

**Letters
of
Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon**

Volume One: 1805-1816

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Editor's Preface

Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon was a prolific correspondent. Most of what we know about her is garnered from her own letters. The actual number of letters she wrote was certainly in the thousands. Of them, only 737 have come down to us. Her letters were first collected sometime after 1850 by Mother Marie Joseph de Casteras, her cousin and third Superior General of the Institute. They are here presented for the first time in a published English version.

Two editions of her letters exist in French. One is a four-volume mimeographed version (1971-74) prepared by Joseph Verrier, SM. In the first two volumes, going from 1805 to the foundation of the Daughters of Mary in 1816, the letters are arranged chronologically. In the second two volumes, they are arranged according to recipients. The second edition of her letters in French dates from 1985 (volume one) and 1987 (volume two). In this printed edition, prepared by the Daughters of Mary and published in Rome, all the letters are in chronological order. A concordance of the numbering of these two editions may be found in *Adèle, A Biography of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon*, by Joseph Stefanelli, SM, pages 504 to 509; it is repeated in Appendix Four of this volume.

Given the spontaneous and unrehearsed nature of these writings, the letters serve admirably to give us insights into the character, personality, spiritual development, and human frailties of this saintly and dedicated woman. From the earliest letter, written when she was not yet sixteen years old, to the last, written less than six weeks before her death at the age of 38, there is evident a close and loving relationship with her God, with her family, and with her friends.

In his forward to the 1985-87 French edition, Verrier emphasized that “the same ardent zeal and thirst for souls which characterized St. Paul was to be found in this daughter of the Agen countryside, whose mother counted St. Louis among her ancestors.”

Verrier continues,

Toward her family she is always affectionate and respectful. With her superior, Father Chaminade, she is frank, considerate, and scrupulously obedient. With Saint Emilie de Rodat she gives free rein to the sentiments she habitually entertains: a high idea of the responsibility of a superior, a constant preoccupation with the sanctification and the health of her sisters, an overpowering urge to promote, by all possible means, the interests of God and the salvation of one's neighbor, and the happiness she experiences in the protection and in the service of the Immaculate Virgin, despite her own imperfections and limitations.

She is businesslike when dealing with temporal affairs. She displays a know-how, a competency, and a realism which she adapts to each particular case. When she addresses the superiors of the communities—some 235 times—she does so simply, naturally, and with no perceptible haughtiness; she is compassionate, stimulating, and a good counselor. Whether she writes to her sisters or to the novices, she avoids both sticky sentimentality and affectation. She patiently adapts to each person, totally forgetful of self, impelled only by the desire to open wide the paths leading to sanctity.

Finally, to her friends beyond the walls of the cloister, she speaks from the heart and finds the words needed to encourage, sustain, console, stimulate—in short, to promote their faith life.

Verrier also quotes the following comment by a theologian of the Sacred Congregation which studies the Causes for beatification and canonization. After examining these letters, he wrote,

The writings of the Servant of God seem to warrant a very favorable judgment as to her moral personality in the supernatural sense of the term. They show that this true Servant of the Lord, from early childhood and during the whole course of her life in this world, was fully conscious of the supernatural responsibility stemming from the Christian vocation and from the call to religion. She resolved to honor this vocation, both by a generous and

constant practice of the Christian virtues and by complete fidelity, without lapse or compromise, to her consecration, and to her total dedication to the service of god in the religious state.

* * *

The “summary Biography of Adèle” which precedes the letters in this English edition, as well as the “Summary Table of the Letters” at the end, both rely heavily on the French edition. The biography will help the reader situate to some extent the context of the letters. For a more detailed background, the reader is referred to *Adèle* by Joseph Stefanelli. Further information on many of the persons mentioned in Adèle’s letters may be found in *Companions of Adèle*, by the same author.

A very valuable tool, even for the reader who is not at home with French, is the *Index des lettres de Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon* published by the Daughters of Mary, Sucy-en-Brie, in 1987. There the reader will find indexes to the letters, covering biblical passages, biblical names, saints, proper names, geographical locations, and authors and books cited. Especially valuable is the extensive (book length) topical index. References in that French *Index* are by letter number and paragraph. For that reason, this English edition has retained the paragraphing of the French original even when it does not follow accepted English usage. The reader should remember, too, that Adèle had no formal schooling. She wrote as she spoke, with little concern for the niceties of French style. She herself says, in the very first letter to Agathe, “It is not so much the style that should preoccupy us, but rather our own improvement.”

The originals of these letters are conserved in the Archives of the Daughters of Mary in Rome. Most of them (384) were preserved by Agathe Diché (Sister Marie du Sacré Coeur). Some dates were added by later hands; some dates are subject to discussion.

Generally, each letter is headed by an *acte*, or spiritual thought serving as a motto for the week. The French word *acte* has been retained because it has this special meaning in both languages. A list of some of these *actes* may be found in Appendix Three. The initials J.M.J.T. with which Adèle begins all her letters reflect her devotion to St. Teresa of Avila, whom she greatly admired and sought to imitate.

Other appendices contain the Rule drawn up by M. Jean Baptiste Ducourneau for Adèle; some of her retreat resolutions; and the Rule of the Association, or Little Society. The originals of all these documents are also conserved in the Archives of the Daughters of Mary.

Editorial items added within the text of the letters are enclosed in []. Italics are used for other editorial comments, as well as for titles of books, special phrases, etc. Whatever was underlined in Adèle’s original text is underlined in this edition.

* * *

Translating early nineteenth-century letters poses a problem for a late twentieth-century translator: what to do about “non-inclusive” language. French, as in the English of that early period, uses the masculine noun where the sense obviously is more inclusive. Preachers of the day, addressing a congregation of only women, might well begin “*Mes frères*”; Adèle herself sometimes does just that when writing to her associates, all of whom are women. Such expressions have been rendered either as “brothers and sisters” or, in cases where the meaning is obvious, simply as “sisters.”

The difficulty becomes especially pronounced with reference to God. Here it is much more than a matter of language; it is a matter of how Adèle images her God. And, beyond question, her image of God is “masculine.” She sees God especially as “father”—just, demanding, deserving of obedience, very loving, caring, protective, considerate, and compassionate. She relates to that God very personally. God is her father, her friend, her confidant, her lover, her all. Moreover, there are many passages in which she passes imperceptibly from “God” to “Jesus Christ,” and it is not always clear to which of the two the masculine pronouns (especially the possessives and the reflexives) primarily refer.

The reader of her letters is certainly more interested in *her* “image of God” than in that of the

translator. In many passages, where it can be done without violating either her style or, more importantly, her thought, inclusive language has been used. In those passages where such an adaptation (it would not really be a translation) would seem to betray her thought or violate the sense of her expression, the masculine has been retained. Let the reader make any necessary adjustment!

A Summary Biography of Mother Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon

- 1789 June 10. Birth at Feugarolles, at the Château de Trenquelléon (Lot-et-Garonne) and baptism in the parish church.
- 1791 Her father, Baron Charles de Trenquelléon, a high-ranking officer in the French Royal Guards, leaves his family to join the exiled nobility seeking to restore the monarchy in France. The failure of the expedition forces him to take refuge in England.
- 1792 January 26. Birth of Adèle's brother, Charles Polycarpe.
- 1793-96 For the first time Adèle expresses her wish to become a Carmelite.
- 1797 September 27. Because her name is erroneously carried on the list of émigrés who returned to France without permission, Baroness de Trenquelléon must seek refuge in exile. The two children choose to accompany her to Spain.
- 1798 Spring. Under pressure from the French government, the Spanish authorities threaten to expel the French refugees. Mme de Trenquelléon and her children go to Bragança in Portugal.
- 1798 July. The Baron comes from London to join his family at Bragança.
- 1799 June 12. Birth of Adèle's sister, Désirée.
- 1800 September 8. Heading homeward, the family settles in San Sebastián, Spain.
- 1801 January 6. Adèle makes her first communion in the church of Santa Maria in San Sebastián. She is eleven and a half years old. Before the family leaves for France, Adèle again expresses the desire to become a Carmelite; but her mother points out that she is still too young.
- 1801 November 14. The family returns to France and to the château.
- 1802 January. To prepare herself for a Carmelite vocation, Adèle, with her mother's permission, persuades her brother's tutor, M. Ducourneau, to give her a "Rule of Life."
- 1803 February 6. Adèle, Jeanne Diché, and Jeanne's sister Agathe, receive the sacrament of Confirmation from the hands of Bishop Jacoupy of Agen. From that moment, a lifetime friendship is established between Adèle and Jeanne, who is four years older.
- 1804 August 5. At the suggestion of M. Ducourneau, Adèle and Jeanne Diché found the "Little Society," a prayer group whose primary purpose is preparation for death. It also stresses mutual aid by prayer, emulation in the exercise of the Christian virtues, and a commitment to recruit other young women for the Society.
- 1805 April 23. The marriage of Jeanne Diché to Doctor Belloc. Adèle fears momentarily for the future of the Little Society and for her friendship with Jeanne Diché.
- 1805 Adèle, who is sixteen years old and lives in seclusion in the country, launches an apostolate by correspondence for the benefit of the members of the Little Society. One of her friends who is privileged to receive a weekly letter is Agathe Diché.
- 1807 February. M. Ducourneau accompanies Adèle's brother to Paris where he is to continue his studies. Father Larribeau, the pastor of Lompian, becomes the director of the Little Society and also Adèle's spiritual guide.
- 1808 With Adèle as its driving force, the Little Society makes rapid progress. From the seven members it counted in 1805, it has grown to seventy, among whom are several priests of the diocese of Agen.
- 1808 Summer. While visiting her mother at Figeac, the Baroness meets M. Lafon of Bordeaux, a friend and collaborator of Father William Joseph Chaminade. She learns that the latter has founded in Bordeaux the "Marian Sodalities," divided into groups according to age and sex. To Mme de Trenquelléon, the Young Ladies' Sodality resembles very much the Little Society founded by her daughter. At Lafon's suggestion she proposes that Adèle affiliate herself to the Sodality of Bordeaux. Lafon, on his part, speaks of Adèle and of

- the Little Society to Father Chaminade. The latter sends to Trenquelléon a short description of his work with Sodalities.
- 1808 November 20. Adèle is twenty years old. She is sought in marriage by a young man of great merit and of high social standing. Despite the consent of her parents and the example of her friend, Jeanne Diché, she resolutely puts aside any thought of marriage.
- 1808 November-December. The beginning of the correspondence between Adèle and Chaminade. Following his directives, which are faithfully transmitted and discussed among the associates, the Little Society is gradually structured along the lines of the Bordeaux Sodality; above all, it takes on a Marian character.
- 1809 November 4. The Marian Sodalities are suppressed in France. Thanks to the discretion of both Adèle and Chaminade, the Little Society is untouched by the persecution.
- 1810 Adèle falls seriously ill and her life is in danger. She recovers, but a sense of the precariousness of life will never leave her. Though the prospect of Carmel still attracts her, she plunges ever more actively into the apostolate. She teaches catechism to the children of the poor, conducts a small class, visits the sick, helps the needy; this is what she calls “her missions.” Meanwhile she continues to carry on an extensive correspondence.
- 1812 Adèle’s father is afflicted with creeping paralysis. She becomes his nurse and constant companion, his “faithful Antigone,” as he loves to call her.
- 1810-13 The language Adèle uses in her letters to the Little Society is clear or obscure depending on the political climate. She hints at a *cher projet* she has in mind, that is, at the institution, with the participation of her friends, of a religious community whose primary objective would be the personal sanctification of its members through prayer and the observance of the three traditional vows. It would also devote itself to works of charity and bring a measure of relief to the moral and physical misery of the rural folk. Chaminade is informed of this *projet*; he invites Adèle to come to Bordeaux, where the more fervent members of both Sodality sections are moving toward some kind of religious life. The prevailing political climate and her father’s condition do not allow her to accept his invitation.
- 1813 July-August. Adèle and her friends in the Little Society are officially received into the Young Ladies’ Sodality by Father Laumont, Chaminade’s delegate.
- 1814 June-July. The abdication of Napoleon (April 11) and his exile to the isle of Elba brings about a return of the monarchy, accompanied by a climate of relative religious liberty. Adèle begins to flesh out her *cher projet*. She, Agathe, and other associates decide to live as religious in their own milieu and to adopt a religious name. Laumont agrees to provide them with a Rule, which would then be submitted to Chaminade for revision and approbation.
- 1814 August-October 8. Adèle keeps Chaminade informed of the progress of her *cher projet*. He accepts her plan in principle, but in a series of letters exposes his own project, the result of fourteen years of reflection since he returned to France as a “missionary apostolic.” He proposes that Adèle and her friends become “missionaries” and multiply and develop Marian Sodalities among the faithful.
- 1814 October 10-11. Chaminade’s project is discussed by the group and by Laumont and is adopted enthusiastically.
- 1814 Adèle sends Chaminade the first draft of the Rule prepared by Laumont; to these she adds her own reflections. Chaminade finds the draft inadequate and, at Laumont’s insistence, sets to work on his own version. Meanwhile, he also tempers the impatience of Adèle and of her companions, who would like to begin their novitiate on December 8. He proposes that meanwhile they take temporary vows of chastity. Adèle suggests to those of her friends who make the vow that they wear a simple silver ring as a sign of their total belonging to Christ.
- 1815 March 15. Chaminade postpones the organization of a canonical religious community. With the specific objective of the Institute in mind, he is convinced that it is preferable for the time being to develop and to give the widest extension and the most careful organization to the Marian Sodalities in the Diocese of Agen,

where Bishop Jacoupy has given his approval and encouragement.

- 1815 March, April, May. The delay is providential. When Napoleon returns to power (March 20), there is a revival of religious oppression. Chaminade is arrested, is kept under house arrest in central France, and is forced to interrupt all communication with Adèle.
- 1815 June 18. Baron de Trenquelléon dies after a lengthy and painful illness. Napoleon is defeated at Waterloo the same day.
- 1815 September-October. Freed from some of her family responsibilities, Adèle contacts Chaminade, who is now at liberty after the fall of Napoleon and the return of Louis XVIII. He resumes his correspondence with Adèle, and develops the specific objective of the future Institute: it will be missionary in spirit; it will seek to multiply Christians by developing Marian Sodalitys. Since the community will soon assemble, he approves the lease by Adèle of a part of a former convent in Agen known as "the Refuge."
- 1815 December 6. Chaminade informs Adèle that the Constitutions are ready; he plans to visit Agen at the end of January.
- 1815 December 28. Adèle proposes to the members of the Little Society a novena, to begin on January 1, asking the Lord to reveal to each member the state of life to which she is called.
- 1815 Early January. Adèle tells the aspirants to the religious life that Chaminade expects a personal letter from each, explaining why she feels attracted to the religious state and what difficulties or obstacles she might encounter.
- 1816 January 11. Answering some of Adèle's questions, Chaminade points out that the new Order will make of each religious a missionary under the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary.
- 1816 January 18. Adèle authorizes M. Diché to lease a part of the Refuge at Agen, as a home for the future religious.
- 1816 February 2. The lease is signed.
- 1816 April 17. Adèle enters into an agreement with her brother concerning her share of their father's legacy.
- 1816 May 24. Adèle bids farewell to her family.
- 1816 May 25. Adèle leaves the château of Trenquelléon with three of her friends to join two other future religious at the Refuge of Agen. Mlle de Lamourous, who was sent by Chaminade from Bordeaux to help launch the new foundation, arrives some hours later.
- 1816 June 8. Chaminade arrives with the text of the Constitutions. The candidates make a short retreat. However, Jacoupy does not allow them to take vows at its end, nor even to put on the religious habits they have prepared. Chaminade prolongs his stay until mid-July, explaining the Constitutions and initiating the candidates into the practice of the religious life. Before leaving for Bordeaux, he appoints Adèle superior of the convent; Bishop Jacoupy names Father Mouran, superior of the major seminary of Agen, confessor and ecclesiastical superior of the group.
- 1816 September 6. To overcome the bishop's hesitation over the cloister which must accompany perpetual vows, Chaminade proposes that the cloister be made the object of a special vow from which the superior could dispense in case of necessity.
- 1816 November 18. Chaminade authorizes the opening of free classes for little girls from poor families.
- 1816 December 25. Jacoupy allows the sisters to wear the habit on Christmas day. Mouran obtains an extension of this permission for the whole octave, and then for an unlimited time.
- 1817 July 25. After a preparation of fourteen months, the bishop allows the sisters to make their vows, but only privately. Chaminade receives their vows in the privacy of the confessional.
- 1819 January 18. Chaminade informs the Holy See of the new religious foundations (the Daughters of Mary and the Society of Mary) and solicits various spiritual favors.

- 1819 May 25. Rome responds favorably to his request.
- 1819 June 21. Beginning of the correspondence between Adèle and (Saint) Emilie de Rodat. This exchange will continue until the death of Mother de Trenquelléon.
- 1819 December 27. The purchase of a part of the former convent of the Augustinians at Agen, to which the community of the Refuge will be transferred.
- 1820 April 1. Emilie de Rodat invites Mother de Trenquelléon to Villefranche. Their correspondence has led them to consider seriously the possibility of merging their two foundations.
- 1820 April 5. The bishop is opposed to a meeting of the two foundresses at Villefranche. Fearful of losing Adèle from his diocese, he prefers that Emilie come to Agen.
- 1820 June 5. The purchase of a house at Tonneins (Lot-et-Garonne) in order to found a new community.
- 1820 End of August. Visit of Chaminade to Agen.
- 1820 September 6. The transfer of the Daughters of Mary from the Refuge to the former convent of the Augustinians.
- 1820 September 7. Chaminade and Mother de Trenquelléon lead a group of Sisters to Tonneins, for the foundation of the second community.
- 1821 October 7. Mother de Trenquelléon admits to the novitiate her cousin, Elisabeth de Casteras, who will eventually become the third Superior General.
- 1822 July 3. Both the Daughters of Mary and the Sisters of Villefranche still desire to unite. Mother de Trenquelléon invites Emilie de Rodat to come to Agen during Chaminade's stay there. She comes, accompanied by Father Marty, the ecclesiastical superior of the Sisters of Villefranche. At the end of their meeting, all agree in principle to a union. However, the Sisters of Villefranche, realizing that they may be faced with a possible separation from their own superior, decide against it.
- 1824 July 16. Mother de Trenquelléon and Chaminade lead a group of Sisters to Condom (Gers) to found the third community of the Institute. En route, they stay overnight at the château of Trenquelléon.
- 1824 July 27. The novitiate of Agen is transferred to Bordeaux. Accompanied by Chaminade, Mother de Trenquelléon leads the group of sisters and novices who are to form the fourth community.
- 1824 August 10. Mother de Trenquelléon signs the contract of purchase for the novitiate in Bordeaux and then returns to Agen.
- 1824 August 20. Jacoupy gives his written approbation to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.
- 1825 May 24. The Chamber of Deputies passes a law authorizing religious congregations of women.
- 1825 Mother de Trenquelléon is ill. Chaminade insists that she cease her apostolic activities and take some rest. The Foundress uses this time to intensify her correspondence with her Sisters, and especially with the superiors and the novices. She composes "short catechisms" for the formation of her novices, and also an account, which is no longer extant, of the origins of the Institute.
- 1826 The state of Mother de Trenquelléon's health worsens. A stomach ailment prevents her from regaining her strength. She continues to guide her daughters by her correspondence and reassures them as to her condition. She stresses fidelity to the Rule, respect of the cloister, and a constant increase in devotion to Mary and to Jesus in the Eucharist.
- 1826 June 20 to mid-August. Chaminade visits the convents of Agen, Condom, and Tonneins.
- 1826 During Chaminade's visit, a new foundation is decided, for Arbois (Jura).
- 1826 October 27. Mother de Trenquelléon goes to Bordeaux to prepare the Sisters who are to leave for Arbois to found the fifth community.
- 1826 October 29. The sisters leave for Arbois. Mother Marie Joseph de Casteras is appointed superior.

- 1826 November 18. The sisters arrive at Arbois.
- 1826 December 23. A letter reaches Mother de Trenquelléon with the news that Mother Marie Joseph has typhoid fever and has received the final Anointing. The Foundress asks all the communities to pray; Marie Joseph recovers.
- 1827 January 29. The health of Mother de Trenquelléon suffers a setback. Chaminade recommends her to the prayers of all the convents of the Daughters of Mary and of the Third Order Secular, asking that their Superior General be preserved and restored to health.
- 1827 February 12. Mother Saint Vincent de Labastide, Adèle's assistant, informs Emilie de Rodat of Mother de Trenquelléon's health and asks for prayers.
- 1827 February 16. Mother de Trenquelléon lists in legal form the equity of each sister with respect to the furnishings and buildings of the convent of the Augustinians.
- 1827 July 14. Mother de Trenquelléon convokes her Council; she wants to obtain the approbation of her Institute by the government.
- 1827 July 18. Chaminade leaves Agen after his visit to the convent.
- 1827 October 27. Mother de Trenquelléon makes her will.
- 1827 November 15. Mother de Trenquelléon writes to the Mayor of Agen, asking for official approval of the Convent of the Daughters of Mary by the municipal council, a necessary preliminary step toward recognition by the national government.
- 1827 November 22. Jacoupy approves the proposed Civil Statutes of the Institute.
- 1827 November 28. Mother de Trenquelléon writes her last [extant] letter. It is addressed to Mother Marie du Sacré Coeur, Agathe Diché, superior of the convent of Tonneins.
- 1828 January 7. A letter arrives from Father Larribeau to Mother Saint Vincent, recommending that Mother de Trenquelléon be prepared for death.
- 1828 January 10. Death of Mother Adèle de Trenquelléon.
- 1828 January 11. Funeral services in the chapel of the convent.
- 1828 January 12. Burial in the cemetery of the convent of the Daughters of Mary at Agen.

The Letters of Adèle de Batz de Trenquelléon

1 - 304

1. To Agathe Diché, Agen

The following is the oldest extant letter of the Foundress, and the first one addressed to Agathe Diché. Each of Adèle's letters to Agathe usually contained an enclosure for Dicherette. Unfortunately, these enclosures have not been preserved.

+ J.M.J.T.

February 2, 1805

God must be the principle
of all Christian friendship.

