perhaps for reasons less than edifying. And while I see Turks die rather than not live up to their word, when in doing so they invoke the name of God, priests will falsify promises of quite another kind, made knowingly and willingly to Jesus Christ, taking him as witness and under his own eyes! It is frightful... but I await these infidels at the hour of their death. Jeancard[[64]](#footnote-64) has not waited for this moment to be eaten with remorse. He has written two letters to me which are pitiful and inspire in me the greatest compassion. He begins with these words: “I can no longer bear the sentiments with which my heart is oppressed; it is a sadness, and interior desolation which, I must admit, I did not expect in the brief moments when my fault was still only a project.” In the meantime the scandal is at its height and the persecution very evident. I do not know what infernal game has prompted X...[[65]](#footnote-65), on whom, as on the archangel, I will not do other than invoke the judgement of God. But he succeeded in irritating His Grace the Archbishop against me in an unbelievable manner, to the extent that the Prelate went beyond all limits, calling me a hypocrite, a whitened sepulchre, a wretch, a monster. I assure you that nothing at all concerning my person is cause for alarm. I know quite well that I am neither a monster, or a wretch or a hypocrite or even a whitened sepulchre, although I offend the good God daily; but I have too much confidence in the mercy of my Saviour to believe that his powerful grace produces no other effect than to whiten a sepulchre; I believe firmly, on the contrary, that it entirely erases my sins, which I try, in any case, to render as less numerous and as less grievous as I can.

If I were tempted to complain of such unjust treatment, I would be held back by the consideration that it is a great favour to experience what the saints experienced. May God will that I draw from them the same profit that they have drawn.

**To Father Suzanne at Gap.[[66]](#footnote-66)**

119:VI in Oblate Writings

*He must take care of his health*

Suzanne

[Marseilles]

November 11, 1823.

But in the meantime, you have to admit that you are inexcusable for having kept silent about a swelling that is so troubling, for having said nothing to me about what you were going through during the strenuous octaves that followed one after another and that you got into a situation miserable both for yourself and for those who would have to continue them after you.

**To Bishop C.A. de Richery of Fréjus.[[67]](#footnote-67)**

44:XIII in Oblate Writings

*The Rules of the Missionaries of Provence are not opposed to the right of Bishops. The latter cannot annul vows made with their implicit consent. The Society of Missionaries exists only through and for Bishops.*

Richery Bishop de

Marseilles,

November 12, 1823.

Your Lordship,

Fully reassured by all the kindness you have always shown to me and by the protection you have deigned to grant to our Society when I asked your blessing on it and on myself at Paris, I kept silence when your Council in a grave decision detached three members of a group which has constantly been employed in the service of your diocese.[[68]](#footnote-68) The respect that I profess for your sacred person as well as the concern of displeasing you hindered me from giving you some explanations which if they had arrived on time, would probably have changed the Council’s mind from crudely pronouncing the nullity of certain commitments voluntarily taken, with the permission of legitimate power at that time, for the greater good of the individuals and to the benefit of the respective dioceses they had been charged with evangelizing. These explanations would have proved to you, my Lord, that priests who make profession of the most absolute devotedness to their chief pastors, and who in everything act only in their name and under their orders, take care not to withdraw themselves from their jurisdiction. On this point, I would only have had to acquaint you with one of the basic articles of our Rules which is couched in these terms:

“The members of this Congregation will, under *the authority of the Bishops on whom they always depend,* make every effort to provide spiritual aid for the poor people scattered over the countryside and for the inhabitants of rural villages, who have the greatest need of this spiritual assistance.”

I do not wish to say, my Lord, that you are unable, in strict law, to dispense those of your diocesan clergy for whom the regularity of our way of life has become a burden. We have never claimed to deny the rights of bishops in this matter; all we wanted to do was to abstain willingly from the right of having recourse to it ourselves.