Mademoiselle,

² I find it difficult to express all the pleasure I derived from your letter, and from the hope I entertain that you will continue a correspondence which, I trust, will be all for the glory of God and the cementing of our friendship. You are my friend's sister; this is more than enough to arouse my deepest interest. To that, we have added a relationship which has inspired me with a more profound attachment. Besides, my dear associate, you know the nature of the correspondence between your sister and myself. If you are willing, ours will be of the same nature. We shall exchange our pious reflections. God, for our mutual edification, will inspire us with some that would otherwise not have occurred to us. You know, of course, that our letters must be shown to the other associates, as our Rule suggests. It is not so much the style that should preoccupy us, but rather our own improvement; we must state frankly what we think will be beneficial to our correspondent. Mlle Agathe, I suggest that at our very next holy Communion we have as our intention that God bless this new correspondence.

³ What we must constantly strive to instill into each other is the love of God. The day you receive my letter is the day when that love of the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit, descended upon us. We must cherish the memory of that happy day.¹ If we received the sacrament worthily, the Holy Spirit will set the torch of divine love blazing in our hearts. Let us try to rekindle it if we have unfortunately allowed it to be extinguished. Should one of our dear associates have the happiness of uniting herself to Jesus on that day, I ask for her prayers, I who probably will not have the same happiness.²

⁴ How I wish, Mlle Agathe, that through some fortuitous occasion we might meet; I could then give you proof of the friendly feelings which, in God, you inspire in me. Meanwhile, let us see each other in God, who is the unique principle and the only lasting bond of all Christian friendship. To love each other in God, for God, and because of God is to be sure of a lasting love. A friendship that has not this basis cannot normally endure. The merest trifle can cause a chill in the relationship. But if a love is rooted in God, come what may, the reasons for loving are always there. My hope and desire is that these will be the motives which inaugurate a friendship that will last until our death.

⁵ Dear Mademoiselle, I trust that God will bless our friendship and allow me to profit by your examples and your advice. As a token of the intimacy of our union, let us henceforth address each other as "friend." I expect this token of friendship from you; I trust that you will skip the "Mademoiselle" in your next letter. So, my dear friend, let us always use this sweet name. May our correspondence and our love for each other be for God alone, with no admixture of selfish interests or of merely human

¹Agathe had received the sacrament of Confirmation the same day as Adèle and Jeanne Diché, February 6, 1803. But it would seem that, on that occasions, Adèle did not particularly notice her.

²An allusion to the rigorist tendencies of Father Dousset, her confessor and pastor.

friendship.

⁶ On closing, my dear friend, please remember me to the whole Society, which I embrace most tenderly in the divine Heart of Jesus.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

2. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 6, 1805

O death! O moment
that will reunite us with our God!

² Your letters, my very dear friend, give me a great deal of satisfaction. I feel a strong friendship springing up between myself and all our associates, whom I long to meet one day. That is what I need to revive my courage.

³ My dear friend, how can we so easily commit failings, when we realize that we may be called, very soon perhaps, to render an exact and rigorous account?

⁴ Just picture to yourself for a moment a person about to gasp her last breath as she hovers between two eternities, with the choice depending on that last gasp. Imagine that she must give an account of her spiritually debt-ridden state. How she will regret not having made good use of her time when she was in health, not having amassed a treasury of good deeds, the only currency recognized in the other world, having sinned so easily, having for a momentary pleasure sacrificed an eternity of happiness in exchange for one of misery.

⁵ As we reflect on this while we are in health, let us try, my dear friend, to forestall the despair we would experience at that moment. On the contrary, may our last moments be filled with consolation. Consider the true Christian at the hour of death. Far from terrifying her, the prospect fills her soul with consolation. Imagine her receiving the holy Viaticum. This God, whom she has ardently desired, is entering her room, and complete serenity is mirrored on her face. She listens with attention to the exhortation of the priest and with fervor receives her God for the last time in this life. This celestial Viaticum is received with faith, and it will sustain her during the rough passage from time to eternity. She is also given the final anointing. What is her joy at the thought that those faults which frail nature allowed her to commit through her senses are now purified. As her soul is recommended to God, she listens with confidence to the words of the priest: “Go forth, Christian soul, in the name of the Father who created you, in the name of the Son who redeemed you, and in the name of the Holy Spirit who sanctified you.” Death for her is the moment when she will be reunited to her God forever. She listens to the exhortations of the minister of Jesus Christ, and these all stress confidence in the divine goodness and in the precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, equipped with all the helps of the Church, this faithful soul falls peacefully asleep in the Lord.

⁶ Only a short while ago, those of us here were privileged to witness the deaths of two saintly persons. I can assure you that my aunt’s death was much more consoling than terrifying.³ I can still see the heavenly air she had when she was given the holy Viaticum, the look which spread over her features, the look of one who is famished for this delicious food being offered to her, her eagerness to receive the final ministrations of the Church—and I cannot help exclaiming, “Ah! What blessedness to die after having lived a holy life!” Let us live in this fashion, my dear friend, and we will come to the same end. For as we have lived, normally, so shall we die. Can a person who has led an evil life really expect to receive from God the miracle of conversion at the hour of death?

⁷ Let us never cease asking God to protect us at that solemn moment. Let us prepare ourselves by a

³Catherine Anne de Trenquelléon, oldest of the Baron’s four sisters.

holy life to become worthy of the grace of perseverance which the mercy of God will grant us.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend. It is in God that I embrace you, and that I love you and the Society with all my heart.

Adèle de Batz

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3. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 27, 1805

Herbs and plants bless the Lord!

² I am always happy, my dear friend, to receive your letters. Believe me when I say that they give me great pleasure. Dear friend, continue to be faithful to this practice.

³ We are in a season when everything should help us raise our hearts to God and provide us with topics for reflection. First: the plants, the trees, everything is reborn, and should we alone remain unchanged! Let us be reborn in Jesus Christ. Easter is here! Let us be worthy of rising again with him, to start a new life.

⁴ Secondly: should nature not draw our attention to the wisdom of the Creator? Look at the smallest blade of grass. Is there a human being skillful enough to make its like? Is there anyone else endowed with the power and authority to cause a grain of seed to multiply, as God does? Everything in nature sings of the grandeur of God. Would only we, by our failings, give occasion for the godless to blaspheme God's holy name?

⁵ My dear friend, let us prove by our behavior that the God we serve merits to be served. Our piety should be exteriorly attractive, so as to encourage others to love him. Let us win souls for Jesus Christ. That is one of the objectives of the Society. What an added joy for us in heaven to see the souls we have helped save! What powerful intercessors, should they precede us there! Indeed, my dear friend, were the glory of God not incentive enough to win souls, our own self-interest should spur us on. However, may the glory of the divine Spouse always be our motivating force.

⁶ The Kingdom of God is not given to mercenaries. Indeed, as soon as the mercenary sees the wolf, that is, temptation, the coward cannot resist and absconds.

⁷ My good friend, let us love God with all our hearts, with all our strength, and with all our mind. Then we shall have God's interests at heart. For you see, when we truly love someone, that person's interests sometimes take precedence over ours. We are more touched by their misfortune than by our own. This will be true with respect to God, if our love is true; everything touching God's glory will be dear to us. Alas! Do we not have good reason to fear that we do not love God, since we show such indifference and so little concern for his glory? We should weep at seeing him so little known, so outraged.

⁸ I suggest that we say an *Our Father* to St. Joseph and a *Hail Mary* to the Blessed Virgin for two Protestants who are very ill, and the same prayers for two priests. Unfortunately these latter are giving scandal in the localities where they reside, although they are not functioning as priests.

⁹ My dear friend, when we see so many who are heading for perdition we should thank God for the grace given us to be withdrawn from the corruption of the world. Let us remember that God will be much more strict with us if we do not profit by this grace. Much will be asked of those to whom much has been given.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear and beloved friend. Love me, for I love you very much even though I do not yet have the pleasure of knowing you very well. Please kiss Dicherette⁴ for me. May the Society, which I greet, join me every day in the desert in an act of adoration until the end of Lent.

⁴Agathe's older sister, Jeanne, nicknamed "Dicherette," since she was the first of the five Diché girls.

Adèle de Batz

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4. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 10, 1805

Oh, what a prodigy of love!
Act of desire.

² I would be remiss indeed, my dear friend, if I allowed this week to pass without speaking to you about the marvels and the goodness of our Lord. This God of goodness, who died for us, now gives us the grace to celebrate every year those holy days when he gave us such proofs of his love. My good friend, may we enkindle this divine flame in our own hearts, and may we be consumed in its sacred blaze.

³ Tomorrow I shall have the happiness of dipping into the very source of this divine fire and of partaking of the divine Lamb, of uniting myself to the first communicants of the Church who that very day received his divine Person from the hand of Jesus Christ himself. May we not spend that day, nor that week, without thanking him for this, his greatest gift. This divine Savior was about to leave us for heaven, but he did not want to abandon his dear children to their weakness; so he stayed with us in the sacrament of his love. After such a favor, can there still be people who do not find their happiness in frequently receiving the Author of life? Ah! What delights! Nevertheless, there are indeed some who find a burden therein, rather than their joy and consolation. Yes, we must admit it in all simplicity; such persons have no love for God. Can we love him, and not desire to be united with him? During these holy days, let us deplore our indifference toward this great sacrament.

⁴ The law of Moses prescribed that the partakers of the paschal lamb be on their feet, shod and ready to set out. In like manner, when receiving Jesus Christ, of whom the paschal lamb was but a figure, we must be completely detached from creatures and worldly things and ready to leave for the great voyage of eternity whenever God calls us. The lamb was also eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. We, too, must eat it with the unleavened bread of sincerity and charity, so that we ourselves become, in some way, a new dough. We must eat it, too, with bitter herbs, that is, with the austerity and bitterness of penance.

⁵ Please excuse these reflections, my dear friend. The Society allows and even encourages us to make them. I dare hope that you will do likewise for my benefit, and that our friendship, bound by the ties of love, will be eternal.

Adèle de Batz

⁶ My greetings to our dear Society. Let us rendezvous on Easter Sunday, with Magdalene, in the garden near the tomb of Jesus.

⁷ I am not writing to Dicherette by this messenger; I hope to do so with the next.

⁸ Please ask Dicherette to check with Monbel whether the book Mama ordered from Paris has arrived, or will arrive soon; if not, she will have Papa bring it.

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5. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 18, 1805

O will of my God,
I adore you and love you!

² My dear friend, I find it difficult to express the delight your letters inspire. How I would love to meet you in person! Let us hope that the God of goodness will grant us this satisfaction, should he find it profitable for our salvation. Let us yield to his will, for he is both our Father and our Master. May this attribute of father reanimate the confidence which the mere title of “master” might hide from us.

Adorable Father, will you not receive your children when they hasten, like the prodigal son, to cast themselves into the arms of the most merciful and most tender of fathers? And so, we return to you, O infinitely lovable Father, with all the confidence which your infinite goodness inspires.

³ My dear friend, God’s mercy is boundless. Ah! How it should induce us to love him in return. However serious the crime we may have committed, God forgives us if we but turn back to him. But let us not take advantage of that divine kindness. God could become annoyed with us and deliver us over to justice. Let us avoid the least sin more than any other evil, however great it might be. The least sin is always an infinite evil, since it required nothing less than the death of a God to free us from it. Human atonement alone could not suffice. How profoundly we should detest sin!

⁴ Just think, it is our sins that have been the cause of the deplorable and cruel agony of our Savior, of his betrayal, his whipping, his crowning with thorns, the insults he endured, his crucifixion, his death; should we not die of sorrow? Each drop of his blood, each blow of the scourge, each thorn pressed into his adorable head was one of our sins, one of those sins we commit so lightly almost just for the fun of committing them.

⁵ I suggest that, when we are on the verge of giving way to our evil tendencies, we think that we are about to renew all the sufferings of the Savior, pierce his head with another thorn, deliver him another blow with the scourge, mock him again. If only we were able in this fashion to avoid some sins and to prove to Jesus Christ our love and our gratitude for all that he was willing to suffer for us!

⁶ In honor of the silence he kept before the tribunals he faced, I suggest that we refrain from saying something we would very much like to communicate at a certain time. This could also be in reparation for our uncharitable or useless words, or for those spoken at any time in church.

⁹ I also suggest that we say a *Hail Mary* so that those who followed the jubilee mission might receive Communion at Easter, and also for those who will not have that privilege.

¹⁰ There are some in our parish who took part in the jubilee mission⁵ but, finding Easter so close, will not again approach the holy Table. My loving friend, let us pity these unhappy people and thank the Lord for having enlightened us. Alas! Had we not been better instructed than they, we would perhaps be worse than they are. We must look down on no one, but rather humble ourselves. Please enter into the challenge that Dicherette and I have given each other.

¹¹ Farewell, my dear, my very dear friend. We must love each other in God, for God, and according to God’s will; then we shall love each other as tenderly as I do you.

Adèle de Batz

¹² My greetings to the Society.

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6. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 24, 1805

Oh, how pleased I am with the correspondence from the Society, and how I love to read the sentiments of the associates toward God and toward myself. God grant that I may have only the divine glory in view. However, I am still full of human feelings; I naturally experience great joy when I receive letters from some of my dear friends. I most willingly call all our associates “friends.”

⁵A jubilee mission, proclaimed for all France by the pope, was preached at Feugarolles during the first months of 1805.

² I fear that our very dear Thérèse and Lucille⁶ may be growing negligent, for it is a long time since they have suggested any *actes*. It is really no great bother for them to tell you or your sister, “I suggest the following aspirations,” and then you or she could send them to me. However, they must not think that I am upset with them. No, but since I love them as true friends, I should certainly like to hear from them. Besides, their salvation and their spiritual progress interest me profoundly.

³ Ah! Dear friend, should one of our group ever show signs of becoming lax, we must stop her on that path and shout, “Hey, where are you off to, you unhappy creature? By fleeing from God, you are fleeing from happiness!” But I hope that we shall never have that misfortune. What I just said about your sisters may be taken as banter and nothing serious. They must not think that I have the least suspicion that they are lax. Alas! I, who am so lax, would I be so presumptuous as to tax others with that defect?

⁴ Let us all, whoever we are, take care not to fall into a condition of laxity; we would be very guilty after all the graces we have received from the goodness of our God. In us, the least infidelity is a crime. However, we must always place our trust in God. True, of ourselves we can do nothing; but with God’s help we can do anything. We must have hope, therefore. Our most serious failing would be to despair; that would be an outrage to the infinite goodness of God, a perfection of which he is most jealous.

⁵ I am truly vexed, my dear and tender friend, that I cannot write more at length. I must still write to Mlle de Saint-Amans and to Mme Belloc and cannot spend more time with you. Don’t imagine that it is not without regret that I must leave you in haste; exchanging with a friend is so wonderful. But I hope to make it up to you next time. Meanwhile, be assured of the tender friendship of your associate,

Adèle de Batz

⁶ I lovingly embrace the Society. Next Sunday, let us rendezvous in spirit in the Sacred Heart.

⁷ Pray to God for me, for I have need of your prayers. Remember, dear friend, when we were first united in spiritual communion at Mass, we had no inkling that we would be corresponding like this.

⁸ My Aunt Saint-Julien⁷ wrote me, asking that your sister procure her six pounds of cotton to quilt a bedspread, but I turn to you because your dear sister must be very busy.⁸ Please do me this favor or have someone else take care of the matter. Please excuse the bother, dear friend; I would hope to render you some similar service.

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7. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 30, 1805

Come, Lord, delay no longer!
Act of desire.

² I had planned to write to you this Saturday as usual, my dear friend. My letter to your sister has already left, and I have something urgent to communicate. Someone is going to the Port⁹ this afternoon, and I am taking advantage of that to beg you on the part of my mother to repeat the novena which I had asked of Dicherette. You might start on Thursday. The intention is for Mother’s sister, who is in danger of death. She would leave three young daughters and a very confused financial situation; it is important

⁶Thérèse and Lucille were sisters of Agathe and Jeanne Diché. Every associate had the right to propose a weekly *acte*.

⁷Mme de Saint-Julien was Marie Françoise Elisabeth, Baron de Trenquelléon’s third sister. After having been expelled from the monastery of Prouillan by the Revolution, she and two of her sisters conducted a boarding school for girls at Condom.

⁸ Jeanne’s wedding was less than a week away.

⁹ Port-Sainte-Marie, a little town on the right bank of the Garonne, some 15 miles downstream from Agen and about 5 miles northeast of Feugarolles. The port served the boats that navigated the Garonne; it was the closest crossing of the Garonne between Feugarolles and Agen.

that she be spared. I trust the Society will willingly join this novena.

³ Let us ask the Lord to be with us constantly as we pray to him. Our constant aspiration must be to possess this lovable Savior. Ah! Let us tell him from the bottom of our hearts, “Come Lord, delay no longer. My weakness is so great that without you I feel that I am falling. Come, Lord; a prolonged absence would be my downfall. Do not delay any longer in satisfying my desire; you are my heart’s only desire, or at least the only one it would wish to have.”

⁴ How great is our guilt, my dear friend, when we are indifferent toward holy Communion, toward the Bread of Angels. To think that the angels take their delight in it, even though they do not receive it with the familiarity that is ours; and yet, we would dare approach it with distaste! How often is that not our condition. Ah! Let us tremble; let us shake off our lethargy, recalling this word from the lips of him who is truth itself: “He who does not eat my flesh and drink my blood will not have eternal life in him.”

⁵ Do we need threats to induce us to receive our God? Should not the simple permission to receive him have us panting after him? Alas! Even after the expressed order and threats of Jesus Christ and his Church to those who abstain, we still see the holy Table deserted; what would be the situation if it had been left to our private devotion? What an outrage to Jesus Christ is this indifference in his regard, to see his Table abandoned while that of the devil is crowded with guests! Yet he invites us in such tender terms. “Come to me,” says this Savior, “all you who are tired and burdened, and I shall refresh you. The bread I shall give you is my flesh, and the drink you shall have is my blood.”

⁶ Great Lord! What an honor for weak creatures to feed on God! Carried on the wings of holy love, let us hasten to this delicious feast. To be deprived of it should be our greatest sorrow and our keenest penance. But, on the contrary, when we are sometimes deprived of it, we hardly feel anything; this is true of me, at least.

⁷ The wedding of our dear friend¹⁰ must have attracted a crowd, but I know that my dear Agathe, even in the midst of the world, will still have thought of him who is its Master. Yes, for a soul that loves God and wishes to be saved, social gatherings—when these are not merely for personal enjoyment—need not distract her from the attention she owes her God.

⁸ Embrace the Society for me, and in particular the new bride.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend, and rest assured that my feelings toward you are of the warmest.
Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I shall not write to you this Saturday. You may answer me on Sunday as usual. We shall then get back into our routine: you write on Sunday and I on Saturday.

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8. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 8, 1805

The Reign of God consists of the peace and joy
which is given by the Holy Spirit.

² My dear friend, if we want the Kingdom of God to be within us, we must keep our souls in peace. May a holy joy always possess us. Sadness is the sign of a troubled conscience. Let us serve the Lord in serenity. When he said in his Gospel, “I have not come to bring peace on earth but war,” he meant that we must never declare an armistice with our passions but rather wage continual war against them. But he himself calls himself the God of peace; I dare you to find anything to the contrary in the Gospels.

¹⁰The marriage of Jeanne to Aimé Barthélémy Belloc was solemnized during Easter week.

³ The prophet Elijah did not detect the presence of the Lord in the strong wind, but rather in the quiet zephyr. To allow oneself to lose peace, to become troubled, and to lose one's head is a temptation of the devil. If we are in this distraught state, the evil one can more easily make us yield to temptation than when we are at peace and more able to discern deceptive stratagems. Let us keep peace of heart as one of the greatest treasures. Whatever happens, let us resolve to keep that peace.

⁴ In keeping with the Apostle's advice, let us rejoice. Our inner peace must be reflected in our faces; however troubled our soul may be—it is unthinkable that we should never experience this—our exterior appearance must never change. Always an unruffled, unperturbed air; no hustle and bustle.

⁵ Let modesty characterize our behavior. May our eyes not rest on unseemly objects; let the eyes of our heart turn constantly toward the heavenly bridegroom. Let us long for the happiness of visiting him in the sacrament of his love. Let us love him, love him; for by loving him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength, our heart will be so attached to its God that it will despise any disorderly attachment to creatures.

⁶ We are still at a tender age, my dear friend, and many struggles still await us in life. We must be armed with holy courage. Let us pray for each other, that God may help us come out victorious from all the trials that will confront us.

⁷ My dear friend, I regret telling your dear sister that I would be in Condom for the octave. She may have planned on coming here at about that time and may have been led to postpone her visit. I beg her not to consider whether or not I shall go, but to come here as soon as possible. Now that she is married, so many factors could delay and even postpone the trip indefinitely. I am very sorry for having broached the subject. She must know that her visit involves no sacrifice for me, as I shall have the pleasure of her company. I beg her to tell me the approximate date at which she might give me that satisfaction.

⁸ Embrace her for me, my dear friend, and all the other associates. Let us all rendezvous Sunday, at our awakening, in the divine Heart of Jesus, there to take the resolutions needed to spend the week well. Such a method will serve us well.

⁹ Goodbye, most dear friend; love me always as I love you, and then I will know that I am loved.
Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I am enclosing this letter in a rough draft of one that I had written for our associates of Villeneuve-de-Marsan, which you can return to me. I am doing this so no one can tell that [or, see what] I am writing to you.

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9. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Just who is being calumniated? Perhaps Father Menet, Agathe's spiritual guide?

+ J.M.J.T.

May 29, 1805

God alone is the consolation of the afflicted soul.

² I see that you are depressed, my very dear friend, and my heart is upset. I see that you are troubled by the rumors about the person you mentioned. What can I say to you? As a friend, I can try to give you the consolations of friendship; but as a Christian friend, I am going to give you the solid, the true consolations which religion offers in such a case.

³ You are distressed because the innocent is accused, and the calumny is believed. My dear friend, this has always been the case and will continue to be so. Yes, vice will always prosper and virtue will be oppressed. Our divine Master himself told his apostles and, through them, all his faithful, "You will weep and the world will rejoice." He immediately adds, "But your sorrow will be changed into joy." Yes, it is

in heaven that we shall see the value of humiliations, of sufferings, etc.

⁴ The more precious the one you refer to is in the sight of God, the more God wants to purify this person. Just as gold is tried in the furnace, so does God purify in this world so as to reward in the next.

⁵ It is a great proof of virtue to be much calumniated and to bear everything with patience. No, only the innocent can be tranquil in the midst of the war that is waged against them on all fronts. Besides, God often allows innocence to shine forth after a long period of oppression. All Christians should consider themselves blessed to walk in the footsteps of their divine Master. Who, more than Jesus Christ, was humiliated, slandered, held up to ridicule?

⁶ My dear friend, if we seriously contemplated this divine model we would not so readily be troubled by the vain discourses of others. Besides, whatever they may say against us makes us neither better nor worse. When we hear our neighbor's reputation being ripped to shreds, let us keep a cheerless silence or withdraw. We must first pray to the Lord not to allow a lie to triumph over the truth, and then submit blindly to Divine Providence.

⁷ When people for whom we care are being maligned, let us unite the anguish we experience to the sufferings of the Blessed Virgin when she witnessed her adorable Son being mocked and insulted. We shall then acquire merit before God; this will help expiate our sins and a perhaps too emotional attachment we may have had to those persons.

⁸ My love and friendship for you, my dear friend, have inspired me with some ideas to bring to your soul the consolation that you need. For I believe you react the way I do. I know that this type of cross grieves me very much, and I am frequently its victim. I shall join my weak prayers to yours for this person, who interests me because of you.

⁹ Farewell, my dear, my very dear friend; be assured of my loving friendship.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I embrace all the associates and ask that they rendezvous with me on Sunday, the holy day of Pentecost, at nine o'clock in the morning in the Cenacle, where the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles. We shall try to draw the Spirit to us through the vehemence of our desires, borne up to God on the wings of divine love.

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10. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 4, 1805

Spirit of light,
shed light in my darkness!

² The divine Spirit, who descended upon the apostles and who will descend upon us if our hearts are rightly disposed, is a Spirit of light. We must beg this light to shine upon our path, our undertakings, and our actions. We need it all the more because we are so young. We need it to enlighten us as to the state to which we are called. For that state, the Spirit has prepared special graces which would not be present in some other state not indicated for us.¹¹

³ Let us leave everything up to a Spirit who knows better than we what is for our good. We must let ourselves be led by such an able guide and submit to the Spirit all our desires and plans. If we have a certain calling in mind, let us not think of it or speak about it, so that no human and natural motivation may give us a spurious penchant for that state.

⁴ When we are a little older, then we can examine our tastes, our inclinations, and the motives which could make us choose one vocation rather than another. But we will have to consult the Holy

¹¹ Adèle was about to celebrate her sixteenth birthday.

Spirit and the spiritual guide who has charge of our soul's progress; through him, God will make known his will.

⁵ Meanwhile, let us be satisfied with imploring the counsel of the Holy Spirit. Until God has placed us definitively in a given state, or we have definitively chosen the one in which we are presently engaged, I propose that we say daily the following prayer: "Come, divine Spirit, shower your divine light upon us and inflame our hearts with your holy love." Given our present circumstances, we shall probably continue saying this prayer for several years. So what? Let us be faithful to the practice and say the prayer with fervor. God, infinite goodness, will grant us the favor if we ask in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, for Jesus himself said, "Everything that you ask the Father in my name will be granted to you." That is why we must conclude our prayer with "through our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."

⁶ I recommend that the other associates say this prayer with the exception of Mme Belloc, who has already embraced the state in which, it must be hoped, God wishes her and her husband to work out their salvation.

⁷ On the day this letter leaves here I hope to receive one of yours and one from your dear sister. I am worried about her, for I have received nothing from her in the last two deliveries. If she should take ill, I wish you would tell me about it immediately. I expect this gesture because of our friendship. My letter may reach you through M. Ducourneau and Charles. Then you will receive it on Thursday. On the other hand, it will reach you only on Saturday should they decide not to go to the fair.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend; think now and then of me, who think of you so often.
Adèle de Batz

⁹ Friendly greetings to the members of the Society, whom I embrace in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I ask them to rendezvous with me every day during the Octave of the Blessed Sacrament during Benediction and to make an act of reparation for the outrages the Savior receives in the divine Eucharist.

¹⁰ I had just finished this letter when Dicherette's arrived; I am now reassured concerning her. But I am grieved because of the bad news concerning Father Menet. I share your grief and that of dear Thérèse. I beg you to be patient and submissive to the orders of the Lord; he knows better than we what is needed.

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11. To Agathe Diché, Agen

M. Ducourneau and Charles did bring Adèle's letter. They returned enchanted with their reception by the Diché family. They spoke very highly of Adèle Diché, Agathe's youngest sister.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 8, 1805

Who will separate us
from the love of Jesus Christ?

² My dear friend, can we with good grace say, "What could separate us from the love of Jesus Christ," we who do separate ourselves from him for trifles? We who so often have preferred creatures to the Creator? Alas! Have we not more reason to say, "What will attach us to Jesus Christ?" since all that he willed to suffer for us, plus the infinite graces he has given and still gives us, fails to make us commit ourselves sincerely and irrevocably to him.

³ Can we say, "What could separate us from the love of Jesus Christ?" when we see that at the first slight difficulty we lose courage and abandon the struggle? And yet what more charms can our lovable Savior display to merit our love? How blind we are! All these years, has the love of Jesus Christ not been vying against our heart's yearning for creatures? Are the bonds linking us to them so difficult to break?

Are the knots so solidly tied? How few are they who can face with equanimity trials, sorrows, sickness, and death!

⁴ My dear friend, let us unite ourselves ever more to our Lord Jesus. Let us love him, and may nothing in this world ever be able to separate us from this love.

⁵ Pray for me, my dear friend, and pray also for a person who is very dear to me and who is in need of prayers at the moment.

⁶ I shall have someone here pass this letter on to you, for I think I shall be in Condom when you receive it. Your answer will be forwarded to me.

⁷ You have seen M. Ducourneau, for I am told that he was seated next to you at table. How I wish I had been in his place! I hope someday to have that pleasure.

⁸ I am sorry to have to cut this letter short, my dear friend; I beg you to count me as your friend for life.

Adèle de Batz

⁹ Give my greetings to our well beloved associates. A big hug for your little sister Adèle, who is very charming, they tell me. May she one day become a worthy member of the Society.

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12. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle has just spent considerable time at Condom. She expects Jeanne to join her at Trenquelléon any day now.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 27, 1805

I am writing to you and addressing this letter to you, my dear friend, for I expect your sister any day now. But since I have received no word from you, I fear that her trip might have been postponed. In spite of the disappointment which would be mine, I know that I would not have profited by the time spent together had I not offered to the Lord these days of waiting.

² In spite of my joy at her visit, I would be distressed if she were exposed to an accident; for that I could never forgive myself. Let her not react as would a child at this delay, but offer the Lord a sacrifice which will be more painful for me than for her. Besides, I am warning her that, if there is danger, she cannot expose herself to it without offending God. I think she realizes that I am speaking as a Christian friend, for if I gave way to my natural feelings I would use a totally different language.

³ Let me give you the particulars to be observed on the Feast of St. Peter:

⁴ The morning meditation will be on St. Peter's denial, the result of his presumption, and on the penance he then imposed on himself. The evening meditation will be on the miraculous conversion of St. Paul and on the efficacy of grace.

⁵ The *acte* for next week is "O my God, come to my aid; Lord, hasten to help me."

⁶ Mlle de Saint-Amans suggested these aspirations for this week; but we shall use them next week because we already have the *acte* for this week.

⁷ On the feastday itself we shall also make an act of contrition and try to weep for our sins, at least interiorly, in imitation of St. Peter. During the day, to imitate St. Paul and for the triple denial of Christ by St. Peter, we shall say three times, "Lord, what do you want me to do?"

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend, and believe me your good friend for life. I am truly sorry that I cannot write more at length. I embrace the Society.

⁹ Please send or transmit the letter to Mlle de Saint-Amans.

Adèle de Batz

I received the letter from your dear sister. I am resigned to the divine will.

+ + +

13. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Mme Belloc is at Trenquelléon.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 5, 1805

O my God,
I am sorry for having loved you too late!

² I am writing to you with special joy, my dear friend, because I am writing to you in the presence of my good friend. To appreciate my mood, think of yours when she is with you. Pray that I may benefit from this visit to advance in virtue and to increase in love for the God who gives me this satisfaction.

³ Alas! Too late have we loved this infinitely good and lovable Being. Dare we even say that we love God now? How weak our love still is! We should be all on fire for this divine Object, but we are instead only icy cold. What a contrast when we compare ourselves to so many saints who have loved God so ardently! Yet, this is the same God, nor has he blessed us with less grace.

⁴ Have there not been times in our lives when we loved God more than we do now? Wonderful days, happy days, where are you now? Who could have lessened my love for someone who crowds each new day with new blessings, added to those with which I am already overwhelmed? Ah! How ungrateful we are!

⁵ Pray for me, my dear friend, especially tomorrow, Saturday, when I intend to kneel at the feet of the minister of reconciliation.

⁶ I was overjoyed on hearing yesterday that you had made your decision, and that you had already placed yourself in the hands of Father Serres. I fully sympathize with the sorrow you felt on leaving Father Menet. However, the pain accompanying a change of spiritual guide should not keep us too long from approaching the holy Table. What is more capable of sustaining us in this mortal life, of supporting its inevitable sorrows, than this celestial food, this bread which sustains the strong? Let us never willfully neglect it, nor make ourselves unworthy of it. We shall answer before the judgment of God for all the Communions missed through our own fault. The very idea should make persons like me shudder, for I have so much to reproach myself for in this regard.

⁷ I am the weakest in the Society, and yet I am the one most liberal with advice; is that not ridiculous? Not necessarily. God sometimes makes use of the feeblest instrument to perform his greatest works. However, I beseech you to admonish me in return. I am asking the other associates to do the same. If they have something helpful to say, let them tell you; you can then pass it on to me. If only they knew how pleased I would be! I know that in the goodness of their heart they would have some useful hints to give me through you.

⁸ Already they are proposing some *actes*. I like the ones suggested by Mlle Lucille. I think this practice of our Society is most pleasing to God, next to the good deeds we perform in common. A holy rivalry should exist among us to surpass one another in the love of Jesus Christ. She who loves him most will be the most pleasing to this divine Savior. What an alluring prospect!

⁹ Farewell, my dear and good friend. Believe me your friend for life. Have you any news of Mlle Pérot? She interests me because she is your friend and, more so, because she loves God.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I embrace the Society tenderly and greet the rest of your family. Did you receive the letter that was destined for Mlle Saint-Amans? M. Grandet agreed to deliver it. Ask for it if you have not yet received it.

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14. To Agathe Diché, Agen

In a prior letter, Agathe complained that her sister Jeanne had unduly prolonged her stay at Trenquelléon.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 14, 1805

You realize, my very dear friend, that I don't want to lose a single moment of the little time I have to spend with your dear sister. Therefore, I cannot write at any length.

² I am sending you a rosary blessed by the Holy Father and one also for each of your dear sisters and for Mlle Saint-Amans. They are rather common and I would have preferred some prettier ones. However, not their appearance, but the countless graces attached to them is what matters. Happy are we if we can earn them. I hope that the united prayers of the whole Society will enable us to do just that; we can obtain that grace from the distributor of all graces.

³ I think I almost surely will be able to visit you this October. Think of my joy if I can manage it! This is a promise from one of my aunts; Mama and Papa do not know of it yet. Do not announce it as a certainty, for I would be annoyed if my parents heard of it before my aunt had told them of her plans. I suggest the saying of one *Hail Mary* until then for the grace to have this visit redound to the glory of the heavenly Spouse, an objective that all the associates should always propose to themselves. By this means I also hope to convince you, or one of your dear sisters, to come to substitute for my dear Dicherette when she cannot come herself. Think of the joy the idea gives me!

⁴ I am a little disappointed in you; that you, my good friend, would deprive me, deprive your own friend, of the company of your wonderful sister for a couple of days, while you have her all year round! I could not imagine that you, of all people, would refuse me this sacrifice! However, I am sending her back to you, and perhaps for a long time. That very notion distresses me.

⁵ Farewell, my good and dear friend; despite your little mischievousness, I love you and will love you always.

Adèle de Batz

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15. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 23, 1805

My God, I love you!

² I feel that a hundred years have passed since my last letter to you. Today I am allowing myself the sweet consolation of expressing to you my loving friendship and my pleasure at the thought of the approaching moment when I shall be able to tell you face to face what my heart feels for you.

³ The Feast of the Assumption is approaching, when Mary died of love. Like her, may our love of God be the death of all our bad habits and of our ill-regulated tendencies. *The Following of Christ* says, "Love is strong, nothing can stop it; it runs, it flies." Let us run toward the blessed goal to which we aspire. Let us fly on the wings of holy love. Our flight will sever all contact with the earth, the unhappy abode to which we cling so steadfastly. Yet here we are in constant danger of losing that celestial heritage which is promised to those who have fought with courage and gone on to victory.

⁴ Let us avoid the world as much as possible. It is a constant danger, for here innocence is often lost, God is forgotten, and its perverse maxims can lead us astray.

⁵ How different is the happiness of the soul that is alone with its God, silently going about its duties, far from temptation, noise, and tumult. God, in whose presence she fulfills them with the utmost exactitude, will be her reward. Strengthened by this prospect, the soul finds comfort even in the most difficult trials. "God will reward me for this" is a recurring thought, and this suffices to give her comfort even among the most bitter sorrows.

⁶ How happy would we be if this were our situation. Let it be our aim to be mortified in all things. Let us punish ourselves when we have sinned. For instance, if we have given way to vanity in our dress, let us mortify ourselves by not wearing some article that appeals to us; if we have sinned by too great enjoyment of our food, let us practice some abstinence. The same applies to our bed; if we have enjoyed it too much, let us rise a little sooner, be it only five minutes. If a kind of lethargy has riveted us to our chair and made us avoid and skip some duty, at some other time and out of mortification we should get up and do some chore which has little appeal. The same goes for any other faults we might commit, etc., etc.

⁷ Notice that I am taking advantage of my privilege as member of the Society to give you plenty of advice. Please reciprocate in kind, for I will soon weary of the practice if I alone do the giving.

⁸ Farewell, my dear and good friend; remember me to the celestial Spouse in whose heart I embrace you and assure you of my friendship.

Adèle de Batz

⁹ A tender embrace to the associates, whom I love so much in the Lord.

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16. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 13, 1805

Possess your souls in patience.

² Your letter, my dear friend, gave me the pleasure I always experience when I receive something from you. Let us continue this written exchange, good friend; our letters cannot help being profitable to our souls, since in them we always speak of God.

³ How I long to come see you. I think I shall do so very soon. It is a visit I desire most sincerely. You tell me that you have great need of my advice. Dear friend, to whom are you turning? Well, I shall do my best to give you that advice which I hope will be of some use to you, on condition that in return you do the same for me. That is my stipulation, and it is the practice of the Society.

⁴ My dear friend, you complain because you have no patience with suffering. Look at our divine Savior, suffering the most abominable insults, the most crying outrages, the most cruel torments, and all that without a whimper. How the contemplation of this divine Model should stimulate us to patience! Yet we often give way to ill humor and to the impetuosity of our character.

⁵ Jesus Christ said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." Therefore, we are to imitate his meekness, not only by hiding our impatience from other eyes but by trying to quell our inner revolt. Our sensual nature is set against suffering. Unless we tame it, it will take over. God loves the peaceful soul. God's dwelling place is in those who possess their souls in peace.

⁶ We must first convince ourselves that we shall never suffer enough to expiate our innumerable sins. We have accepted the pleasure of sin; it is only right that we accept the suffering. Let us never permit ourselves fits of anger, impatience, murmuring, or frustration. May we take the example of St. Francis de Sales and make a pact between our tongue and our heart, so that when the heart is agitated, the tongue will remain silent. Let us ask God for the gift of patience. Every night we must examine ourselves to see whether we have committed the least fault, and then give ourselves a penance. In this way, God will bless the efforts we make to repair our faults and will eventually free us from this unhappy defect.

⁷ Pray for me, my dear friend, who am so frail in this matter, and encourage me to overcome it.
⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; love me always and never doubt that I reciprocate this sentiment.
Adèle de Batz

⁹ You are hereby directed to embrace your dear sisters for me.

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17. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 20, 1805

Although I have some urgent things to do, my very dear friend, I will not forgo the pleasure of a brief note to you; however, it will not be as lengthy as usual.

² What topic shall I treat? There is no need to search about. I can find ample matter in the virtues of Mary, which we should imitate especially between the feasts that are consecrated to her, those of the Assumption and the Nativity.

³ Purity, that virtue which is more angelic than human, the Blessed Virgin possessed to the most eminent degree. She is troubled the moment the angel, under the semblance of a young man, appears before her. She consents to the divine motherhood only after the angel assures her that she shall remain a virgin. Like her, let us avoid every occasion of tarnishing that precious virtue which we bear about with us in earthen vessels. Flight is the only means to triumph over the contrary passion. In acquiring this delicate virtue, let us not entertain the least improper thought. Let modesty rule our looks, our gestures, our comportment. We must excuse ourselves the moment we notice that a conversation in which we are engaged might lead to evil thoughts. Finally, let us have recourse to the Queen of Virgins, and we shall acquire that virtue which should be the object of our efforts, especially between now and the Nativity.

⁴ Humility is also one of the favorite virtues of the Blessed Virgin. Mary is troubled at the salutation of the angel. Her answer, when the angel assures her that she will become the Mother of God, is to declare herself his servant. We should imitate that virtue and consider ourselves as useless servants. Let us never take credit for anything, but recognize in all truth that God is the author of all good.

⁵ Mary showed her obedience in an admirable fashion. As soon as she receives the inspiration from the Lord, she leaves to visit Elizabeth, although she knows the journey is a difficult one. In obedience to the Emperor, she goes to Bethlehem to be registered despite the rigors of the season and her advanced pregnancy. We can imitate her obedience by following the inspirations that come from God and by obeying punctually and unquestioningly the orders of our superiors.

⁶ The love of God was brilliantly displayed in this incomparable Virgin. Like her, let us love God with renewed ardor and remember that, as love was the cause of her victory, so also will it be of ours—if our love is sincere, true, and wholehearted.

⁷ The Blessed Virgin's patience in suffering was also most perfect. Like her, we should suffer to see those persons calumniated and suffering whom we love and in whom we are interested. We must suffer for the love of God and for our sins that are so deserving of punishment, while Mary, who suffered so much, was without sin.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; my letter is as long as usual, despite my introductory remark. But I do not think you will find it burdensome.

⁹ Farewell again; love me always, and remember me especially at the foot of the crucifix.
Adèle de Batz

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18. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 1, 1805

How great is the goodness of God, my dear friend, who always forgives us in spite of our constant relapses. He has established a sacrament through which, each time we receive it with the right dispositions, we are forgiven and restored to our lost innocence. We had disfigured the image we bore of our Creator. In this sacrament of peace and reconciliation God is pleased to impress it again upon our soul. What guilt would be ours if we neglected to use such a powerful remedy for our faults!

² The benefits we derive from this sacrament, that interior peace which accompanies it, are certainly worth the inconvenience and the shame we experience when we have recourse to it. Let us consider the minister of this sacred tribunal as taking the place of Jesus Christ. Let us reflect that we are about to accuse ourselves to this good and merciful God, who knows everything that we do. Do not consider the man, but God whose place he holds. Let us receive with respect and obedience the confessor's guidance and his exhortations. God is speaking through his lips. It is through him that God makes known his will for us.

³ Dear friend, henceforth let us have sincere regret for the past and make strong resolutions for the future. Then we shall leave the confessional with ever greater energy to resist the attacks of the devil. That evil one tempts us, my dear friend, and prowls around us; but we shall overcome with the strength of Jesus Christ. We can do nothing, "but we can do all things in the one who strengthens us." If we ask for grace, he will give it to us. "Ask and you shall receive."

⁴ Farewell, my dear and good friend. May God hasten the moment when I shall embrace you directly. I promise you that I shall do so [in reality], just as heartily as I do now in desire.

⁵ I also embrace all the associates.

Adèle de Batz

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19. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 10, 1805

The constant proofs of friendship which you give me, my dear friend, increase my own regard for you. How impatient I am to be able to assure you of this otherwise than by letter. Meanwhile, in imitation of the pious Agnès de Cara Santa and of Virginie,¹² I am going to present you with a pious challenge.

² My most dear associate in the service of Jesus Christ, you know that detachment from creatures and from created things is absolutely essential for those who would be true servants of Jesus Christ, and more so for those who have the happiness of being his spouses. I challenge you, therefore, to detach your heart and affection from them to the extent desired by our Lord.

³ I suggest that Sunday's meditation be on detachment. At that moment, we will determine from what we must be detached, and also our strategy. We shall firmly resolve to take all the necessary means and to implore God's grace so that we might undertake this painful task. God's help and love will render it pleasant, for it will be for him that we undertake it.

⁴ Would we want to live a very tranquil and happy life here on earth, when our lovable Savior and all the saints had to bear with sufferings and the cross? How shameful to be a weak member when our leader is crowned with thorns!

⁵ We shall soon leave this earth, perhaps sooner than we expect. Is it really worthwhile attaching ourselves to it? Oh, what folly and what blindness!

⁶ I regret having to stop here, my very dear friend. I am often pressed for time when I write to you.

¹²Names of the heroines of a popular book of the period, *La fervente novice*. The author shows how they encourage one another in the pursuit of perfection.

I hope to make it up to you next time. Farewell, therefore, my dear Agathe; love me as I love you, for mine is no niggardly love.

Adèle de Batz

⁷ I embrace the associates in our Lord.

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20. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 18, 1805

Well, my dear Agathe, what is the state of your fervor? Has there been an increase or a decrease since our last Communion? That, after all, should always be our point of reference. Alas! In my case I don't think that I have made any progress; therefore I must have relapsed. For, in what concerns salvation, who does not advance falls back. The new graces which we receive every day from the hand of our God should make our love grow daily; but, on the contrary, they seem to diminish it. What a way to repay those benefits! If God paid attention only to his justice, he would quickly withdraw grace from us. But God displays his great mercy toward us. How ungrateful we are, my dear friend. We are so thankful for the services rendered to us by others; is God the only one to experience our ingratitude? And yet, what human being has ever given us, or done for us, as much as our divine Master?