The promise to persevere in the Society which seems to have cast a shadow of suspicion in your Council, is a means of preservation which is, as we take it, not at all opposed to the rights of bishops over their subjects. We are prepared to go to wherever they may call us; we receive our mission only from them, and we shall be careful not to take even the least step that is not in perfect conformity with their wishes. Thus we have conducted ourselves hitherto, and none of us has ever thought of swerving from this rule of conduct. How then can one declare those commitments to be null which were taken with the knowledge of the competent authority which governed the dioceses that were linked at that time. Those commitments were made freely and voluntarily, several times renewed and confirmed; commitments which are not at all contrary to the bishops’ rights which we gladly recognize. To dispense us would be in order if you judged there were sufficient reasons to take such an extreme measure; but to annul them! With better information, this would certainly never have been done.

Through the imprudence of those who provoked this decision and are spreading it from house to house, however, everyone is taken up by it, and each is giving his own opinion without understanding the root of the question. We are blamed without being listened to, for we refrain from speaking. We are calumniated and ill-favored, and this tends to discredit our persons and ministry. After eight years of peaceful profession this storm is breaking over us! And the fatal blow is struck by that authority on whose support alone we rely, under the auspices of which we were founded, have grown, and continue to exist. In fact, are not the bishops our natural guardians, our fathers and the object of our veneration and love?

Yes, my Lord, their will is our rule, their authority the soul of our corps, the component of all our activities; we exist only through them and for them, to work without respite, on their orders, for the salvation of the people entrusted to them, and to alleviate their preoccupations by all our zealous efforts.

Eight years have gone by without our having received the least reproach in the exercise of our holy duties. Our way of life, our conduct, I can honestly say, has been the subject of edification for all those who have been in a position to follow and appreciate it.

Our ecclesiastical superiors, under whose eyes we are working, have constantly encouraged us and always approved every step we have taken. We were about to spread the good effects of our ministry by multiplying our work through the establishment of various houses in the dioceses which we have evangelized. The Lord Bishops of Gap, Digne, Marseilles and Nimes have given us the most laudatory signs of their protection and were calling for our service, which we were ready to give them, exactly as we would have done for you at your first sign; and now your arm smites us a fatal blow which confounds all our plans, and in its consequences shakes our institutions, injures our persons and leaves us, so to say, at the mercy of our enemies who are none other than those whose tendencies we opposed and whose passions we thwarted by fulfilling exactly the sacred duties of the ministry entrusted to us.

Admit, my Lord, that we have a just cause to be put out because of this. Besides, if I go by the rumors I hear, this is only the beginning of our woes and you are preparing an even more serious blow for us.

For, when all is said and done, since those who provoked the decision of your Council want to leave, let them go. But is it possible that Your Lordship, whose kindness and gentleness are so well known, may further do violence to the will of the small number of our brothers who love the holiness of life that we lead in our houses and are called by the attraction of a special vocation to practice higher virtues in great regularity of conduct and wanting to profit from the inestimable benefit of community life, yet without renouncing the exercise of ministry, and thus considering it their supreme happiness to live among us, that you want, Your Lordship, to uproot them from the refuge that Providence has provided them, in which two out of the three of them have been brought up from their childhood and at our expense? I will never be convinced of that

In closing, I wonder if it is to Your Lordship that I have had to write a kind of apology? I had flattered myself and would have been proud to have merited your goodness by my respect and attachment to your sacred person; I would have thought myself excused from giving further proofs; it took nothing less than all the noise made all around me to arouse my attention and oblige me to reclaim the sentiments that I would never have believed you to doubt in regard to myself and a Society that belongs to you.

Please allow me to repeat the assurance of profound respect and devotion with which I have the honor of being Your Lordship’s very humble and obedient servant.

Eugene de Mazenod.

**To Father Suzanne at Entreveux.[[69]](#footnote-69)**

120:VI in Oblate Writings

*He must protect himself against the cold al Entrevaux and send news immediately upon his arrival*

Suzanne

Marseilles,

November 19, 1823.