² This is because we are earthly and attached to what strikes the senses, without ever raising our sights. However, we have taken the resolution to detach ourselves from creatures, and so we must do so with tenacity. Let us see who is the first to attain the objective.

³ Of course it will be you! But, what am I saying? If I can do nothing on my own, I can do everything in the one who strengthens me. Let us do our utmost to become detached. If we look at the nothingness of creatures and feel the emptiness they leave in our souls, we will be struck by the folly of attaching ourselves so much to what is transient, and so little to what is everlasting.

⁴ May I recommend to your prayers and to those of the Society my brother and my cousin, who one week from Friday will receive absolution and be confirmed on the following day. Pray also for all the candidates for Confirmation, that they may be adequately prepared to receive the Holy Spirit and that he will set their hearts on fire with divine love.¹³

⁵ So you agree to lend me your sister for a few days! Imagine my satisfaction! You see her as much as you want, whereas I see her so little. I beg you, dear friend, not to envy me these few days of happiness.

⁶ I hope to have you also some day, when poor Dicherette cannot come. Until I have that satisfaction, I beg you to believe in my fondest friendship.

Adèle de Batz

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21. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Mme Belloc is at Trenquelléon.

¹³The sacrament was administered by Bishop Jacoupy on his first visit to the parish of Feugarolles. He spent some time at the château of Trenquelléon and interviewed both Adèle and Jeanne, who was spending her holidays with her friend. The bishop was briefed by M. Ducourneau and the two foundresses on the Little Society. Not only did he approve their work, but he declared himself its promoter and protector.

+ J.M.J.T.

September 26, 1805

It is seven-thirty in the morning, my dear friend, and your sister and I have just finished our prayers. I hasten to take up the pen to give you another proof of my friendship.

² You may imagine the joy I experience at having with me a person who is so dear. At last, a friend who loves me in God and principally for the salvation of my soul. How sweet to be able to say that one can associate the consolations of friendship with the hope that even they are pleasing to God. How thankful I should be to God for giving me friends whose examples and advice can contribute to my sanctification.

³ Let us challenge one another to a holy emulation; let us love God, who loves us so much. He overwhelms us with good things; shall we repay with ingratitude? We have so much affection for our friends, and we know so well how to show friendship to creatures; would God be the only one to whom we have nothing to say? During our meditations, we are dumb. More often than not, we are absentminded. Yet, it is before a God and to a God that we should address our prayers, our supplications. Miserable creatures that we are, have we nothing to ask of our God? Would a beggar remain at a rich person's doorstep and not ask for anything? Does the beggar need coaching to be taught what to say? Does not misery itself find the proper words? We are the poorest of the poor when it comes to virtue, but we know not what to say! Let us beg and never cease imploring the divine mercy, that God may cast upon us a merciful glance. Ah! How great is our need of it!

⁴ For two nights now, Dicherette and I have adopted the practice of falling asleep in the arms of divine mercy.

⁵ The *acte* for the following week is "My God, I long for you." My dear friend, we must yearn for this God who is so good. Let us long ardently for the happy moment when we shall approach the holy Table. Let us come to the holy banquet in a transport of love. But, should we be deprived of this heavenly food, we must say with more warmth than ever, "My God, I long for you," so that the ardor of our desire may compensate for the sacramental Communion of which we are deprived.

⁶ My dear friend, where else but in this sacrament will we find the strength to silence or to resist our temptations? If it is chastity that is being attacked, the contact with this virginal flesh will make ours stronger to resist the assault of the impure demon. If it is anger that seeks the upper hand in us, the partaking of this meek Lamb will calm our rebellious heart. If it is the love of pleasure that would seduce us, the heavenly sweetness contained in this sacrament will render our hearts insensitive to the false joys which the world offers.

⁷ Farewell, my dear, my very dear friend. You must believe that my friendship for you is ever increasing. Please convey my warmest greetings to the Society.

Adèle de Batz

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22. To Agathe Diché, Agen

There will be no trip to Agen. Adèle has to take charge in her mother's absence.

+ J.M.J.T.

[undated]

My God, my All!

² My dear Agathe, I did not write to you on Saturday, so I shall receive no answer. You know that it is a real privation for me not to receive your precious letters.

³ Like you, I too find much good in Mme Acarie; let us, my dear friend, profit by our reading.

⁴ We are nearing the Feast of St. Teresa. I have been promised access to the celestial banquet on that day; pray to God that I prepare myself worthily. I shall receive with the intention of discovering my

vocation. May I suggest that you perform on that day, besides the *acte*, six acts of humility in honor of the time St. Theresa spent in a state of dryness. We shall humble ourselves before God, acknowledging that we deserve every kind of privation, since a saint like Theresa was tested in this manner.

⁵ Let us humble ourselves, my dear friend, before the will of God. He knows our needs better than we. Alas! I had hoped to see you, but I am deprived of that satisfaction, because in the absence of my mother I am in charge and because one of my aunts did not come as expected. Let us bow before the will of God. How I would love always to be able to smile at the decrees of heaven!¹⁴

⁶ I had already been hoping that my good friend might stay with me for a few more days. Just put yourself in my place: separated from Mother, from my aunt, from my friend. But I trust in the goodness of M. Belloc. After having visited with her here, he will surely allow her to stay for another eight or ten days. I am being reasonable! And your father wrote to mine, saying he would be coming to visit us. He could take her along when he returns home.

⁷ Please excuse me, my good friend, it is my heart that speaks. I am asking a sacrifice of you . . . but you would be making it in honor of the most true and sincere friendship. Moreover, religion itself will help you to find sweetness in this sacrifice caused by the absence of a sister who is, and rightly, so dearly cherished.

⁸ Farewell, my very good friend; believe in my very warm friendship.

⁹ M. Ducourneau has suggested the following *acte* for next week: "My God and my all."

Adèle de Batz

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23. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 14, 1805

The compliance you have shown me, my dear friend, by sacrificing the early return of your charming sister, has touched me profoundly and makes me most obligated to you. Pray to God that I profit by it, for my salvation.

² O my dear friend, let us be detached from creatures. That is our challenge. Let us try to meet it in friendly rivalry.

³ The *acte* for next week is suggested by Mlle Saint-Amans: "My God, I am resigned to your will." Yes, let us embrace the adorable will of our God, striving to know it and to follow it. Following it, we cannot go astray; without it, our flighty spirit will be tossed about by our passions. And who has more need to be guided by this divine will than ourselves, my dear friend? Alas! It is at our age that we have most need of it. By means of our good behavior, a truly Christian behavior, let us try to deserve its ongoing guidance.

⁴ So my letter enchanted you, my dear Agathe? So did yours enchant me, but in quite another sense: I am enchanted with the continued possession of our dear Dicherette. These are certainly different enchantments. Please excuse this mild banter, my dear friend; I hope this letter enchants you, but in a different manner.

⁵ Thank you for the nice things you say about my trip to Agen and the desire you express to see me. Mine is no less, believe me. But what is put off is not lost. So, my dear friend, I hope to see you on another occasion. It would be nice if you came with your dear father, who is due here in a few days. Imagine the pleasure that would give me!

⁶ Give my regards to the Society; I am really vexed at not being able to meet them. I thank the

¹⁴Mme de Trenquelléon had to leave in haste for the château of Bétricot, near Mourède (Gers), to be with her sister, Mme de Casteras, who was near death.

associates for their kind remarks.

⁷ Farewell, my good Agathe, love me always; my happiness needs your friendship.
Adèle de Batz

⁸ Please pray *Out of the depths* [Psalm 130] for my aunt, my mother's sister, who has just died. Mother brought back with her my aunt's youngest daughter, Clara, who is three years old.

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24. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 2, 1805

Death harvests its victims at any age!

² I felt very bad, my dear friend, for not giving the last messenger a letter for you, and I regret that I must be so brief now.

³ This morning we went to the Mass for the departed. Alas! My dear friend, how eager we should be to succor those poor souls. What wonderful protectors would we have in those whom we had the happiness of freeing from purgatory. How grateful they would be. They would show us their gratitude by the prayers they in turn would say for us.

⁴ We may soon find ourselves in that place of torment, but also of hope. Death has no respect for age. A young girl of sixteen from the Port died a few days ago. That is why we must always be ready, so as not to be surprised. Let us frequent the sacraments; let us never allow ourselves to neglect them so much that we run the risk of an unhappy death.

⁵ I sympathize with you at the absence of your confessor. But let your desire accomplish what actions cannot. At the sight of your good will, God will compensate by other graces which he will give through whatever means he chooses to use. We must let ourselves be guided by God, adoring the divine designs and submitting to them.

⁶ I have chosen the following *acte* for this week: "My God, take my heart completely and forever." Next week we will use the *acte* suggested by Dicherette, "Heart of Jesus, I am all yours."

⁷ Farewell, my dear and good friend, and accept my regrets at not being able to embrace you in person.

⁸ I suggest that on the day you receive my letter you, and the Society, go to bed in spirit in the blessed Tabernacle. Embrace the Society for me; assure them that I very much desire to make their acquaintance.

⁹ When the time comes, I count on you to announce the birth of little Eugène or of the much desired Eugénie.

¹⁰ Again, farewell, dear Agathe. It was a week ago that we were reading Valmont and, I believe, at this very hour.

Adèle de Batz

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25. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 13, 1805

My dear Agathe, I am going to give you a great proof of my friendship. Today I have time to write only one letter, and it will be addressed to you.

² It seems such a long time, my dear friend, since I have had that pleasure. Now that I have that satisfaction, let us profit by it to spur us to the love of God and to the avoidance of sin, which so displeases him.

³ At our age we must expect to be tempted; the devil is jealous of young hearts which are desirous of giving themselves to God. The evil one tries to snatch them by whatever means and is prowling constantly around us, on the lookout for those motivations, those occasions where we display the greatest weakness. These are then used to tempt us. The devil is often transformed into an angel of light in order to deceive us. Sometimes we think we are motivated by God, whereas it is really Satan at work.

⁴ Let us always be on our guard and equipped with heavenly weapons. If we have recourse to prayer and ask the help of God, we shall overcome. Satan's ruses will no longer frighten us, if God is on our side.

⁵ Let us not be unnerved by temptation; it is the crucible in which God permits his chosen souls to be purified. Confidence, therefore. Lack of trust would outrage the infinite goodness of our God. It is most certain that if we do not want to, we shall not succumb to the temptation; it is also most certain that as long as the temptation is displeasing to us, we will never consent.

⁶ Let us not give way to sadness. That is one disposition that is very pleasing to our enemy, for it leaves us open to temptation. We should be characterized by a sweet serenity which mirrors the peace of our soul. Our neighbors should not be aware of our inner conflicts, for that could often be damaging. Believe me.

⁷ And so, courage my friend. The long-desired end of our sufferings will soon be here. Let us acquire merit through our struggles. Courage, I repeat, and strength; God struggles with and for us. Through our love and our fidelity let us correspond with the divine plans and share our concerns with our God.

⁸ Farewell, dear and good friend. I enjoin upon you, the day you receive this letter, to fall asleep in the arms of Jesus, dying on the cross and sprinkling us with the blood flowing from his sacred wounds.

⁹ Friday is the feastday of St. Eugène. I shall pray that your dear sister's child receive baptism and that he will be a worthy child of God.

¹⁰ I embrace the Society from the depths of my heart, particularly Mme Belloc.

¹¹ Farewell again, dear Agathe; I love you and will always love you in God and for God.

Adèle de Batz

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26. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Agathe's confessor has been absent a long time; she has therefore not been able to go to Communion.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 27, 1805

My dear Agathe, when shall we be able to exclaim, "My beloved is mine and I am his! His beauty and his goodness have ravished my heart!"

² This well-beloved is ours whenever we so desire. But are we his whenever he wishes? We often refuse him the sacrifices he wants of us. But let it no longer be thus. Let us weep for the unhappy days when we have sinned. Cursed be the day when we sinned for the very first time, when for the first time we drove God from our heart.

³ I believe that Father Serres has returned to Agen. Through the fervor of your Communions, you can make reparation for those you have missed. See to it, my dear friend, that God takes delight in you. He himself says, "My delights are to be with the children of men." What goodness! And will it not be our delight to be with God? How blind we are when we do not long after Communion! Let us sigh after it,

my dear friend, and may the ardor of our desire be rewarded by the coming of Jesus to us. Pray for me on Sunday, for then I hope to have that happiness.

⁴ On Sunday, my dear friend, let us reflect much on the judgment, for the Gospel treats of it. Just think that we may be very close to it; to prepare ourselves, we must redouble our fervor.

⁵ Farewell, my dear friend; I love you very tenderly. I encourage you to fall asleep Saturday desiring holy Communion.

⁶ I embrace the Society.

Adèle de Batz

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27. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 3, 1805

Watch and pray!

² How long it has been, dear friend, since I received a letter from you! You must believe that I wait for it with impatience, for everything that comes from you is dear to me, especially when it contains something from which I can profit.

³ We have a book here which gives a subject of meditation for each day of Advent. Today it treats of vigilance. Let us watch over ourselves, my dear friend, so that the devil, who is prowling constantly around us like a roaring lion, may not devour us. Let us watch and see to it that every door to our senses is closed, lest they lure us with their miserable cravings. Let us watch, finally, lest the world seduce us by its empty displays. Watch, yes; but also pray to obtain from the Lord the grace to be truly alert.

⁴ We are perhaps on the eve of our death. God may this very night require our souls. The house can catch fire; a bedpost might crush us. We could die suddenly. Are we ready to appear before God, to stand at his judgment seat, which is both severe and just? Ah! How blind, and I might add, foolish, if we are not always in readiness, if we trust our salvation to a “perhaps.”

⁵ Let us therefore watch and pray, and God will not surprise us. Let us make a good provision of oil, so that when the Spouse knocks we might enter with him into the marriage feast. Let us be wise virgins and not foolish ones. Let us live always in expectation of the coming of the divine Spouse of our souls.

⁶ Indeed, this marvelously good God himself warns us, so that we will not be taken by surprise. But we are deaf to God’s words and pay them no heed. How the Lord loves young hearts, my dear friend! The offering which a young girl makes of herself is most agreeable to him. Let us give ourselves to him, consecrate to him our heart, and let our affections be only for him or concern only him. Let us trample underfoot whatever could seduce our youth. We must be distrustful of ourselves, but trustful of God. Whoever hopes in you, O my God, will never be disappointed.

⁷ Farewell, my dear Agathe! I hope to receive a letter by return mail; if not, I shall accuse you of being terribly indifferent toward a friend who loves you tenderly.

Adèle de Batz

⁸ Have you received any news from Mlle Pérot?

⁹ I embrace the associates.

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28. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 10, 1805

I congratulate you, my dear friend, on the arrival of Father Serres. I can imagine your joy, for you have been awaiting him for the past two or three months. Just between you and me, I think that is a bit much; you have allowed yourself to be enslaved. God would have preferred you to listen less to yourself and to do a little more violence to your feelings. I admit that I have the same repugnance to a change of confessors, and when I do change it is not because I find it pleasant. However, we must learn to be reasonable.

² What do you think of me, lecturing you, my dear friend? But I know you well enough to feel that you will not be annoyed. At least, that was not my intent. You may have had good reasons and even better intentions. Besides, it is your confessor and not I who should judge the matter, which I may have treated a bit too lightly. I beg you to show this letter to no one else but Dicherette.

³ Let us love God, my dear friend, and do our utmost to please him by offering the sacrifice asked of us. Could we hesitate between the world, the flesh, the devil—and God? No, most adorable Jesus, you alone shall have my heart. I shall do violence to myself; but help me Lord, for I am weakness itself.

⁴ Do not be downhearted when tempted, my dear Agathe. The devil would be only too pleased, for you would be giving him an entry. Despise the evil one, for he can do nothing to you without your consent. Always call God to your help: “Help me, my God, and however troubled I am by the temptation I shall not fear to succumb.” This aspiration is very fitting for a time of temptation.

⁵ Farewell, my dear and good friend. Love me always, for I love you very much.

Adèle de Batz

⁶ May you fall asleep in spirit Saturday with the martyrs stretched on their rack and being torn by iron hooks.

⁷ I embrace the Society.

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29. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 23, 1805

By the time you receive this letter, the great solemnity, that great expectation of the just, will have passed. I am obliged to write to you some days before Christmas, for I shall not have the time on the day itself.

² And so the Beloved of the nations is coming, my dear friend. Have we allowed him to be born in our hearts? Have we eradicated all that could displease his eyes? Has the fire of divine love consumed every earthly affection? If all this has not happened, my dear friend, let us bemoan the fact. Let us hope that our tears of repentance may soften and incline toward us the heart of our God, justly angry with us if we have not prepared ourselves properly to give him birth in our hearts.

³ My dear friend, let us look upon the year we are about to begin as the last one of our lives—which, in fact, it may very well be. Let us make strong resolutions to spend it in a more holy fashion than we have the preceding ones. God is giving us a new grace, for he is giving us a little more time, something which he withholds from so many others. I am giving Mme Belloc an agenda for the day, which I beg you to follow, my dear friend.

⁴ The best way to celebrate feastdays would be, and is, to love God more and more, to increase in our love for God and in our hatred for sin. Dear Agathe, let us detest that sin, that horrible sin, which has placed a God in a cradle and on the cross. How awful it is, and how much it should indeed seem so, to a soul that loves God!

⁵ With what ardor we should seek the sacrament which restores us to grace. What transports should be ours, and what sorrow, when we kneel at the feet of his minister and he absolves us; we believe

we hear from the very mouth of our God those consoling words, “Go in peace, and sin no more.”

⁶ Truly, when we believe that we are in God’s grace we enjoy great peace; if we want to continue in that state, we must sin no more. So let us avoid sin by avoiding all occasions leading to it. Let us often have recourse to prayer, especially in time of danger.

⁷ Farewell, my dear Agathe; adieu, my good friend. Let us love God above all, and love each other in and for him.

⁸ I propose that you fall asleep on Saturday, next to the divine Jesus in his crib.

Adèle de Batz

⁹ I embrace the Society.

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30. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 15, 1806

My dear friend, the flooding¹⁵ has prevented me from receiving your answer to my letter. Still I do not want to delay assuring you that to write to you is most consoling, especially since I cannot enjoy the pleasure of speaking face to face. However, I don’t know when my letter will leave here; in any case, it is ready.

² Let us love the Lord, my dear Agathe; his must be the first fruits of our heart. What creature could compensate us, were we to lose our Creator?

³ Let us not allow ourselves to be seduced by the enemy. Let us keep watch over our heart, control all its affections, so that nothing unworthy of a virgin may issue from it. We must keep a pure heart for our divine Spouse.

⁴ May we always preserve purity of heart. Let us love God above all things, and creatures in him and for him. Let us flee from all occasions of sin, for flight here means victory.

⁵ My dear friend, let us prepare ourselves for Lenten penance by spending the carnival season in a holy fashion and by bemoaning before God the disorders that are committed. Let us pray for one another that God might sustain us. We are very young, dear Agathe, and the offering of a young heart is most agreeable to the Savior.

⁶ You notice that our Society has received quite an increase. Should you happen to meet some devout persons, you could admit them to it. The greater our numbers, the more prayers we shall have to sway the Lord.

⁷ How sorry I am for poor Mlle Pérot! What an excellent associate! But it is the will of God, and we must submit to it. He knows better than we what we need.

⁸ The *acte* for the week is “O my soul, what are we doing if we are not working for eternity?”

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend. I embrace you, and also the associates, in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. I invite you to rendezvous in spirit in that Heart as we take our rest.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ Please kiss the young mother and her child for me.¹⁶

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¹⁵The Garonne had overflowed its banks. Whenever that happened (usually every spring), all navigation stopped, and the mail could not get across.

¹⁶Eugène, the Belloc’s first child, was born January 2, 1806.

31. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.
The Feast of St. Agnes.

January 21, 1806

² I am writing to you, my very dear friend, on the feastday of St. Agnes, the twelve-year-old virgin and martyr. What strength, my good friend, in a child of that age! We, who are much older, would perhaps not have had it—at least we may think not—considering our weakness when it comes to self-discipline. And yet, we are servants of the same God and we expect the same crown. To earn it, why would we not do what so many saints, men and women of all ages, have done?

³ Oh, how weak we are, my dear Agathe; yet, despite that, we are still so proud! What total blindness! The proof that we are steeped in pride is only too evident at the first occasion when our pride is humbled. Then we rear up in revolt, we seek empty excuses, instead of suffering in silence in imitation of the silence of Jesus Christ during the rough handling he suffered from the Jews.

⁴ He should be our model, my dear friend, just as he was the model of that young virgin whose feast we celebrate today. However, how can he be, when there are no traits of resemblance whereby we can be recognized as the disciples of Jesus Christ? Do we possess any virtues? No; but let us, with the help of grace, try to acquire some.

⁵ God never refuses grace to anyone. We can always draw at this plentiful and superabundant source. Come, courage! Our nature will suffer, but we must pay no heed to it. We shall perhaps die very soon, and how happy we shall be then to have followed the virtuous path. The world will appear to be a trifle at the sight of that eternity into which we shall be ready to enter. Would we want to lose an eternity of happiness for a few days of enjoyment? And of a happiness that is unalloyed, while the joys of this world are always mixed with thorns?

⁶ I was pleased to hear that you had received news from Mlle Pérot. My good friend, if somehow we could manage to make of her an associate, how we would profit by sharing in her good prayers! But, if that is not possible, may the will of God be done. Did she explain why she had not written for quite some time? You know, my dear friend, how interested I am in everything that interests you.

⁷ Farewell, my good friend. I embrace you in the Lord; may you fall asleep in spirit at the foot of the Cross.

Adèle de Batz

⁸ I embrace the Society.

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32. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 29, 1806

Well, my dear friend, how have we lived up to our challenge to detach ourselves completely from creatures? In my case, very poorly. I am at least as much taken by creatures as before. And yet, we should be advancing along the path of holy renunciation, for it is not grace that is lacking; it is we who too often fail to correspond with grace. Let that not be the case from now on, my dear friend. Let us profit by the graces the Lord gives us so that he has no reason to reproach us, as he did the lazy servant for having hidden the talent of his master. On the contrary, let our profit be a hundredfold. That is, the profit that we derive from God's graces will entitle us to more.

² Our God will never be outdone in generosity. If we give, he doubles the gift. If we love him, he repays us with the most tender love. This idea should spur us to love God with the full strength of our heart.

³ This heart has been created for God alone, my good friend, and we rob him if we but pilfer the smallest part of it. O my God, take my heart; take it to yourself; watch over it, lest it suffer the misfortune of being seduced by creatures.

⁴ I gave Dicherette the agenda for the day of our Confirmation.¹⁷

⁵ Please say a *Hail Mary* for an unfortunate woman who may well die in childbirth. How grateful we should be to God for the happy delivery of our dear Mme Belloc. How good God is toward us. Let us show our gratitude by loving God with all our heart and by doing everything possible to please him. Whatever sacrifice God asks of us, let us perform it most readily. And so, after having been united to God in this life by grace, we shall be eternally united to him in glory. This is my wish for both of us.

⁶ Farewell, my very good Agathe; love me as I love you, and I shall be happy.

Adèle de Batz

⁷ I embrace the Society which I love; give me some news of it. For a long time now, you have told me nothing about your dear sisters whom I love and who, I hope, love me in Jesus Christ, united to them as I am through the Society.

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33. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T

February 9, 1806

“Pardon, O my Jesus,
for so many outrages.”

² I have received no letter from you, my dear and good friend, since the last regular post; consequently, I did not write the letter you normally receive on Saturday. I had several letters to write and so postponed it until today.

³ What is the nature of the soil, my dear Agathe, in which we receive the seed? It is a bit of earth full of brambles and thorns, which soon choke the precious seed of the word of God. O my dear friend, let it no longer be so! Let us remove from our soul the thorns it harbors, and may the fire of divine love consume them down to the roots. We must allow the precious seed which God casts into our hearts to develop good roots. It must not fall on hearts of stone, but on hearts that are tender with the love of God. Nor must we allow it to lie on an unprotected path, for fear that the devil might come and take it away; rather let us guard it with Christian vigilance and humility. Then our seed will not be lying on a road where anyone can take it.

⁴ Let us prepare our hearts, using a good fertilizer to enrich a soul that by nature is barren. Let us water it frequently. With what? With the adorable blood of our Savior. Oh, what soil would not profit by such a sprinkling? We must cultivate it at the sweat of our brow, so as to rid it of weeds. The seed, having fallen into a heart that is pure and well-prepared, will yield a hundredfold.

⁵ If only we would make an attempt of this kind, my dear friend. There would be so much work to do, but the reward is such as to prod us on to overcome every obstacle. The Kingdom of Heaven is won by violence, and only the violent can seize it. Let us practice a saintly violence on ourselves. May we turn a deaf ear to our corrupt nature; heedless of what it claims or refuses, let us overcome it, enslave it, treat it like a miserable vassal, like a restive horse that we wish to tame.

⁶ Let us encourage each other, my good friend, in this frightful combat we have undertaken. God will be with us; what have we to fear? Let us call on our good angel and on St. Michael, who brought the devil to his knees, and ask them to drive the evil one out of our heart.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend. Believe me when I say that I love you very much.

¹⁷February 6, third anniversary of their Confirmation.

Adèle de Batz

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34. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 26, 1806

My God, forgive us our trespasses.
(*Acte* for next week)

² Oh, my dear good friend, let us say these *actes* from the very depths of our heart and ask God to forgive us. They are very timely for the present season, one during which we should implore God's mercy and the pardon of our sins.

³ Besides, Jesus Christ himself composed this *acte*, for it is taken from the prayer which he taught his disciples. Let us say it with fervor, for it is in our highest interest that God pardon our unending sequence of offenses against him.

⁴ But, my dear friend, while we ask pardon for our sins, let us also declare that we wish to offend God no more. We must avoid sin and the occasions of sin, trying to please God in all things and trying always to do his adorable will.

⁵ If we love God, our love will make all things easy. Would we want to be a burden to someone we love very tenderly?

⁶ Love defies death itself, rather than lose the object loved. We should say with St. Paul, "What can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? Persecution, or death?" No, nothing in this world will henceforth be able to turn me away from this holy love.

⁷ Yes, I shall love you, my divine Savior; I want to love you. But you yourself must sustain my love. Otherwise I could deny you as did St. Peter. He had protested that he would always be true to you; yet he denied you at the voice of a servant girl. O my God, I am not as presumptuous as that apostle, and I ask for your holy grace; with it I would brave death itself for love of you.

⁸ Yes, my dear Agathe, these are the sentiments that should be ours always and in which we would like to die. Well, let us live in them, for death will surprise us when least we expect it.

⁹ Yesterday a young man of our region died suddenly. He was not sick; he simply had the common cold. He went out the evening before, had supper, and during the night his wife awoke to find him dead. He is said to have choked on the phlegm induced by the cold.

¹⁰ May all these sudden deaths, so frequent in our day, warn us always to be ready to appear before God, my dear friend, for we shall be brought before the dread judgment when we least expect it. If we live in a constant state of grace and in the love of our God, we shall not fear death.

¹¹ Farewell, my dear friend; love me a little, for I love you very much, and all the associates as well. I recommend that they be constant in their fervor.

¹² The older we get, the closer we come to the tomb; we must not relax our efforts. Before falling asleep, let us always make a fervent act of contrition.

Adèle de Batz

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35. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 25, 1806

The Feast of the Annunciation.
I am the handmaid of the Lord!

² I have just finished reading one of Bourdaloue's¹⁸ sermons, my dear friend. May the Holy Spirit who guided this Christian orator inspire me as I write today, as I try to share with you the salutary reflections I gleaned from the sermon.

³ What a great feast, my good friend. The Word of God takes on our flesh! The Son of God becomes the son of man! God even becomes our brother. Oh, what prodigious love of a God for guilty creatures!

⁴ After admiring this immense grace and this infinite love, let me make some practical reflections on this mystery.

⁵ A God has emptied himself and taken the form of a slave. Whom does he choose to accomplish this? A humble virgin.

⁶ At what moment does this prodigy take place? At the very moment this incomparable virgin makes the most perfect act of humility, by declaring herself the handmaid of the Lord just when he gives her the honor of becoming his Mother.

⁷ We must conclude from this that humility is a favorite virtue with God since it has the power, in a manner of speaking, of bringing a God to earth.

⁸ We, who profess to adore this mystery must, as a necessary consequence, practice humility in all our actions, our thoughts, our very being. However, we scarcely ever do.

⁹ My dear friend, if we wish to be pleasing to God we must be humble. Humility is his favorite virtue, and it entitled the Blessed Virgin to conceive him in her chaste womb. Everything about us should proclaim humility: we will not protest when contradicted, and we will accept with patience every humiliation and adversity that comes our way, admitting in a spirit of humility that they are well deserved.

¹⁰ Another reflection to be drawn from today's mystery: the angelic purity of the Virgin Mary.

¹¹ She is troubled at the sight of an angel in human form. How this contrasts with a multitude of young virgins whose greatest satisfaction is to see and to be seen. They often, if not always, lose the precious vase of their virginity, which can only be preserved by many safeguards and flight from the world. My dear friend, let us, like Mary, avoid even the least occasion, keeping our eyes and ears in check so as not to see or hear anything that might tarnish the delicate and fragile beauty of that virtue.

¹² O beautiful and angelic virtue! How frequently and how easily you are lost, and how difficult it is to restore you!

¹³ But, my dear friend, after we have taken all reasonable precautions, let us place this most precious treasure into the hands of the Blessed Virgin. Let her be the guardian of our purity and innocence. Let us learn from her to beware of danger, and to avoid it. The desire to please must be far from our heart. After banishing every impure and alien flame, may our heart burn with love for the Lord alone.

¹⁴ Farewell, my very dear friend; I love you very dearly.

Adèle de Batz

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36. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 1, 1806

O divine King, be the sole ruler of my heart!

² Today, my dear Agathe, I am writing only to you. I don't want to be deprived of your letters. If I put off your letter, it will be two weeks; whereas with your sister's, we would be only three or four days

¹⁸Louis Bourdaloue (1632-1704), a French Jesuit preacher who brought the classic sermon to its most perfect oratorical form.

late. I bid you to embrace her tenderly for me, and I ask that she do the same to you.

³ I greet you with “Alleluia! my dear friend,” for we shall begin to sing it the day you receive my letter.

⁴ Let us never cease praising God, Alleluia, for his willingness to suffer so much for us miserable sinners. Because he rose from the dead to vanquish death and open the gates of heaven to us. With the great apostle, let us shout on Easter day, “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” Let us rejoice therefore; Jesus has broken our bonds, Alleluia!

⁵ Like him, let us rise again to grace. This divine Savior has made this easy for us by freeing us through his death from slavery to the devil. Courage, therefore! We can affront the struggle with great courage, because Jesus’ victory over death is a positive guarantee of ours.

⁶ Let us work at eradicating our evil propensities. A God gives himself completely to us; would we want to refuse him our heart? However miserable it may be, God will be pleased with it, provided we give it cheerfully.

⁷ Let us offer ourselves as a holocaust and generously sacrifice all our imperfect affections. May this Easter Communion make us resolutely choose the good. Let us try to keep Jesus Christ in us through his grace.

⁸ Let us control our hearts, for God is a jealous God. We must frequently repeat, “Lord, guard my heart lest it escape me.” Let us watch over its inclinations and offer them all to the divine Jesus.

⁹ I am enclosing a letter from our esteemed priest associate [Larribeau]. Pay close attention to what he recommends, the practice of meditation and of the evening examen; let us never omit these two exercises. If we are pressed for time, it would be better to omit the other prayers than these two, which are so essential to one who wishes to make progress in virtue.

¹⁰ The *acte* for next week is “O divine King, be the sole ruler of my heart!”

¹¹ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart in expectation of the day when I can do so in person, which I hope will be soon.

¹² I embrace the Society.

Adèle de Batz

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37. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 10, 1806

Peace be with you!

² My very dear friend, let us prepare ourselves well for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our hearts should have resurrected to grace and to the new man during the solemn paschal festival. May they preserve the purity they have acquired at the springs from which they have drunk deeply, so that the Holy Spirit might find them disposed to receive the gifts and intuitions which God intends to give them. Let us place no obstacles to the divine inspirations, but rather listen attentively so as to hear God’s voice. We should find ourselves present in spirit at the various appearances of Jesus Christ risen from the dead. Let us not be unbelieving, but faithful.

³ The divine Spouse gives us the peace he earned; it is one of the greatest treasures he can give. “I give you my peace, I leave my peace with you.” What consoling words!

⁴ Let us carefully preserve this precious peace which is the heritage of the children of God. This peaceful spirit is what distinguishes them from the children of the devil. Besides, the Holy Spirit comes to hearts that are peaceful, and not to those that are agitated. Agitation is an obstacle to the attention that should be paid to divine inspirations. This spirit of peace should be visible in us. We must sacrifice all our inclinations for the good of peace. It must never be troubled by our impatience; look upon it as a precious deposit confided to us by God.

⁵ I give you rendezvous on Sunday with the apostles to whom Jesus Christ appeared when he said, "Peace be with you." We shall imagine that we were there, hearing that sweet word. We shall form the resolution to live in peace with everyone, whatever we have to suffer at others' hands.

⁶ I expect to receive one of your letters today; I rejoice at the thought. How happy I shall be, then, when I can actually speak with you, my dear friend, whom I love so tenderly.

Adèle de Batz

⁷ I embrace the Society. May it increase daily in fervor and in the love of God who is so justly deserving of our love.

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38. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 23, 1806

My God, give us the grace
to profit from our retreat.

² I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you, dear friend. What joy for me to be with you all! Let us try, at least, my good friend, to be worthy of God's presence among us. May God preside at our meetings and be the bond of our friendship. Yes, let us love one another only in that divine Savior; let us love God in us and each other in God.

³ My dear Agathe, we have the happiness of receiving Jesus Christ in us; our bodies become his members. Is it possible that we would not be consecrated to him? Could we profane by sin the sanctity of our bodies, the living sanctuary where the Well-Beloved says that he takes his delight? Oh, how we must respect our bodies because of the honor conferred upon them by God. Could our tongue utter words of anger and impatience after having received Jesus Christ so often, that God of sweetness and peace? Could our eyes, which contemplate so often the Sun of Justice hidden in his sacrament, turn to gaze on dangerous objects? Could our ears, which hear the sacred words that cause Jesus Christ to descend upon our altars, listen to malicious speech dictated by hatred and wickedness, or, in profane spectacles, hear speeches conducive to a loss of innocence? Our heart, finally, where Jesus Christ has reposed so often, could it burn for others rather than for him?

⁴ My very dear friend, let us treat our bodies with greater respect and never allow them to serve sin. We must believe that our bodies, after the resurrection, will share with our souls in our happiness or misfortune for all eternity. Let us never follow the desires of the flesh. It is a perfidious guide which must be subjugated; otherwise, it will revolt against us and drag us along in its fall.

⁵ The great St. Paul says, "I chastise my body so as to bring it into subjection lest, after having preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." Let us make the same reflection, my dear friend, and use the same means. Let us chastise our bodies harshly by means of mortification for fear that after having received so much advice, we end by losing ourselves.

⁶ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you and love you and the Society most tenderly.

Adèle de Batz

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39. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 29, 1806

My God, I wish to find my joy in you alone.

² Although I expect to see you very soon, my very dear friend, I am still going to give in to my desire to write to you and to share with you some reflections on the *acte* for next week: “My God, I wish to find my joy in you alone.”

³ What a beautiful resolution is contained therein: never to take pleasure in the false and vain amusements of the world, to rejoice only in God and with the intention of pleasing him, and to refer all our joys and satisfactions to God alone.

⁴ O yes, my God, I wish to find my joy in you alone! Can the world, with its false charms and its pernicious illusions, offer me the sweetness which you offer to your true children whose only desire is to find their joy in you alone? Yes, in you and for you. Let us pronounce this *acte* with such dispositions as these.

⁵ So we are going to see each other, my dear Agathe. May the joy we shall experience be offered to God, who is its author. Let us repay God for this favor by our efforts to increase in love of him. This is the compensation that God expects of us, and we must not refuse it. Some other time he could very well deprive us of this grace.

⁶ So, you have heard the saintly preacher. But, my dear friend, that is not enough; in fact, it is futile to hear him unless we profit by what we have heard.¹⁹

⁷ This retreat must leave us at least better disposed and more fervent than when we started; that is the reason it is granted to us.

⁸ Alas! Our ministers will become so scarce that this grace will not often be repeated. Let us strive to profit by it. If we do draw benefit from it, perhaps the Lord will have mercy on us and grant us more ministers. What a wonderful reason to urge us to make good use of it.

⁹ Let us neglect nothing to take advantage of this grace. When we abuse grace, we trample underfoot the Blood of Jesus Christ, the source of all the graces offered us. How highly must we value them!

¹⁰ Farewell, my very good friend; I embrace you with all my heart and long for the time when I shall be able to do so in person.

Adèle de Batz

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40. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 6, 1806

My God, I long for you with all my heart!
(*Acte* for the following week)

² I am once again reduced to writing to you, dear Agathe. It is still wonderful that the Lord grants us this mutual satisfaction. Let us profit from it by making this correspondence contribute to his glory and to our advancement in piety

³ We are approaching the great Feast of the Ascension. I sent an agenda to Mme Belloc for the occasion. I hope I shall be given the happiness of receiving Communion. And you, my dear friend, do you think you will, too?

⁴ I propose the *acte* with which I prefaced my letter; it will dispose us for Communion, provided we say it with love and from a full heart.

⁵ My God, I long for you with all my heart! Yes, may our heart melt, as it were, in its desire to possess its God. This lovable Savior will leave us, but we must not lose hope; it is to send us his

¹⁹On the occasion of the great jubilee, Bishop Jacoupy entrusted the evangelization of a good number of parishes to a priest whom he esteemed highly, J.C.F-X. Miquel. The latter started the mission at Agen after the Lenten season of 1806. Adèle was informed of the event and begged her parents to allow her to participate.

consoling Spirit. He has promised him to us, and he is faithful to his promises. Besides, no, he is not leaving us; he stays behind in the adorable sacrament until the end of time. He cannot make up his mind to abandon his dear sheep. Like a tender and vigilant shepherd, he keeps constant watch over his flock. Alas! This flock will abandon him and is the first to surrender to the fangs of the wolf.

⁶ In the ten-day interval between Ascension and Pentecost, my dear friend, let us avoid all sin of any consequence. Let us maintain great purity of conscience, so that the Holy Spirit may descend upon us with all his gifts.

⁷ I hope to spend the holy day of Pentecost with you. We shall write the gifts and fruits of the Holy Spirit on slips of paper and then will draw them by lot to see who gets what. If Mme de Fumel is present, we shall be exactly seven.

⁸ Let us try to make our little assembly deserve the visit of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray earnestly for this grace. The apostles remained in prayer from the Ascension until the day of Pentecost. Uniting ourselves to them, let us pray, at least in our heart, during every instant of the day. I shall propose a suitable *acte* for the week.

⁹ Those of us who will have received Communion on Ascension day could, for the rest of the week, say, “May you be blessed, O Lord, for all your benefactions,” instead of “My God, I long for you with all my heart,” used at the beginning of the week.

¹⁰ Farewell, dear Agathe; I embrace you most tenderly.

Adèle de Batz

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Adèle spent the day of Pentecost at Agen among her friends with whom she followed the retreat exercises preached by Father Miquel. After the feastday, she went with Agathe to visit the missionary at the Hospital of Agen, where he was lodging. They suggested that he enter the association; he was pleased to do so. The time Adèle spent at Agen was also used in recruiting and training associates.

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41. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle chooses the day of the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament to announce her departure for Condom.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 5, 1806

Blessed be the most Holy Sacrament.

² I want to write to you, my very dear friend, before my departure for Condom. I shall leave my letter here, and someone will see that you get it. By that time, I shall have been there several days already.

³ What a delightful week for a heart that truly loves Jesus Christ. Every day, we see him exposed to our view but also exposing himself to a thousand insults. But nothing of all this can induce him to separate himself from us. For it is he who said, “My delight is to be among the children of men.” So a God would make it his delight to dwell among us, and we would not make it ours to be in his presence! Or we dare to come with distracted looks and a dissipated mind!

⁴ Yet it is the same God: the one who is in our churches, and the one who will come to judge the living and the dead on the last day. The difference is that here God is seated on the throne of mercy, whereas then he will be sitting on the throne of justice.

⁵ When we are in the holy place, let our comportment be marked by modesty and recollection.

With the eyes of faith let us see our divine Savior on the altar, always exercising the functions of priest and victim.

⁶ Let us go to him; let us have recourse to him in all our needs; let us reveal to him all our troubles. He is compassionate and will have pity. He stays with us day and night so that we can turn to him at will.

⁷ A fountain is gushing in Israel; let us hasten to drink from it. It is the fountain of living water. He who drinks from it will no longer thirst.

⁸ Let us receive with the utmost respect the blessing which we will be given every night. We must profit by it. Let us ask Jesus Christ to bless us; and let us dispose ourselves so as to receive this blessing worthily.

⁹ I suggest, my dear friend, that we say a *Come, Holy Spirit* so that God might reveal to us those young people who could join our Society. Let us ask him in the same *Come, Holy Spirit* the grace of promoting the glory of God and the manner of drawing souls into his holy service.

¹⁰ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. I suggest that the day you receive my letter you fall asleep in spirit in the blessed Tabernacle while making acts of adoration and love.

¹¹ Again, farewell, my dear friend. I await your letters with impatience. I embrace the Society.

Adèle de Batz

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42. To Agathe Diché, Agen

After three weeks at Condom, Adèle is back at Trenquelléon.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 26, 1806

I resign myself into your hands, O Lord.

² It seems a long time, my dear Agathe, since I have had the pleasure of writing to you. But here I am at Trenquelléon, and I am going to resume my former practice of writing to you every week until the happy day when we shall be together. How I long for that day! My good friend, we shall have to put the interval to good use, so that the Lord may grant us that satisfaction often.

³ How good is our God, my dear friend. God loads us with favors and graces. And how do we show our gratitude? How long will our infidelity last? Will this heart, which is made for God alone, be so ungrateful as to turn from its Creator to the love of a creature? No, O my God, better death than to be so ungrateful. I desire that all my sighs, all my breaths, be so many acts of love issuing from the depths of my heart.

⁴ I hope to receive Communion on Sunday, the Feast of St. Peter. I am sending Dicherette the agenda for the feast.

⁵ Ah! My good friend, let us weep for our infidelities along with this apostle. Let us lament having so often betrayed our divine Master out of human respect. Let us formulate firm resolutions never again to yield to a weakness which is unworthy of a Christian. Our sole object should be to please God. Let us pay little attention to the judgment of others; those are always vain and deceiving.

⁶ I think you share in the joy of knowing that our Society is increasing in membership. I wish the cousin you mentioned might be a part of it. Try to prepare her. My God, how I regret Mlle Pérot; what a good associate she would have been. Do not give up, especially if you can ask her without causing any trouble.

⁷ Farewell, dear and good friend. I embrace you and love you and all the associates.

Adèle de Batz

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43. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 9, 1806

My God, cast some light in my darkness.

² How time flies, my dear and good friend! What a host of reflections the quick passing of time can lead us to make!

³ Do we stop to think that every day we are taking one more step toward the tomb? How are we preparing for that terrible passage from time to eternity? Alas, instead of preparing for death our heart yields ever more to the grip of this sordid world.

⁴ St. Paul cries out, "When shall I be delivered from this body of death?" Meanwhile, we are absorbed in caring for it, satisfying its every desire! That is how we pretend to prepare for death? A saintly death is a boon which we cannot prize too highly, nor purchase too dearly. The lives of Christians who are dead to the world and to everything that could attach them to it are a thousand times more peaceful and happy than those of worldlings, who are so bound to this world that they are afraid to leave it or to lose it.

⁵ Just this thought, "Nothing is stopping me; I am ready to go when it shall please God to call me," is for the soul the sweetest consolation and a source of true happiness. My dear friend, let us try to imitate St. Paul and use the world as if we used it not. That is, let us live as if we lived not; let us live without loving life and all the goods of this life. Let us live for God and in God so as to live eternally in glory with God.