Although you have not yet left for Entrevaux, dearest and beloved, I am writing you a letter; one must take precautions well in advance for a locality so difficult of access. Please God that the very day of your arrival you will think of sending me news of yourself and quieten the anxiety in which I am going to be until the moment when I will have the certitude that you are safely arrived in port. If I were in the group, that would seem nothing to me; but when I think of the accident with the horse on your journey to the Great Chartreuse, I shudder. I am speaking to your good angel, given the impossibility of making myself understood to yourself, so that he will keep and stay with you and bring you back. The first thing to do on arriving at Entrevaux, is to buy cloth or, better still perhaps the material necessary to make yourself the kind of shawl which will protect you from the cold in the confessional. If the knitted waistcoat that you have is not warm enough, you must procure another immediately. Also buy some canvas footwear so as not to risk slipping on the ice. Remember your fall at Tallard which still irks me. In a word, take all precautions not to suffer from the piercing cold of those mountains[[70]](#footnote-70) to which we are not accustomed. Watch over our good Father Mye also lest he be in want of something. As for Dupuy, I think it is needless for me to recommend him to you, he is prudent enough to provide for his needs.

It is indispensable that you take something with cream every day to fatten your chest...

**To Father Suzanne at Entrevaux.[[71]](#footnote-71)**

121:VI in Oblate Writings

*Affectionate interest for Father Suzanne. Opinions of Bishop Arbaud and Father Thomas, S.J, regarding Suzanne’s way of preaching, etc.*

Suzanne

Marseilles,

November 29, 1823.

I hope, my very dear, my good one, that on arriving at Entrevaux you will have given me credit and will have recognized that I have neglected nothing to reach you with my news. Alas! I am so grieved to know you so far from me and not be able to relieve you in the hard work that you are doing, that I have no need of being moved to soothe my anxiety by the sole means that is in my power.

If you have not found a letter at Digne, it is because I had calculated that it would be necessary to write to you the same day that I addressed a letter to you at Gap; but I took steps so that you might not be in the situation of pining at Entrevaux where one of my letters must have arrived as soon as you did. As for you, you are above all praise and you give me each day the occasion to make acts of love for you, by which I mean that I say to you in my heart and often even with my lips all that I could tell you if were present. It is truly an enjoyment for me for, in thinking of you, my imagination rests on the object of my most tender affections, worthy in every way of my love because of his virtues and all the good and fine qualities. I am perhaps wrong in speaking in this manner but you give me daily so many proofs of your tender attachment for me, that you wrest from me after a fashion the avowal of all that has never been a secret for you. I speak from fullness. If your modesty may suffer thereby, tell yourself, if you wish, that my excessive affection makes me exaggerate to myself your good qualities and that this consideration prompts you to work efficaciously to acquire new claims, in the eyes of God especially, whose will it is to crown in us his own gifts.

The Bishop of Gap has written to my uncle; Father Thomas[[72]](#footnote-72) has written to me. The Bishop of Gap wrote to my uncle on another matter; it is in passing that he remarks that you are not doing badly but that the tone of your discourses is too monotonous. As for Father Thomas, he thanks me and acknowledges that you have responded kindly to all that has been asked of you; but he tells me nothing about the results of your obedience, he only says that having been forewarned that Father Mye and Father Touche would not be popular, being accustomed only to preach in Provencal, he had not made them preach; that they had the goodness to give catechetical instructions, which are much more useful to the ignorant than beautiful discourses. As for you, he relates to me the counsels he has given you concerning your manner of preaching. I am somewhat of his opinion; I am quite pleased that he has made these remarks to you, and desire that you profit from them; but I admit that I would have wished that after all you have done, they would give me more complete details and that they would tell me something more than simply: “They listen to you with pleasure...”

Buy as soon as possible what you need at Entrevaux, no matter if it is dearer there than here. Do not suffer from cold, and count a little more, in regard to the good that you must do, on the help of grace rather than on excessive efforts which you are making. Be more moderate then, you see that this is the counsel that everyone gives, and preach in a manner as not to be exhausted and breathless when you finish. This is important for you and for us...

**To Father Suzanne.[[73]](#footnote-73)**

122:VI in Oblate Writings

*Work of Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier at Marseilles.*

Suzanne

[Marseilles]

December 16, 1823.

The time for renewing jurisdictions overworks us unbelievably; we usually work until midnight with Father Tempier; it has happened to us to be kept at it separately until two o’clock in the morning. The budget of the Prefect, the business of the bishop’s house and of the seminary, the town councils that have to be attended, all these things come all at once and crush us.

1. PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, I, 73-74. Joseph Hippolyte Guibert was a postulant. He began his novitiate on January 25, 1823, and made his profession on November 4th of the same year. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Founder was on the mission of Tallard in the High Alps (January 5 to February 2, 1823). During this mission which he began when he was unwell and anxious about the nomination of his uncle, he wrote to Father Courtès on the 6th, 8th and 17th of January. REY (I, 295) quotes, between inverted commas, but in the third person, several lines of these letters. On January 6, the Founder complained of the indifference, of the inconceivable lack of concern of the people, but he hopes that the exercises of the mission will produce their normal fruits. He was “obliged to condemn himself to silence and to limit his work of preaching to the examination of conscience for a quarter of an hour, half aloud, and to the notices which are given in the evening after the Benediction.” However, in a new letter of January 8, he added “that he is better than at his departure from Aix and that this mission will cure him like the others, while the treatment at the house produced no good effect.” The news of the nomination of Fortuné was followed with no confirmation, so Father de Mazenod, still continued to leave the matter to Providence and “did not wish to be perfectly sure until the day of the official letter” (Letter of January 17 to Courtès). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. REY, I, 297. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Fortuné was named bishop of Marseilles on January 13, by ordinance of the King. Eugene and his uncle left for Paris on February 9th. While passing through Lyon on the 11th, Father de Mazenod wrote to Father Tempier. REY (I, 297) quotes two lines of this letter: “My uncle bears up on this journey, as in all things he undertakes, truly like a young man. He has slept perfectly these past two nights.” [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. February 15th. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. At Paris, the two travellers sought hospitality at the seminary of the Foreign Missions. They had much difficulty in finding rooms there as the house was full and the Bursar, that most “obstinate of mortals”, did not wish to receive visitors. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. YENVEUX,V, 160; VIII, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. REY, I, 300. This letter was probably sent to the Commune of Lauzet, Low Alps, where Fathers Tempier, Suzanne and Moreau preached a mission from February 9 to March 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Abbé Claude Maurel was named superior of the major seminary, re-established in December 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Abbé André Caire of Marseilles was professor at the College Louis-le-Grand at Paris. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. REY, I, 305. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The Father of J. H. Guibert continued to be opposed to the vocation of his son. The latter had to return to him in February. He finally obtained the consent of his father and returned to the novitiate at the beginning of the month of March. He made his profession on November 4, 1823, after nine months of novitiate. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. YENVEUX, V, 169, 205; VIII, 191-192. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, I, 77-78; REY, I, 305; YENVEUX, IV, 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Father de Mazenod had had, from his first interviews with Guibert, “the presentiment” of the value of this young man and of the grand responsibilities that he would have in the Church: “All that augurs well for the good there will be for us to do together in the fold of the Church”. Guibert became, when still young, superior of the major seminary of Ajaccio, then Bishop of Viviers, Archbishop of Tours, Archbishop of Paris and Cardinal. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 1 RAMBERT, I, 360-363; REY, I, 302; YENVEUX, IV, 209; V, 176; VIII, 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. I Cor 11, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Bishop Etienne Antoine de Boulogne, bishop of Troyes (1809-1825). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. John 13, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. YENVEUX, VI, 17; REY, I, 307-308. Jacques Antoine Jourdan, entered as a young priest into the Society and made his profession on February 9, 1823. He was suddenly stricken and died on April 20, 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Luke 10, 16: “He who heeds you, heeds me”. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. MS. Yenveux: Olives. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Is. 38, 14: “O Lord I am oppressed be thou my security!” [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. YENVEUX V, 149; VII, 41\*; VIII, 73; REY I, 303. The Founder addresses Courtès in this letter with the second person singular *tu* but in the text of Yenveux, VII, 41 \*, this has been changed to *vous.* That of VIII, 73, has no indication of to whom it is addressed but the letter was certainly addressed to Courtès who then was at Aix with Deblieu. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. YENVEUX, VII, 261. Father Tempier made the canonical visitation of the house at Marseilles, composed of Fathers Maunier, superior, Dupuy and Suzanne. During this time he furnished all the information which the two de Mazenods needed at Paris about the diocese of Marseilles. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Mission of 1820, preached together with the Missionaries of France. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. JEANCARD, 379-381; REY, I, 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. YENVEUX, V, 29, 68, 235; IX, 141, 215 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The sudden death of Father Jourdan, which happened April 20, 1823. He was 25 years of age. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. RAMBERT, I, 363-364; REY, I, 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. M. Ricaud, rector of the parish of St. Vincent de Paul. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. YENVEUX, IX, 66. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. The reference, it seems, is to Deblieu who was already thinking of leaving the Society. He did so in the month of October. In May or June, only the lay brother Claude Ignace Voitót left the house of Aix before making his profession. He had entered the novitiate on May 30, 1822. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. YENVEUX, VIII, 258. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. From the details at the end of this letter and because of the effect produced on the Founder by the announcement of this “apostasy” we believe that he refers to Father Deblieu who would leave in the month of October. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. John 6, 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Luke 9, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. RAMBERT, I, 365-367; REY, I, 300-301. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. The Founder had announced to Father Tempier on May 21st that Fortuné would name him Vicar General of Marseilles. Father Tempier replied on May 31st that he would obey but would first permit himself to present motives for refusing: his incapacity and the good of the Society of the Missionaries of Provence. This letter, which is in response to that of May 31st, is cited without date by Rey and Rambert but it was written at the beginning of the month of June. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Prince de Croy, Grand Almoner, proposed to the Founder the bishopric of Chálons-sur-Marne. Cf: J. PIELORZ, *Le Fondateur et la nomination de son oncle à l’évéché de Marseille* in *Etudes Oblates,* t. 17 (1958), p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. REY, I, 305-306. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Brother Guibert. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. The Father Richardot whom he consulted was provincial of the Jesuits (REY, I, 305). [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. YENVEUX, IX, 101; PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, I, 78-82; REY, I, 306. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. There were negotiations to open a house for missionaries at Digne *(Missions O.M.I.,* 1897, pp. 205-207) and to accept the care of the shrine of Notre Dame de Rochefort at Nimes (REY, I, 284). They were even thinking for a while of buying the isle of Lerins, then on sale at a low price, as a place for the novitiate (REY, I, 284; Coulin to Tempier, June 11, 1822 and letters of Father Dupuy, end of 1822, beginning of 1823). [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. I Peter 5, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. 1 REY, I, 309. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Fortuné de Mazenod was consecrated bishop on July 6th in the chapel of Lorette at Issy by Bishop de Latil of Chartres, Bishop Devie of Belley and Bishop de Frayssinous of Hermopolis *in partibus.* [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. REY, I, 309-310. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. REY, I, 314-315, footnote. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. M. Rodet and the Missionaries of France established at Marseilles had campaigned against the nomination of Bishop Fortuné de Mazenod. He, after having consulted M. l’abbé Jean Marie de la Mennais, Vicar General of the Grand Almoner, asked M. Rauzan to recall his missionaries. On the entry of the new Bishop to his diocese, Sunday, August 10th, the Missionaries of France were still there and some of their supporters engaged in public demonstrations against him. Their resentment was especially against Father de Mazenod whom they held responsible for the measures taken by Bishop Fortuné, even if in reality it was the personal decision of the latter to proceed thus. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, I, 82-83. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Brother Guibert had written: “It seems to me you have concluded or at least suspected that I had taken the resolution to leave the community. I must have explained myself badly. Pardon, I beg you, this slight inadvertence. I only wished to reveal to you my interior affliction and it was quite necessary at the same time to describe their causes. My whole intention was to receive from your wisdom some advice to guide me well in the important matter of my vocation. But, for the rest, I had taken no definitive decision and I declare that I will never take any without your advice. I have sought to know the will of God, ready to make all the sacrifices that it will demand of me...” *Ibid.,* p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. RAMBERT, I, 375-376. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Fathers Deblieu and Maunier, first companions of the Founder, left the Society in October, 1823. They accused Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier of having accepted the position of Vicars General of Marseilles and thus compromising the future of the Society and sacrificing it to the interests of a diocese and perhaps being motivated even by personal ambition (RAMBERT, I, 374). This, however, was only a pretext. They came from the diocese of Fréjus which, like Marseilles, had just been re-established. The new bishop, Bishop C. A. de Richery recalled priests originating in his territory and declared null any engagements taken in prejudice of a third party, by priests who had previously promised obedience to a bishop. Already little inclined to the exigencies of religious life and henceforth disengaged from their vows and attracted by promises of important functions, the two Fathers profited from the circumstances to return to Fréjus, Cf.: COSENTINO: *Un inconstant: Fr. Deblieu in Etudes Oblates,* t. 17 (1958), pp. 152-179. *Un formateur, le p. Maunier, ibid,* pp. 219-269. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. RAMBERT, I, 379-380. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. The Archbishop of Aix, like the Bishop of Fréjus, thought of withdrawing subjects of his diocese from the Mission (REY, I, 316). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Pierre Marie Joseph Coudrin (1768-1837). He had founded in 1793 the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Coudrin left for Rome in the summer of 1825 and obtained approbation of his Constitutions which he promulgated in 1826. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. REY, I, 318. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Rey writes: October. This letter is in reply to that of Father Courtès, probably written on the 22nd, immediately after the visit of two hours and a half which he made to Archbishop de Bausset**.** [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. RAMBERT, I, 380-381. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. RAMBERT, I, 376-377. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Matthew 26, 38; Mark 14, 34: “My soul is sorrowful even unto death”. Besides the fear which came from the threat to have members taken away by the dioceses of Aix and Fréjus, and the sorrow caused by the departure of Fathers Deblieu and Maunier, the Founder had several other defections to sadden him. In November, Father Moreau, superior of Notre Dame du Laus, entered the Trappists (Dupuy to the Founder, October 1823; REY, I, 317 says that he entered the Chartreuse; Simonin, in *Missions O.M.I,* 1897, pp. 202-203, 208, says the Franciscans or Capuchins). He changed his mind and returned however to Laus in the month of October. Brother Jeancard, Oblate since May 30, 1822, left the Mission also. Guibert himself, who gave so much promise and seemed decided to make his vows, wrote towards the middle of October a long letter in which he said: “I am therefore quite resolved not to proceed any further until the circumstances change...” (PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY, I, 86). He completely changed his mind and made his temporary vows on November 4th.