⁶ The *acte* for next week is "My God, cast some of your light into my darkness." Yes, my dear Agathe, let us beg God to enlighten us, to open our eyes, to allow us to see the nothingness of this world, to realize the happiness of belonging to him from the depths of our heart, to be his truly and sincerely, without reserve and irrevocably.

⁷ My dear friend, let us concentrate on pleasing this divine Spouse of our souls. Let us make the most strenuous efforts to uproot from our hearts everything that could displease him, and to install those virtues which are most agreeable to him. Especially must we try to acquire an ardent love, a sincere humility, and a spotless purity. Let us begin with this; we shall have plenty to do if we intend to implant these virtues solidly within us. But what can we not accomplish with the help of the All-Powerful?

⁸ Farewell, dear and sincere friend; I embrace you and the associates most tenderly in our Lord.
Adèle de Batz

⁹ As I finished writing this letter, I received one from Mme de Fumel, who suggests the following *acte* : Holy Virgin, be my helper at the hour of death. The one I have suggested can be used for the following week.

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44. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 17, 1806

My God, cast some light in my darkness.

² My dear friend, does not the God whom we serve deserve our whole heart? Why have we so many reservations in what concerns him? God does not act so toward us, for he showers us abundantly with the most excellent gifts. He leaves his Tabernacle to enter our hearts as often as we wish. What abuse we make of God's goodness! Some day he will grow weary, and we shall seek him in vain. "You will seek me, and you will not find me." Let us search for him now, for this is the favorable time, these are the days of salvation. How God loves the offering of a young and tender heart! Let us offer ours to

him, my dear Agathe, these hearts that beat for none other but him. Let us consecrate to him all our affections. We shall preserve the purity of our hearts only by directing them toward him.

³ O my God, will I always be rebellious toward you? Always unfaithful to your voice, which is so sweet and which exhorts me with such tenderness to do what you command? By my continual hesitations, will I finally exhaust your patience? Will I endlessly thirst for the world and for the satisfaction of my passions, while I show only languor and apathy in your holy service?

⁴ No, my God, it will not be so. With the promptness of the Magi, who set out as soon as they beheld the star, I will do your will the moment it is revealed to me. I shall do my utmost to discover that will, and then waste no time in doing it.

⁵ That, my dear friend, is what we should say to our God while asking for the grace without which we can do nothing. God will never refuse it, if we ask with a humble and submissive heart.

⁶ Farewell, my good friend; I embrace you with all my heart while I wait for the day, so ardently desired, when I shall do so in person.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

45. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 22, 1806

O my God, change my heart!
(Feast of St. Mary Magdalene)

² O my very dear friend, what an example is given us this day by the blessed, loving soul whose feast we are celebrating!

³ During her whole life she had profaned her heart with impure love; but the moment she is converted, her love centers on Jesus Christ. Her gentle heart, made for loving, now loves with an all-consuming love. She finds no better way of making reparation for her wayward affections than to consecrate them henceforth to the Lord. Just as she had passionately loved the world, she now loves our divine Savior. And this is what merited her these consoling words: "Your sins are forgiven because you have loved so much."

⁴ In imitation of this sinner, my tender friend, let us turn everything that has been an occasion of sin for us to the glory of God. For example, have we been too attached to creatures? Well, let all the tenderness and sensitivity of our heart now turn toward the Lord.

⁵ Are we naturally of a lively disposition? Well, by controlling it, let it become an occasion for merit, by turning this vivacity into enthusiasm for our daily duties.

⁶ Do we yearn to please the world? Let this become a desire to please the Lord.

⁷ Are we irritated by contempt? Let us turn this into a sincere sorrow for the times we were out of favor with the Lord.

⁸ Do we find a certain satisfaction in enhancing our appearance? Let us change the object, and put all our skill into adorning our soul with virtues. And so forth.

⁹ Let us prepare ourselves for our approaching visit together, my dear friend, so as to reap the greatest profit.²⁰ It must represent a step forward in our spiritual life. We must seize the opportunity to mutually encourage one another to detachment from creatures—the objective of our challenge.

¹⁰ Have you any word from Mme Pérot? How I regret that she is not a member of our Society.

¹¹ What do you think of the letter from Father Larribeau?²¹ Notice how he speaks of temptations.

²⁰This comment probably refers to Agathe's projected visit to Trenquelléon. See Adèle's letters, nos. 47, 49, 53.

²¹Jean Larribeau, the pastor of Lompian, a parish in the canton of Damazan, was one of the priests who was affiliated to the

Courage then, and let us banish every hint of discouragement and faintheartedness.

¹² Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you heartily, and long for the happy day when I can give you a true embrace.

Adèle de Batz

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46. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 31, 1806

My God, strengthen me
by giving me the Spirit of Fortitude
to keep me from falling.

² Yes, my dear friend, may the Lord give us the Spirit of Fortitude to keep us from falling, for of ourselves we are incapable of resisting any of our tendencies. All next week—when we perform our *actes*—let us ask with all our heart for this Spirit of Fortitude which we need so much. With that strength from above we can defy all the powers of darkness. Yes, “I can do all in the one who strengthens me.” Courage, therefore; let us always put our hopes in God, who never ceases giving us abundant grace. Let us do all that we can, and may faint-heartedness never seduce us. Let us hope in God. He is faithful to his promises; whoever hopes in him will never be disappointed.

³ As a practice of mortification, my good friend, I suggest that we both keep silent once, at a time when we would like to speak. We have so often pronounced evil or useless words. To atone for these we must keep a holy silence.

⁴ Let us omit nothing, my good friend, that could make us advance in virtue. Let us spur each other on in holy emulation. I suggest that on Sunday we reflect in general on how we have spent the week. If we have made some progress, let us bless the Lord and give him all the glory. If we have fallen back, or even if we have only maintained our status quo, let us lament before God and take new resolutions. We must seek the means to correct ourselves as soon as possible, for there is no time to be lost. Time passes, and eternity approaches, when God will separate the chaff from the good grain.

⁵ Dear Agathe, let us advance in virtue and not be backsliders, for not to advance is to fall back.

⁶ May the example of the de Pomier girls,²² our associates, challenge us to advance as these wonderful young women are doing. Alas! Even though we are united to some very holy persons, we remain always the same. What a terrible account we shall have to render for so many graces, so many examples, so many means of salvation.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend. I leave you with these reflections and embrace you from the bottom of my heart.

Adèle de Batz

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47. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Association. From several passages of Adèle’s correspondence we can conclude that he made contact with the Little Society as early as 1805. He became the spiritual guide of a number of the associates, including Adèle. She persuaded him to accept the official title of Director of the Association.

²²During a visit in 1804 to his native region of Villeneuve-de-Marsan (Landes), M. Ducourneau had recruited two associates, Adèle and Rosalie de Pomier. Together with the three Diché girls and Adèle, they formed the nucleus of the “Little Society.”

+ J.M.J.T.

August 7, 1806

My God, I wish to love you alone!

² This is the *acte* that you had proposed, my dear friend, and which we can use during the coming week. It is an ideal preparation for the Communion which we shall doubtless have the happiness of receiving on the day of the Assumption.

³ Let us prepare ourselves for it, my dear Agathe, with more care and more fervor than usual. Like the disciples of Emmaus, may our hearts burn within us when we hear the hidden voice of the Savior in us. Let us be on fire with devotion and burn without ceasing for the Lord, who does not cease to shower us with his favors.

⁴ May our increase in fervor keep pace with the increase in the membership of our Society; otherwise, we can expect the most rigorous and terrible judgment.

⁵ The day is approaching when we shall be united. Well, let us try to increase in merit before the Lord.

⁶ I can add nothing to this, my dear friend, for I am pressed for time.

⁷ Farewell; I embrace you in the Lord.

Adèle de Batz

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48. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 13, 1806

I do not have the time to write you a long letter, my dear and good friend. But I don't want to let this messenger leave without telling you something of the happiness I shall have tomorrow. You will certainly have experienced it by the time you receive this letter. God will have come into our hearts!

² Ah, may he have taken such possession of them that never thereafter may they belong to anyone else! Oh, yes, divine Spouse of my soul, to you I consecrate my heart, to you I consecrate all its longings and all its affections.

³ My dear Agathe, let us draw more profit from this Communion than from all the others. Let us keep Jesus, and never let him depart. May he find his grace in us when he comes on a return visit, and may he rejoice at the progress we shall have made.

⁴ Come, let us revive our zeal; Jesus who is coming to us will help. What can we not do with the help of his powerful arm?

⁵ Let us never stop deploring the sins we have committed in the past; let us drown them in tears of repentance. Would those who have had the misfortune of offending their God be pardoned for finding their joys in the world? A single mortal sin suffices to cause a lifetime of regret. What must we do then, we, who have had the misfortune to offend our Jesus so often?

⁶ Farewell, my very dear friend; believe in the sincerity of my friendship.

Adèle de Batz

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49. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 21, 1806

My God, let your heart guide mine
in all the circumstances of my life.

² How anxious I am to see you, dear Agathe. Yes, my very good friend, it will truly be a pleasure for me. We must try to have this visit contribute to a more fervent love of God. It is precisely for this purpose that God grants it to us.

³ Pray God for me, my dear friend; I am in such need of prayers. I am happy for you that Father Serres is not going to the country; you will therefore not be deprived very long of what must constitute the one source of happiness in our exile.

⁴ Try to arrange to spend as much time as possible here. You are certain to give us great pleasure. Besides, the country air will be very good for you. Ask your sister. . . .

⁵ My dear friend, I gather that you have the happiness of hearing the holy Missionary [Miquel] quite frequently. What joy! How I envy you! How happy we are to be united to him in prayer.²³

⁶ I remember with a great deal of satisfaction the day the two of us went to the hospital to ask him. What a heavenly appearance! A mirror of the purity of his soul. My dear friend, let us carry about us that air of serenity, which is the sign of a sweet and attractive piety. That is the best means of having it imitated and adopted, something we must try to do in our Society, as worthy Father Larribeau told us.

⁷ What joy! What glory in heaven if we could gain souls for God. Let us try our utmost to do so, and may human respect never stop us. Let us work for God and pay no account to what others might say.

⁸ Human respect is a monster which encourages us to avoid good and to commit evil. If we give in, it can vitiate all our actions and deprive us of their merit. Let us see God in all things and everywhere.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; let us not be ingrates after all the favors with which God has blessed us.

¹⁰ I embrace the Society most tenderly. Embrace our most dear Dicherette especially for me.

Adèle de Batz

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50. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 4, 1806

My God, give peace to my soul
for time and for eternity.

² It seems so very long ago that I last wrote to you, dear Agathe. It is with pleasure that I hurry to take up my pen today.

³ We must confess, my dear friend, that our faith is very weak, for had we but a minute amount, how great would be our recollection in the holy place where God himself dwells. How we would tremble before the divine presence of the same God who will judge us and who, already from our altars, makes a terrible appraisal. Good Lord! What is our situation? And we dare appear in the holy temple with a distracted mind! We come to insult Jesus Christ even in his sanctuary!

⁴ I suggest the following practice: the next time we enter a church, we shall make an act of humility and spend a moment without raising our eyes to the tabernacle, confessing our utter unworthiness to be in the presence of God. Then we will fix our gaze on the dwelling where his love keeps him captive.

⁵ If there is a smattering of faith on this earth, would Jesus Christ be left alone and abandoned almost all day in our churches? Oh! My dear friend, if we are not able to keep him company as we would like, let us at least send frequent aspirations toward the sacred precincts where he dwells. Let us transport ourselves there often in spirit. Let us adore, make reparation, and pray. He is among us to hear our prayers. Let us go to him as to the most tender Father, which in truth he is.

⁶ I hope to have the consolation of receiving him on the day of the Nativity. And you, dear friend,

²³A reference to Miquel's willingness to be associated with the Little Society.

will you be blessed with this incomparable happiness?

⁷ What did you think of Father Larribeau's letter? I hope Dicherette can make an associate of the young neighbor of whom you spoke. Her success would please Father Larribeau immensely.

⁸ How practical is his advice for us when we are obliged to take part in social gatherings. And how he insists that we should try to avoid them. Let us profit by his advice. The atmosphere of the world is always contagious. We come out of it more guilty than when we went in.

⁹ Farewell, dear and good friend; love me as I love you, and I will ask for nothing more.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I embrace the Society.

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51. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 9, 1806

I have little time to spend with you, my dear Agathe, for my aunties are here [from Condom] and I have an urgent task to perform. However, I cannot resign myself to not sending you a few words to encourage you to love your God more and more, to make him a constant offering of your heart and of your whole person, to detach yourself ever more from created things. That is our "challenge," but we have not been very faithful to it.

² As we move from one feast to another, we must dispose ourselves to celebrate them by putting into practice the spirit of the mystery represented. The next feast is that of All Saints; as we approach it, let us take one of the saints as a model to imitate to the best of our ability. We can do anything, with the help of God.

³ Saints were human, as we are; subject to the same passions, weak as we are. They differed in that they were hard on themselves, and we are not. However, now they are receiving ample reward for the slight sufferings they underwent.

⁴ The same happiness is awaiting us. We may be enjoying it in a few days perhaps, if we are faithful. This idea should revive our courage and our desire to attain this celestial fatherland. Its possession depends upon us; how shortsighted of us if we let it slip our grasp! So, courage and trust in God, in whom we can do anything and without whom we can do nothing, for of ourselves we are weakness and infinite wretchedness.

⁵ Farewell, dear friend; I leave you with these reflections. I embrace you in spirit until the happy day when I can greet you in person.

Adèle de Batz

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52. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 18, 1806

O Jesus, who are all love,
give me your love!

² This is the *acte*, my dear friend, that I propose for next week. As an expression of fervor, may it inflame our love toward him to whom it is addressed.

³ I hope to have the happiness of receiving Communion next Sunday. And you, good friend, will you have that privilege? Ah! When we are in possession of our Jesus, let us try to keep him and not let

him escape. We should bring the grace we have received from one Communion to the next one. By so doing, we can increase in grace and draw profit from our Communions. If afterward we return to what we were, and our Lord always finds in us the same weaknesses, how can we make any progress in virtue? We would always be starting over again.

⁴ Let us be deeply interested in our spiritual advancement; let us try to do all things to please God. Let us not listen to the demands of nature, but to those of grace.

⁵ The examples of the associates should be an encouragement to us. What do you expect from the new associate? I think the one to be received by Father Larribeau will be excellent. What a saintly man, this Father Larribeau!

⁶ Did Serène²⁴ come to the fair this time? Did you give her the letters? The poor thing! I pity her for not receiving an answer from Father Larribeau. She must want it very much. But God wishes to teach her to detach herself gradually from everything, in order to attach herself more firmly to himself. I am sure that God has great and merciful designs upon her.

⁷ God still treats us like children. He sends us many consolations because of our extreme frailty. What goodness in this tender, this best of fathers! Oh, let us love him, let us repay his love. Let our love be ardent, let it be for him alone. May our hearts rather than our lips recite the *acte* for this coming week: "O Jesus, who are all love, give me your love."

⁸ Farewell, my very good friend; I embrace you in the sacred wounds of our Lord.

⁹ Are you mindful of the rendezvous of the Society at three o'clock?

Adèle de Batz

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53. To Agathe Diché, Agen.

+ J.M.J.T.

September 25, 1806

My very dear friend, the time for our meeting is approaching. Let us see to it that God finds glory in it. Yes, the only objective we must propose to ourselves in all things is the glory of God and the accomplishment of the divine will.

² My friend, you will have the happiness of hearing an instruction by Father D[ousset]. He gives one every Sunday, and he permits us to attend. They are very stirring, I assure you.

³ We are continually receiving new graces, my dear friend; let us avail ourselves of them. Let us follow the example of the most fervent among our associates. What an impression of fervor we get of our dear Henriette de Sainte-Croix. She is our age; let us take her as our model. Her desire is to love God and to be separated from the world.²⁵ Let us at least be detached in spirit and affections. Our hearts must love God above all else. Let us have a true horror for the maxims of the world and never be their slaves. Let us be solid as a rock. We must remain bound to the Lord and to his divine cross, which will be our support and our armor against our most deadly enemies.

⁴ Until All Saints, I am taking the Blessed Virgin as my model. I wish to be like her: humble, gentle, patient, avoiding even the shadow of evil. What an assignment! But with the grace and the help of God, I can hope for everything. Confidence and determination.

⁵ Dicherette must have told you that I hope soon to see our respected Father Larribeau. I hope with all my heart that he will find you here. My happiness would be complete were you to hear this holy man speak of God.

⁶ Farewell, my very good friend; see if you can have the new associate propose an *acte*. I greet her

²⁴Serène de Saint-Amans, an associate from the suburbs of Agen.

²⁵The friendship of Adèle and Mlle Henriette de Sainte-Croix had led to the foundation of the groups of Valeilles and Montflanquin, not far from Villeneuve-sur-Lot (Lot-et-Garonne).

and the others warmly.

Adèle de Batz

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54. To Agathe Diché, Agen.

+ J.M.J.T.

October 9, 1806

I put no letter for you in the last mail delivery, dear and gentle friend, for I expected to see you much sooner. But since you have not come, I shall wait no longer before writing to you.

² My good friend, I await your arrival with impatience. During the time we shall spend together, let us try to really love the Lord, to love him with all our hearts, and to do our utmost to please him. The moment we catch sight of each other, let us make an act of love of God. Let us beg God for the grace never to be an occasion of sin one for the other.

³ My! How I wish you could meet Father Larribeau! I would be sorely vexed indeed if he were unable to come. But I fear that is what might happen. I met some priests who had visited him and then stopped here. The burdens of his ministry prevented him from accompanying them. However, may the will of God be done. If his visit is destined to be of some benefit to us, I am certain the Lord will arrange it—that must be our only objective.

⁴ I regret for your sake that Father Serres is absent. Use the time of this privation to prepare yourself more carefully for the reception of the sacraments, to desire them more eagerly, to make progress in self-correction so as to present to Jesus Christ a heart that is loving, whose blemishes have been purified by the flames of purest love. Consider this a time of penance and privation which your sins have justly deserved.

⁵ Keep yourself humbly before God, especially when you assist at holy Mass. Admit your unworthiness to approach a God who is so holy, who is the Bread of Angels. Yet make known your great desire to receive him. Not only will this be very meritorious, but you will also become more and more pleasing to the celestial Spouse of our souls.

⁶ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I love and embrace you most tenderly and look forward to the pleasure of seeing you in person.

Adèle de Batz

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There is no correspondence for more than a month. The reason: the two friends were enjoying the intimate atmosphere of Trenquelléon. After Agathe left, Mme Belloc came to spend some time at the château.

55. To Agathe Diché, Agen.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 12, 1806

My God, when shall I be able to see you?
(This is the *acte* for next week;
please inform the associates.)

² I must parcel my time, my dear and good friend. While Dicherette is attending to some personal matters, I wish to spend some time writing to you.

³ Well, my good friend, what progress are you making in the love of God? Has it remained

lukewarm since you left me? Are we always as cold toward the best of Masters? Oh! Let us awake! What are we waiting for? Can our lovable Jesus give us anything more? To win our love he gives himself!

⁴ My dear Agathe, let us no longer be insensitive toward such goodness. Let us sacrifice to him, once and for all, everything that in us displeases him. Could we refuse him the sacrifice of our evil tendencies, when our salvation has cost him so much? How is it possible not to hate sin, when we see the suffering it has caused our divine Savior?

⁵ I am enclosing a letter from Father Larribeau. I received it the day after your departure. As you see, he announces his visit but does not say when. What a holy man! We must profit by his advice and counsel.

⁶ Please show this letter to the associates. As you see, he submits the young women to many tests before admitting them. He is right, for, if this “little flock” is to be the delight of the Lord, it must be composed only of fervent souls.

⁷ What a wonderful motive for all of us associates to take a good look at ourselves. It will move us not to slacken our efforts; to continue the struggle with courage; to advance, lest we fall back—for that is what will happen. We must choose one or the other. Ladies, choose!

⁸ So far I have made no mention of the sadness I experience at being separated from you, but only of the great happiness I have in the possession of my dear friend. Our every wish cannot be satisfied. I shall make no mention of her trip, for she herself will write to you.

⁹ No one here has forgotten you; that includes Mme Pachan and the whole family.

¹⁰ Today, I went to Vianne with my dear Dicherette; she is very good at finding the right roads.

¹¹ Farewell, my gentle and good Agathe. I love you sincerely in God. A thousand kisses.

Adèle de Batz

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56. To Agathe Diché, Agen.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 20, 1806

O my God, from this moment on
I give myself entirely to you!

² My dear Agathe, that worthy, that respectable Father Larribeau has just left. He arrived Tuesday evening. He gave us an instruction on the Church and on the incomparable happiness of having been born in it, and then said the rosary with us.

³ On Wednesday he spoke on the love we should have for our God and again said the rosary with us.

⁴ Dicherette and I spoke at length of the Society, which he has so much at heart. He wants to see it grow with the addition of worthy members. He spoke a great deal about God and did so with enthusiasm. How I regret that you were not here! I suppose God wanted to deprive you of that satisfaction; let us adore his holy will.

⁵ How I pity poor Serène; she was often the topic of our conversations. Father will send me a letter for her when, somehow, I find the way to get it to her. She is well on the way to heaven; what a tragedy if she were to lose her crown! He will plead with her to have courage and perseverance.

⁶ And what of Mlle Elisa de Saint-Beauzeil? I would like her to join us, but once again, no short sleeves! Father Larribeau spoke strongly against that fashion.²⁶

⁷ Be involved: recruit, enroll new members, and win souls for Jesus Christ. Above all else, may we

²⁶The oppression of the Revolution was followed by a wave of pleasure seeking, of license, and material rejoicing. The prevailing fashions favored indecency in dress, deliberately drawing attention to the figure. Under Larribeau's leadership, Adèle opposes the trend.

save our own souls. That is our objective, our sole preoccupation; an eternity is at stake. Let us give ourselves completely to God. Let us profess our intention clearly by the *acte* of the next week suggested by Father Larribeau.

⁸ Now let us take up the things I would like you to do. For these I beg a thousand pardons. I refer to those things we have to embroider for Father Larribeau and his church.

⁹ Would you please purchase 22 cm of cambric, the best you can find; and 22 cm of taffeta of a beautiful rose color.

¹⁰ Mme Belloc would like you to send her two little skeins of spun cotton for embroidering. She also asks that you look in the drawer of her cupboard. In a box, you will find the rest of the taffeta that was on the stand of the Blessed Sacrament in the chapel. See what kind of taffeta was used, and buy an equal quantity of a crimson color. I would really appreciate it if you could send all this by Saturday.

¹¹ Farewell, my very gentle friend, and believe that I am for life your dear friend in our Lord.

Adèle de Batz

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57. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 27, 1806

Alas! O my God, how could I be in peace
when you are so far from me and I from you!
(*Acte* proposed by Dicherette)

² This *acte* is well chosen, my dear friend. Let us recite it from the bottom of our hearts. How could we be at peace even for an instant, if we were in disgrace and banished from our sovereign Lord, the only treasure of our soul?

³ Had this God of goodness and mercy not waited for us to do penance, we might now be burning in hell with the damned for all eternity. Many of those in hell are no more guilty than we, and yet the Lord did not favor them in such an extraordinary manner. What a reason for us to revive our love and gratitude toward our divine Benefactor! At the same time, it should make us more wary of sin, that horrible sin which crucifies our Jesus anew.

⁴ We must value the grace of our God more highly than all the goods of this earth. Let us be ready to sacrifice and renounce them all, rather than offend God in the slightest way. We must conceive a true horror for sin and look upon it, as in truth it is, as the world's greatest evil.

⁵ I would so like our letters to reach our dear Serène and help her bear the cross which God is sending her. I suggest we say a *Hail Mary* for her on Saturday.

⁶ The pall and the cloth on which the Blessed Sacrament will rest, and which we are embroidering for the worthy Father Larribeau, are very fine indeed. Dicherette will show you the design; I know you will find it charming. I believe the holy man will be very pleased.

⁷ Farewell, my dear Agathe, embrace your beloved sisters for me. I suggest to them, and to you, my dear friend, a spiritual communion after you and they have read my letter.

⁸ Farewell, again. A thousand kisses from one whose friendship will end only with life itself.

Adèle de Batz

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58. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+J.M.J.T.

December 4, 1806

My God, may I attach myself to you alone!

(Acte for next week)

² Yes, my good friend, if we allow ourselves to be attached to God alone, we shall be happy. Only the love of God can help us support the trials of this life and enable us to make the sacrifices which religion imposes. Let us love God; that love will smooth out all the difficulties on the road to virtue. If we reflect often on what a God has suffered for us, we shall be ashamed not to be able to suffer anything.

³ St. Peter, persecuted in Rome, wanted to leave the city to escape the persecution. He met the Lord, bearing his cross and heading for the city. He was surprised to hear Jesus say to him, “Your flight from suffering is renewing my sorrows, and I am going back to be crucified again.” (I think this is the gist of the account of that meeting; I find it very touching indeed!)

⁴ Yes, if we shy away from the cross, if we do not carry it as we should, we load it anew on Jesus’ shoulders and reopen the bloody wounds which his love inflicted on him. Ah! Let us banish that ingratitude and suffer with patience, with courage; let us engage in a holy combat against nature and our passions and say from the heart, “My God, may I bind myself to you alone!”—My friend, please suggest an *acte* for a future week.

⁵ What you say, my dear Agathe, about Mlle Elisa [de Bonnal] makes me hope that she will join our group. Do whatever is in your power to have her admitted. Already I love her very much.

⁶ Should you meet the Dumas sisters and Mlle Sérès, speak to them about the Society and give them all my best.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend, my friendship for you will end only with my life.

⁸ On Monday, Dicherette will give you the agenda for the Feast of the Conception of Mary.

Adèle de Batz

⁹ I embrace the associates.

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59. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 11, 1806

Hasten to my side, Lord,
so that I myself might come to you.

² God really does come to us in haste, my dear and good friend, this God of goodness; but do we hasten to go to him? Alas! He looks for us, and we run from him. He gives us the most pressing invitations: “Come to me, all of you,” and we, always deaf to his voice, follow the path traced for us by our own passions.

³ However, the time has now come to reform, for this is the moment when the divine Infant will be born. “These are the days of salvation, this is the favorable time.” It is high time for us to prepare the way for the Lord, to furnish a dwelling in our souls that is worthy of him, to zealously endeavor to keep him after we have had the delight of receiving him. Let us tell him, “Ah! Lord, stay with us for the day is ending.” “Save us, Lord, for without you we perish.”

⁴ Let us persistently ask the God of all strength for the courage to overcome the enemies of our salvation. O God of my salvation, help me in my weakness, for without you I shall fall.”

⁵ Yes, my dear Agathe, ours is an age of temptation; the call to combat has sounded. Let us arm ourselves with true courage and fight unremittingly; with the aid of the All-Powerful, we shall surely be victorious. God, who is faithful to his promises, has assured us of his help. “He who trusts in me will never perish,” said the Lord.

⁶ But let us try to flee from danger. The Holy Spirit said, “Whoever loves danger will perish in it.” So, my dear friend, as we flee, let us look to God for all our help. Let us love God more than ever, and

remain firm in his holy service.

⁷ Dicherette will have informed you that we have three new associates: Mlle Joséphine Campagnol, Mlle Angélique Campagnol, and Mlle Aurore Lafore.²⁷ O dear friend, our new associates are very fervent. May those of Agen not be outdone by them in piety, for they were the first, and they must still be the first in fervor.

⁸ How impatient I am to see Mlle Elisa. I am sending Mme Belloc the list of our associates. I hope God is showering them with his blessings; he must be, for their numbers are growing so fast.

⁹ Farewell, dear friend; I have other letters to write and I have barely the time to tell you that I embrace you with all my heart in the Lord, who is our celestial Spouse.

Adèle de Batz

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60. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 17, 1806

Come, O divine Infant Jesus, come!

² This is my last letter to you before Christmas, my dear and good friend. Let us speak a little of him who will be born for us, and let us invite him to be born in our hearts.

³ This divine Savior will be born poor, stripped of all the conveniences of this life, like an outcast, he to whom the earth belongs. And we are so much in love with our comfort! To urge him to come and be born in our hearts, let us conscientiously practice mortification. The interval between now and his birth must be a time of penance.

⁴ He is born in a stable in the midst of lowly animals. What humility! It is also by the deepest humility that we shall attract him to ourselves. Let us be truly convinced that we are nothing, that we can do nothing, that we have nothing, and in patience and silence let others think that we are utterly incapable of anything.

⁵ Jesus is born in the darkness of night. We must learn from this to love the hidden life in God, to avoid the world, and to love solitude and silence. It is in solitude that God speaks to the heart.

⁶ I am giving Dicherette the agenda for the day of Christmas. We shall doubtless all have the joy of receiving Communion on this great day. Let us receive it with the utmost fervor, for it will be the last one of the year. We must make it in reparation for all the failings of this year, especially for our indifference in our Communions.

⁷ Tell me something of your Advent preacher, if you went to hear him.

⁸ I think it will soon be the time for the mission of Condom; we shall have to write to the missionary to have him remember us.

⁹ If Serène [de Saint-Amans] were in Agen I think she should write, for he knows her handwriting; I think that would be good. I hope that she will answer Father Larribeau as soon as she gets back to town. She owes him that much for all the interest he has shown in her situation.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you and love you very much.

Adèle de Batz

¹¹ The young Campagnol sisters are from the area around Valeilles and are known to the Lagrange sisters.

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²⁷The Campagnol sisters were from Montflanquin, near Valeilles (see Adèle's letter, no. 60). They are not to be confused with the Compagno sisters, who were from Condom (see Adèle's letters, nos. 245, 295, and others).

61. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 24, 1806

In a short while, my dear friend, this present year will have passed us by. How have we profited by it? How many graces we have received! The Mission, numerous instructions, so many more prayers in which we share due to the increase in the Society. Finally, how many benefits which, perhaps, have only made us more guilty. So many holy examples we have not followed. Alas! What an account should we render if this year were the last of our lives! Yet, how many there are who will not even see its ending! Might we be of their number?

² If we add to the wasted graces all the faults committed, all the bad thoughts when our memory should have been occupied with God and the means of pleasing him, so many words that we now regret having uttered—not to mention the useless ones for which we shall have to render a frightening account—so many actions, omissions of our duties. Good Lord! How could we bear your glance, if you were to call us before your redoubtable tribunal now?

³ Yet the good Lord tells us that his day will come like a thief, when we least expect it. So let us always keep ourselves in readiness, my good friend, and try to end this year with a humble and contrite heart. Such will never be spurned by the Lord.

⁴ Let us beg for divine mercy in the crib of the infant Jesus, and we shall not be rebuffed. Let us all hasten there, sinners and just. Let us surround his crib and adore the lovable name of Jesus, which he consents to adopt for our sake.

⁵ Dicherette will give you the agenda for New Year's eve and for New Year's day. She must have told you that I strongly agree that you should write to Mlle Elisa [de Bonnal]. How she does please me! My dear friend, she pleases you also; this makes my desire so much the greater.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you tenderly in spirit in the stable of our adorable Jesus.

Adèle de Batz

⁷ I embrace the associates.

⁸ Do whatever you can for Mlle Sérès.

⁹ Have you told her about our three o'clock rendezvous?

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62. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 1, 1807

Be born in my heart, O divine Jesus,
and reign there forever.

² My good and dear friend, I come to wish you a blessed New Year. My wish is that you will profit by the days the Lord is good enough to grant us and that, at the end of this year, we will be better than we are now.

³ This may be the last year of our lives; let us spend it as we would like to have spent the last. May our edifying life be a continual preparation for death; then, whether we die suddenly, or in bed, we shall be ready.

⁴ We have taken one more step toward the tomb and have one year less to live than last year. Good Lord! Are we more fervent for all that? Let us try to change that and move forward, for whoever does not advance, falls back.

⁵ I am including a copy of our Rule of Life for Mlle Sérès, along with a list of our associates. Please give them to her along with my compliments.

⁶ So you are the one, my dear Agathe, who have been Mlle Elisa's good apostle! Continue, dear friend, your gracious attentions toward her so that she might grasp our spirit. What an excellent associate I hope we have in her. You must encourage her to follow the example of her sister.

⁷ I suggest, my good friend, that you make it a point to show to the associates the letters of the Society, so that we might be united in spirit and intention, and so that our edifying communications might stimulate them more and more.

⁸ Now take our associates of Villeneuve de Marsan and those of Valeilles, for instance: they exchange everything. Those of Agen must in no way be second to them. If we do not dialogue either by letters or by word of mouth, or by exchanging one another's letters, we shall be like an ordinary confraternity whose only objective is to share in prayer. This is M. Ducourneau's opinion.

⁹ When I next have the joy of coming to Agen, I shall make many new acquaintances. Since my last visit there, four new members have joined us. It will be a real pleasure to meet them. Meanwhile, I embrace them all most tenderly, both the old and the new.

¹⁰ I am sending Dicherette an agenda for Epiphany. On that great feast, let us thank God who summoned us to the bosom of the Church by calling the gentiles, whose descendants we are. It is one of the principal Christian feasts.

¹¹ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you. I suggest that Sunday night you fall asleep in the crib of Bethlehem.

Adèle de Batz

¹² Do you embroider?

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63. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 6, 1807

O my God, may I put to good use
all the graces you will grant me this year.

² Yes, Jesus is mine, I have no fear. He is with me, he has given himself to my soul, he is my Savior, my tender Father, my lovable Spouse. Who could take him away from me? Can he be compared to any other one on this earth? Yes, I am his forever, unreservedly, irrevocably.

³ Today I drew up the simple rule we had suggested for our observance of Epiphany. Like the Magi, my dear friend, let us not return from the crib by the same route. That is, let us lead an entirely new life, a changed life, one transformed in God. Thoughts like these should be suggested by the incident of the voyage of the Magi.

⁴ I read today, my good friend, where it is said that young women can earn a crown akin to that of the true martyrs. It is a reward for our struggles against our senses and our passions.

⁵ Yes, my dear Agathe, and this sort of martyrdom is almost as meritorious as the real thing. After all, what courage do we not need to resist the terrible assaults of our hearts. But there is a God who will combat with us and guarantee the victory, if we resist courageously. My dear friend, let us struggle with valor and decision under the standard of our divine Leader.

⁶ I have written to the Missionary. I am sending the letter to Dicherette to see whether you all approve of it.

⁷ I am returning Mlle Elisa's letter; I find it very well written. If she had the time to write, she would be a good contributor. She interests me very much. Please give my greetings to her, and also to Mlle Sérès.

⁸ Farewell, dear and darling friend; I love you and embrace you.
Adèle de Batz

⁹ Mme Belloc will surely have informed you that Delphine de Fumel has written to me again, and that she has finally resolved not to withdraw from the Society. You may inscribe her name, and that of Joséphine Dalbert, in the catalogue kept by Mlle Sérès and Mlle Elisa, adding the latter's name also.

¹⁰ We now number twenty-four, my dear friend. May Jesus find his delight in our Society. We must keep him with us by our fervor and our virtue.²⁸

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64. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle's brother is preparing to leave for Paris, where he will continue his studies. He will be accompanied by M. Ducourneau, his tutor.

+ J.M.J.T.

January 15, 1807

O my God who died for me,
give me the courage to suffer for you.

² I can dispose of very little time, dear Agathe, for my brother is about to leave, and we all have much to do. But I will not be deprived of the sweet satisfaction of writing you a short note.

³ My good friend, we should be more fervent during this season when the empire of the devil easily outdistances that of our adorable Master. To compensate Jesus somewhat for so many outrages, see what kind of holy preparation that worldlings make to get ready for Lent and the feast of the paschal Lamb!

⁴ My tender friend, we must be wiser; while the worldlings are in the midst of their feastings, let us lament before God and beg pardon for them, using the words made sacred by our divine Savior: "Pardon them, for they know not what they are doing."

⁵ How true it is! Most of these unfortunate people know not the evil they are doing. Of course, they should seek instruction, and they are very guilty for not doing so, especially for not believing all that the preachers tell them on the matter.

⁶ And yet, my good friend, how much greater would be our guilt if we partook of these pleasures, after the Lord has revealed their vanity. We must thank God repeatedly for this special grace and be faithful to it.

⁷ I certainly hope that not a single one of our associates will cause us sorrow by taking part in those follies, and that they will be remarked for their exemplary conduct before God and before others, growing in virtue as they advance in age.

⁸ I expect to receive a letter from you today; I am waiting patiently. How sweet it is to correspond with my good friends.

⁹ How I pity poor Mlle Pérot for not having this possibility. Do you know whether she has received the handbag you embroidered for her? What a wonderful associate she would have been; I am so sorry she is not one of us. But, what can we do? Let us wait with patience. If God wants to give us this precious gift, God will certainly furnish the means.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear and tender friend; I embrace you in spirit in the holy Tabernacle where I recommend you fall asleep on Saturday.

²⁸After witnessing the good performed by the Association, a number of priests entered into a prayer relationship with it, and helped to recruit new members. Besides Miquel and Larribeau, there were the pastors of Condom and of Valeilles, an assistant at Agen, etc.

¹¹ A thousand friendly greetings to the associates.
Adèle de Batz

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65. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 21, 1807

O my God, redouble my love for you.

² I hope to have the happiness of receiving my God in a few days, my very dear friend.

³ Ah! How exquisite is the taste of this celestial manna! It should fill us with disgust for the poisoned crumbs which the world offers. We should always be discovering new flavors in this Bread of Angels; yet, how cold we are when we approach it! We should be seized with holy trembling at the sight of this divine food; yet we receive it almost distractedly. That is why we see so little result from its reception. We receive the Bread of the strong, and we are forever bowed down under the same frailties.

⁴ The reason is that we lack the dispositions demanded by the Lord for sharing in the abundant graces accompanying the reception of his adorable Body. My dear friend, henceforth let us pay more attention to our preparation for so saintly an act; by our fervor, let us merit not to lose the graces welling from this divine spring.

⁵ Above all, my dear friend, let us practice charity and purity. The God we receive loves all persons without distinction. We must never receive him with a heart that harbors ill will against another. Let us try to have that love for our sisters and brothers which allows us to renounce our own inclinations and our dearest interests, so as to preserve the great good of peace. He is the God of peace; do we want to receive him with a heart troubled by spite and impatience?

⁶ We receive the all pure and all holy God. How carefully must we avoid anything that could tarnish so excellent and so delicate a virtue. Let us resolve to purify ourselves as soon as possible of anything that could displease the divine Spouse of our souls.

⁷ My good friend, I am sending Dicherette a letter I have from Mme de Sainte-Agnès.²⁹ How fervent are our associates! Let us try to imitate them and justify the good opinion they have of us.

⁸ Speak to our associates of these fervent ones, that they might be encouraged to love ever more the sovereign Good of our souls. Please give them my greetings.

⁹ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I am going to have lunch with M. Ducourneau. I embrace you with true tenderness.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ Father told me, my friend, that you were embroidering a rose; tell me on what.

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66. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 28, 1807

O my love, keep constant watch
at the door of my heart.

²⁹Mme de Sainte-Agnès was an associate, a religious from Villeneuve-de-Marsan (Landes). The influence of the first associates, the de Pomier girls, had spread. They also attracted Désirée, Sophie, Julie, Henriette, and Emilie de Portets, all members of a family which would gain a certain notoriety under the Restoration of the Monarchy.

² You would have been overjoyed, dear and good friend, to read the letter which our saintly Missionary sent me. You also will be greatly pleased to read that of the respected Father Larribeau. Show it to all our associates, Mlle Sérès, Mlle Elisa, and Mme de Saint-Amans, who could pass it on to the Dumas sisters.

³ I must tell you, my dear friend, that I wrote to Mlle Adélaïde Compagno of Condom, inviting her to join our Society. She must be about twenty-nine years of age. So outstanding is her virtue that her sisters believe she has preserved her baptismal innocence. What a boon for us if she accepts! Then she can recruit the young ladies of Condom whom I do not know well enough to approach. When I visit that town, we can confer and discuss the increase to our dear Society. She may have acquaintances in other towns, and thanks to her we might spread afar. May all succeed for the greater glory of God.

⁴ She will also be in a position to confer with the Missionary (Father Miquel) who is staying with her. I trust it is the good Lord who inspired me with this thought.

⁵ Continue to keep stimulating our companions to ever greater efforts, dear Agathe. Elisa's letter is charming; how I love her. I only wish her sister could be admitted. She may perhaps know of some pious young ladies?

⁶ My dear Agathe, with the increase in membership of our Society, may our own love for our adorable Master also increase, our love for the Spouse who is the source of our union. With the increase in graces, let us show our gratitude to the sovereign Dispenser who lavishes them on us.

⁷ If we profit by the talent entrusted to us by the father of the family, he will give us many others. Let us work steadily in the vineyard of our soul, so that it may bear abundant fruits in virtue and all kinds of good deeds. "Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire." Let us hasten to bear this fruit, so that we might have an abundant harvest in time of need.

⁸ Let us make a provision of good deeds for the great voyage of eternity, which we will undertake perhaps sooner than we think. Let us always be ready, with our lamps well oiled. The Spouse will come at the hour when we least expect him, and the banquet hall will be closed to those who are not ready to enter when he comes.

⁹ Farewell, my dear and good friend; consider that you have no truer friend than myself.
Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ Mme Pachan asks me to greet you warmly.

¹¹ All my best to our dear associates.

¹² Please show the Missionary's letter to all, so that the fervor of the group may increase.

+ + +

67. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 5, 1807
Feast of St. Agatha!

Grant pardon, O Lord, to all who offend you!

² Happy feastday, dear Agathe! On this day the Church celebrates the memory of your saintly Patroness.

³ She was a young virgin. Learn from her, dear friend, to despise the vain satisfactions of this lowly world, and to long only for eternal goods. At a tender age she had the happiness of carrying off, along with the virgin's palm, the crown of martyrdom. She was able to despise the torments and to keep the faith she had sworn to her divine Spouse. Whereas we, my good friend, cannot suffer the least thing for our God. The smallest sacrifice seems too painful. How could we suffer martyrdom, if the occasion presented itself?

⁴ And yet, this is a possibility. We had examples in the recent unhappy Revolution. So let us take

courage, for whoever is faithful in little things will be faithful in more important ones. The devil is prowling about us, dear Agathe; let us remain firm in the assurance God gives us of divine help.

⁵ We shall soon enter into a period of penance; let us try to make our passions fast even more than our bodies. This is the spiritual fast, without which the other is nothing and leads to nothing.

⁶ During these forty days of Lent, let us prepare ourselves to receive the paschal Lamb in a heart that is pure and worthy of him. Let us try to make such progress that by the end of Lent we may rise with Jesus Christ to a new life.

⁷ We receive the ashes on the first day of Lent; let us assist at this ceremony with recollection. Let us recall that we are, in fact, only ashes and dust, and that we must never forget it if we are to keep our humility—for we shall return to dust.

⁸ In order to dispose us to prepare a heavenly dwelling for our poor soul once it is separated from the body, let us learn from this ceremony the utter vanity of adorning so solicitously a body which is dust and which will return to dust, and of being so fastidious in its care.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you a thousand times. I recommend that your last waking thought on Tuesday [*Mardi gras*] be for Jesus Christ, crucified again by the excesses and debaucheries of that day of dissipation.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I embrace our dear associates.

+ + +

68. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 8, 1807

Remember: you are dust,
and into dust you shall return.

² How humiliating are these words, and how they show us our lowliness and nothingness. What have we to be proud of, who are but dust and ashes? How can we have a high opinion of ourselves?

³ We are not the result of our own handiwork. We cannot add a cubit to our stature. All that we have comes from God; yet we often rebel against this God, our Creator and our sovereign Master.

⁴ Let us avoid and resolutely shun the wicked sin of pride, which is a formal affront we make to our God. Let us give God credit for the little good that is in us; that should stifle any vain thoughts and preserve any merit we might acquire.

⁵ Humility is a precious pearl, and blessed is the one who possesses it. She is more wealthy than if she had the whole world at her disposal. Pride is the sin of the devil, for that angel of darkness is the father of pride. That is the sin which, from the heights of heaven, plunged him into hell.

⁶ So let us put on the saintly virtue of humility, especially during this holy season devoted to penance. Humility should accompany our fasts, thus making them pleasing to God. Let us fast to please God and not others; it is God alone who will reward us.