The Founder spent the first Friday of the month of November with the community of Aix before going on the 8th to see the Archbishop. After a day of prayer and fasting on bread and water, he gave a touching address to the community on the dangers which threatened the Society; then, after putting out the lamps, he inflicted on himself a bloody flagellation while his children wept. At the entrance to the refectory, he lay on the floor and all had to tread on him with their feet *(Mémoires du P. Martin,* REY, I, 319). This extraordinary scene produced on Brother Guibert a profound impression. “All his hesitations ceased for ever” writes PAGUELLE DE FOLLENAY (I, 89). It was likewise the end of the internal and external crisis of the Society, for the Archbishop of Aix (at his visit of November 8th) and the Bishop of Fréjus (Letters of November 12th and 25th) promised to leave at the Mission all the members who desired to persevere therein. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. RAMBERT wrote: “X”. He refers to Jeancard. REY writes (I, 320) that Brother Jeancard did not delay in expressing keen repentance but the Founder did not permit him to re-enter until several months afterwards. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Father de Mazenod probably alludes to Deblieu who, before leaving, made a visit to the Archbishop (REY, I, 317). [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. YENVEUX, IV, 220. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Rambert I, 383-386; Rey 1, 319. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. E. Maunier. S. Deblieu and F. Jeancard left the Congregation when Fathers de Mazenod and Tempier became Vicars General of Marseilles at the beginning of 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. JEANCARD, 381-382; REY, I, 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Entrevaux is situated on the border of the departments of the Lower Alps and the Maritime Alps. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. JEANCARD, 382-384; REY, **I,** 458. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Father Thomas was superior of the Jesuits who were preaching the mission of Gap with the Missionaries of Provence, in October-November, 1823. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. REY, I, 332. YENVEUX (II, 100) copies a couple of lines from another letter to Father Suzanne, written on December 6th: “I recommend to you not to dally with persons given to dissipation and vanity. One must take one’s precautions.” [↑](#footnote-ref-73)