⁷ Our only objective should be to please the sovereign Ruler of all things; to never do anything out of human respect. How vile that attitude which attributes to a creature what should belong in all justice to the Creator. “The Son of man will blush before his Father for the Christian who will have blushed for him before others.”

⁸ Today, we were marked with ashes; during Lent let us try to reduce our bad habits to ashes. Let us first take the resolution, and then strive to eliminate at least one defect during Lent, so that we might celebrate worthily the Feast of Easter and deserve to rise spiritually in Jesus Christ.

⁹ Today we were marked with ashes as a sign that we were adopting a spirit of penance. Let us keep that spirit during Lent, and may a humbled and contrite spirit accompany our fasts. Greater fervor

and enthusiasm are required during this holy season, and our penance must incline Heaven in our favor by doing it violence.

¹⁰ I share your sorrow about your friend, but M. Ducourneau cannot meet with her; he will not be making any visits. That is one of your crosses, my dear friend, and these we need if we are to get to heaven. Calvary is a surer guide than Tabor.

¹¹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; never doubt my sincere and tender friendship.

Adèle de Batz

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69. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+J.M.J.T.

February 18, 1807

O my God,
make my heart an offering worthy of you.

² What good news I have for you, dear Agathe! The holy Missionary remembers both you and me. Let me tell you all about it.

³ My aunts [in Condom] informed me that he was to pass at the end of the avenue last Monday. So we stationed ourselves there. Sure enough, he passed by in a coach with the pastor of Condom. Mother stopped the coach and invited them to spend the night at Trenquelléon; they were unable to accept, for they were expected elsewhere.

⁴ Just think how happy I would have been to have this holy man stay at our house. We would have asked him to give us an instruction. But let me return to what I wanted to say. The pastor of Condom asked me why I had not attended the Mission. I told him that I had heard the Missionary at Agen. Father Miquel said, "Yes, I think I saw you at Agen; you were there with another young lady." I said that it was true.

⁵ You must be thrilled to learn that this worthy man was able to remember us so well. Now we can be certain that he will never forget our Society.

⁶ Father Pachan, in an effort to have him stop by, exclaimed, "But, for the love of God. . . !" "Ah!" he said, "but it is precisely for the love of God that I must continue on the road."

⁷ Let us now say a word, dear friend, about him for whom the Missionary is working: about our God. Let us learn from the example of his minister how to be zealous for God's glory and how to love God and serve him with all our strength. That is the reason for our creation.

⁸ Remember with what devotion Father Miquel prayed in the pulpit; let us pray with the same attention and fervor. It is the same God and the same heaven that we wish to gain; let us take the same means. Do we think heaven can be bought for a pittance, when so many saints have paid so dearly for it? It would not be just! Let us imitate the example of these generous athletes and work tirelessly to gain a blessed eternity.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you tenderly and suggest that, as you fall asleep Saturday, you do so desiring holy Communion.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ A thousand greetings to all the associates.

+ + +

70. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 25, 1807

O my God,
may you be the sole object of my desire.

² Yes, dear friend, may our hearts pine for God alone. Yes, God alone is the worthy object of our longing. Let our thirst be always for him. But because we cannot aspire to God without his grace, let us ask for it in the course of the coming week by means of the *acte* which I have just suggested. May God indeed become the sole object of our desire.

³ Let us yearn for this divine Lamb, who is going to sacrifice himself for us. We must use all the means at our disposal to prepare ourselves, above all by flight from sin, so that we might celebrate worthily the memory of his passion and death.

⁴ Alas! Dear friend, because of the dwindling number of its ministers, the Word of God will become more and more rare. Let us be quick to take advantage of the Word we are privileged to hear. As Father Miquel said in one of his instructions, "There comes a time when there will be a great scarcity of the Bread of the Word of God, so essential to our souls."

⁵ Let us listen to that Word with reverence, seeing God in the minister who is proclaiming it and trying to profit by what is said. Begin by asking the Lord to soften these hearts of ours, which are harder than stone; if the seed were to fall on them, it would die for lack of roots.

⁶ Tell me something about your preacher. What is his name? I am enclosing a letter from Mlle Delphine de Fumel and one from Mlle Joséphine Dalbert for Dicherette. The former knows some of our new associates.

⁷ It is ages since I have had news of Henriette de Sainte-Croix; she may be ill, or again, the letter may have gone astray. Given her drive and the spirit of her pious pastor, she may be waiting for a response from a young lady whom they asked to join the association. That person is the sister of our young associate, Mlle Elisa de Bonnal.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe, you know that whatever be the number of my friends, you always have a special place in my heart, in and for God.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

71. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 5, 1807

My Jesus, mercy!

² O my dear Agathe, in this time of penance and reconciliation, let us not cease imploring the mercy of our God. We must importune him for it, especially during the coming week. Let us use the *acte* with which I opened my letter. I believe the prayer is indulged. This should be a stimulus to our devotion. Let the cry, "My Jesus, mercy!" rise ever so often from our heart.

³ How much do we need this mercy! Its effect is felt at every moment in our lives, for at every moment we deserve to be sunk in the abyss. Fortunately the mercy of our God, which is without bounds, stays the arm of his justice. If our sins cry out for vengeance, the Blood of Jesus Christ cries out for mercy. It is to this Jesus, who has shed his Blood for us, that we appeal. We can do so with confidence, provided we try to make ourselves worthy of it through the sorrow we ought to feel for having so frequently offended a God who is goodness itself, a God who is mercy itself.

⁴ This is the proper time to obtain mercy, for we are going to recall the passion and death of our divine Savior. May his Blood not have been spilt in vain for us. During these days of salvation, during this favorable season, we must redouble our devotion, our hatred for sin, and our love of God.

⁵ Let us, with what haste we can muster, draw from these sources of mercy; I mean the sacraments and the indulgences which the Church offers us without number.

⁶ I noticed in the songbook from Condom an infinite number of indulgences. I also noted that, because a number of indulgences are attached to practices of which we are ignorant, a fervent person should, every morning, consciously resolve to gain all the indulgences that are attached to devotions already practiced. I suggest that you do just that. We must not lose those spiritual treasures through our own negligence. Suggest this to Dicherette and to your sisters.

⁷ Farewell, my dear and good friend; I embrace you with all my heart.

Adèle de Batz

⁸ Propose an *acte* for some week; you have not suggested one for quite some time.

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72. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 10, 1807

I congratulate you, dear Agathe, on becoming an aunt for a second time.³⁰ So now you have two nephews. But don't worry; they are saying that next time it will be a girl, and then we will have another little associate!

² The purpose of marriage is to give children to the Church and citizens to heaven. That is why Jesus Christ instituted it, and we must submit to his will.

³ God generally blesses large families. This is a grace which is asked for the bride and groom at the nuptial mass.

³ When I had told Father Larribeau of the birth of Eugène, he wrote these words in reference to your dear sister: "May God bless her and her child, and may the posterity of the true servants of God multiply more and more." This is the wish of our great "patriarch," as M. Ducourneau calls him.³¹

⁵ Ah! But let us speak of our God. I have a painting of him before me as I write. The work was conceived to inspire devotion. You would be surprised, my tender friend, at the air of sweetness and majesty that shines forth from that adorable face. I long for the day when you can contemplate it, and that of his holy Mother, in my little oratory. It has taken on an entirely new aspect since it has been embellished by these two superb prints.³²

⁶ My dear friend, let us love Jesus Christ, and love him with all our hearts. He loved us first and forestalled us; he shed all his blood for us. We would be very guilty if we did not love him wholeheartedly.

⁷ Our hearts are his creation, and we must not refuse them to him. Let us consecrate them to him for time and for eternity so that, after we have loved him during our lifetime, this love might lead us to the celestial dwelling of our Well-Beloved.

⁸ Mme Belloc must have informed you that Henriette de Saint-Croix has told me of four new associates. Here are their names: Emilie de Bonnal, Marguerite de Fumel, Caroline Lafore, and Adèle Lafore. Please tell Mlle Sérès and Mlle Elisa, and ask them to inscribe their names in their catalogues. I hope this increase is a sign of God's blessings on the Society.

⁹ Farewell, my dear Agathe. Let us be faithful to the graces of the Lord. It is in him that I assure you of my wholehearted friendship.

Adèle de Batz

³⁰The Bellocs's second son, Camille, was born March 5.

³¹Speaking with Adèle, Ducourneau referred to Larribeau as the "patriarch," the man of God, whom she was to obey. In February 1807, when Ducourneau left the château to accompany young Charles to Paris to finish his studies, Larribeau replaced him as Adèle's spiritual guide.

³²Adèle had set up a small oratory in her room. Before two prints of Jesus and Mary, which she had herself selected, she punctually made her two daily meditations, recited her vocal prayers, and read spiritual books.

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73. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 18, 1807

O Jesus, who have suffered so much for me,
I love you.

² Let us redouble our fervor and courage, dear friend, as Father Larribeau says, to keep pace with the approaching end of Lent.

³ We shall enter into what is called the “holy” week. Let us try to spend it in a saintly fashion. What cause for rejoicing if we could spend the whole week without sin. Let us keep watch over ourselves, dear Agathe; let us guard the door of our heart and our senses, so as to bar entry to enemies who would like to deprive us of the precious treasure of the grace of God. Sins committed during such a solemn week would be more grievous, for we are commemorating the sufferings and death that God underwent for these very sins.

⁴ During this holy week, let us beg God’s pardon for having been so contemptible as to contribute by our sins to the cruel crucifixion of the Son of God. Let us assure God that we want to make reparation, by a life entirely consecrated to his service, for the shameful days when we offended him.

⁵ We must spend this week in mortification and seclusion, in meditation on the mysteries that are being recalled and which took place on those days. Palm Sunday should find us among the crowd shouting, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” On Wednesday, we see him being betrayed and sold by Judas. On Holy Thursday, we have the institution of the adorable Eucharist. On Good Friday, he breathes his last on Calvary. On Holy Saturday, he is in the sepulcher. Let us be with Mary Magdalene early on Easter day to adore our risen Jesus, who has conquered death and opened for us the gates of heaven.

⁶ I am sending Dicherette an agenda for the Holy Week, and one for the great day of Easter.

⁷ You must have greatly enjoyed reading the letter from Father Larribeau, that of Father Grenier,³³ and those of Mlle Henriette and Mme Sainte-Agnès. How great is their fervor! How humiliating for us!

⁸ Father Grenier informs me that the practice suggested by our respectable leader, of having each associate form another person to virtue, is being carried out admirably well. May God bless our young people. We grow older; may we also grow in grace and merit before God.

⁹ Please show these letters to Mlle Sérès and to Mlle Elisa. Serène could show them to the Dumas ladies. We should all be aware of the fervor being displayed by our companions so as to stimulate our own.

¹⁰ I am also sending Mme Belloc a charming letter from our dear Delphine. She would like to associate a young and very pious girl, but because of our rule I cannot accept her. Besides, I am not interested in seeing our Society grow in that direction, and I have my reasons.

¹¹ Dicherette must have said a word about the fervor of our dear associates, the de Pomier sisters. I was most pleased to meet them.

¹² Farewell, my very dear friend, I embrace you tenderly in the love of the God whom we do not love sufficiently.

Adèle de Batz

¹³ Greetings to all the associates when next you see them.

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74. To Agathe Diché, Agen

³³The pastor of Valeilles and a member of the Association.

+ J.M.J.T.

March 23, 1807

O my God, enlighten my eyes
and kindle a flame in my heart.

² We are leaving for Mass very shortly, dear Agathe, and I cannot spend much time with you. I shall not even have a letter for dear Dicherette with this courier, for you know that this will be a busy week for us.

³ I shall have the happiness of fulfilling my Easter duty on Holy Thursday; at least I hope so. What a favor, my dear friend, for that is the very day on which our adorable Jesus instituted this august Sacrament.

⁴ May I suggest, dear friend, that every day of the Easter season we say a short prayer, asking that God pardon the sacrileges that are committed during this period and that they be fewer in number. You may suggest this to Dicherette and to the Society.

⁵ Your dear sister will have told you what the pastor of Valeilles confided to me concerning a new associate. If you have not already revealed her name to the other associates, please wait until we have more concrete information.

⁶ May you spend this grand Feast of Easter in great fervor, dear friend. Let us be like persons renewed. Having risen to grace with Jesus Christ, we should live only for him from now on.

⁷ Let us be bound eternally to the divine Spouse of our souls, he who is so beautiful and desirable. May our hearts burn for him with the purest flame.

⁸ Like Mary Magdalene, let us ask all about us for our Well-Beloved, and everything will help us to recall him. His marvels will be reflected in everything, and traces of his goodness will be everywhere. Let us chant now and for all eternity, "Alleluia! Praise to God!"

⁹ Yesterday I again had the satisfaction of meeting with our dear friends, the de Pomier sisters. I shall have the advantage of seeing them again before they leave. Their fervor is admirable. We were together for the three o'clock rendezvous in our little chapel, where we had gone to read the letters. I shall have more to say about them to Dicherette by the first courier. Embrace that good friend for me.

¹⁰ Farewell, good Agathe; I embrace you in spirit in the sepulcher of our divine Savior, where I ask you to rendezvous with me on Saturday.

Adèle de Batz

¹¹ Give my best regards to the associates; may they be very fervent.

¹² I am enclosing a beautiful letter from Mlle Adélaïde. It is too bad that she has no notion of spelling; that makes the letter hard to read and to decipher.

+ + +

75. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 1, 1807

O my God, give me your peace,
so calming and so desirable!

² O, dear Agathe, when will we give ourselves to God entirely and without reserve? When shall we effectively destroy the worldly spirit in us?

³ We must hurry, for time is short and moments are precious. We may be nearing the end of our life span, and our hands are still empty of good works. What shall we have to present to our Sovereign Judge? Let us do all we can to multiply our good deeds, so as to tip the balance in our favor.

⁴ We are young, my friend, but death has no respect for age. How many young people have we seen swept away in full flower?

⁵ Remember that our Society proposes principally to prepare its members for a good death. This concern must be ours every day of our lives, for we may be taken by surprise. Away, then, with all terrestrial

affections. What a consolation for a dying Christian to feel her heart free from all perishable attachments.

⁶ Let us strive to acquire that precious freedom of heart and mind. I meditated on this topic this morning; may our heart take flight toward its Creator. We should have risen to new life during the Easter rites; let us therefore imitate the qualities of the glorified bodies that are agile, impassible, and immortal.

⁷ “Agility.” By our fervor, let us raise ourselves to God, and perform with enthusiasm and promptness whatever the divine law ordains.

⁸ “Impassibility.” No worldly event must trouble us or be able to turn us away from our unique objective, which must be to please God.

⁹ “Immortality.” The risen Christ can die no more. Like him, let us never again die to grace; we must never return to sin, which kills the soul. With the weapon of holy courage, we can acquire complete self-mastery. As an encouraging thought, let us reflect that, given the shortness of life, it is only logical to sacrifice its gratifications in exchange for the eternal delights of the next life.

¹⁰ Please, dear friend, give my friendly greetings to our dear associates when you see them. I am impatient to make their acquaintance.

¹¹ Have you shown Mlle Sérès the letters? Have you shown mine to Mlle Elisa?

¹² Farewell, my very good friend. I embrace you most affectionately in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle de Batz

¹³ I am presently embroidering a rose on the percale shawl, and the effect is pretty indeed. Mlle Adèle de Pomier and Mlle Saint-Amans are skilled at embroidery; both had the same teacher.

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76. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 8, 1807

How difficult it is, dear Agathe, not to sin in words. Silence certainly would help us avoid many faults; pride, malicious gossip, mockery, impatience—all these slip imperceptibly into our speech.

² We have to be constantly on our guard, speak with prudent restraint, and always as briefly as possible. On the day of judgment, God will ask us to render an account for every idle word. What a disquieting thought!

³ Let us guard our tongue tactfully to keep it from uttering evil and useless words.

⁴ But, you may protest, how can one avoid idle words? How? By weighing our words carefully, by speaking only when propriety or charity demands it. It is not necessary, in order to avoid useless words, to say only what is absolutely indispensable. No; propriety, politeness, and social convention have laws which must be observed, provided they do not go counter to the laws of God. But when possible, it is preferable to keep silence. Even humility demands this of us.

⁵ We should be pleased to be considered worthless. As much as possible, let us not take part in worldly conversations when in society. Avoiding attracting attention is the best means to circumvent pride, which obtrudes into every conversation, even the most innocent. Nature likes to be noticed. Grace loves and wants to be hidden in God, the only one it wishes and tries to please.

⁶ Besides, a Christian virgin carries the treasure of her purity in a very frail vessel. She must be ever watchful and walk with circumspection. The best way to do this and to cultivate recollection is silence. The mind is easily dissipated during a conversation. How little disposed are we for prayer after having spoken! If we wish God to speak to us, we must listen in silence.

⁷ O my good friend, how I wish you could make the acquaintance of our dear associates, the de Pomier sisters! I hope you will some day. I believe these ladies will come more frequently henceforth. Meanwhile, let us take their example, and try to become always more fervent.

⁸ Have you read the letter Mlle Elisa sent me? It is charming.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you and love you with all my heart.
Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ Give my best to our associates.

+ + +

77. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 16, 1807

O my God, be all my joy!
(Acte for next week)

² Our Jesus will leave us soon and ascend to heaven, dear friend; may our minds and hearts follow him into this blessed dwelling place.

³ Let us not waste our affection on this earth, but consider it despicable compared to the sight of heaven. That will be our home if we know how to deserve it. Let that always be our goal; the sight of heaven will enable us to support with courage the adversities of this life.

⁴ We must suffer in this life, if we are to be happy in the next. Our divine Master entered heaven only by way of the Cross. All the saints have purchased heaven with their sufferings. Can we imagine that what cost so dearly of the saints will be cheap for us?

⁵ We must carry about on our bodies the mortification of Jesus Christ. Would we want to be delicate members of a Leader crowned with thorns? Come, let us enter with courage into the pathway of mortification. This is how we will tame our wretched flesh and expiate our sins.

⁶ Let no day pass without offering some sacrifice to God. There are many ways to mortify ourselves: to check a word we would love to say; to deny our curiosity the satisfaction of asking; to turn our eyes away from something attractive; to eat something we do not particularly like; finally, there are so many other means we can use to mortify ourselves.

⁷ If we were possessed of the true spirit of mortification, our ingenuity would find occasions. A praiseworthy practice is, for instance, to give ourselves a penance every time we fall into our habitual sin; this is a strong deterrent. Finally, use every possible means to gain heaven. Whatever the cost, we must save ourselves.

⁸ Yes, on Monday I am going to see Father Larribeau. I shall inform either you or Dicherette of the gist of the interview. Pray God that I benefit by it to stimulate my devotion. A thousand greetings from me to our dear associates. I can hardly wait to meet them.

⁹ I shall go to Confession shortly, and I hope to have the happiness of a Sunday Communion. I did not have that joy last Sunday, as I had hoped.

¹⁰ Pray to God for me; I want to make this Communion in preparation for death, and to obtain the grace of constant conformity to God's will. At each Communion, we ought to specify an intention and an objective; wise directors recommend this practice.

¹¹ Farewell, my dear and good Agathe; a thousand kisses from your friend.
Adèle de Batz

¹² I propose that you fall asleep in spirit next Saturday in the blessed Tabernacle.

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78. To Agathe Diché, Agen

This letter gives few details about the trip to Lompian, for these had been confided to

Dicherette.

+ J.M.J.T.

April 22, 1807

Courage, O my soul,
we are assured of the victory,
if we have but the will.

² Where do we stand before God, my dear and tender friend? Have we made any progress since the time we began to make resolutions to be faithful? And yet, time is passing, eternity is approaching, and we have not a moment to lose.

³ “Who does not advance, falls back.” That should terrify us. Four or five years ago we were more fervent than now! Yet we have received a surplus of grace since then, even if we take into account only those received in the Society.

⁴ Let us not bury the talent which the father of the family has confided to us; otherwise, it will be taken from us and given to others who will make better use of it.

⁵ Let us be watchful, dear Agathe, or the enemy will come during the night and will sow cockle among the good grain.

⁶ We must arm ourselves with courage, strength, and determination, so as to resist honorably in the combats we wage against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The world mocks piety and gives bad example; the flesh instigates revolts against the spirit; the devil confronts us with a barrage of varied temptations.

⁷ But, “We are assured of victory, if we have but the will,” as the *acte* proposed by Father Larribeau puts it. We can use it next week.

⁸ About Father Larribeau. I went to see him on Monday at Lompian. The previous evening, I had received the letter which I am enclosing along with that for Serène.

⁹ This holy man has put his parish on a sound footing. We spoke a great deal about God and the Society. What fervor in this wonderful man! He exhorts us to be filled with the love of God and with zeal for our neighbor. You may read a more detailed account of the interview in my letter to Dicherette.

¹⁰ In his letter, he outlines a project for us; see whether you agree with it. Personally I think it can only be most advantageous. Let us try to go along with the intentions of this holy man.

¹¹ He is scheduled to come here at some future time. How I do wish you could be with me. You should come with Father on his return from Paris, if he passes through Agen. You can imagine the pleasure I would have to see you and to chat with you about our All.

¹² Farewell, my dear Agathe; think sometimes of the one who loves you very tenderly.

Adèle de Batz

¹³ Greetings to all the associates. Show them Father Larribeau’s letter.

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79. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 29, 1807

My dear and good friend, let us never cease working at self-renunciation and self-abandonment. It is a most frightening affair, and yet most necessary. We have accomplished nothing if we have not learned self-abnegation.

² There is greater merit in knowing how to renounce self in all circumstances than in performing the greatest austerities. That is because our self-will is most dear to us, and we tame that will when we practice renunciation. But this is most pleasing in the sight of God. The least occasion might be a source

of great merit, if we are alert enough to profit by every occasion to practice voluntary deprivation.

³ We must look upon ourselves, dear Agathe, as our own most dangerous enemy. Let us wage constant war against ourselves. But victory is ours if we want it, because it all depends on us—with, of course, the grace of God, which he never refuses.

⁴ How are you doing with our “challenge” to detach ourselves from creatures? My dear friend, my heart is still very much taken by them. But I do want to begin, once and for all, and do my utmost to attach myself strongly and indissolubly to the Lord Jesus. He will always be there when all others fail us.

⁵ The Lord will share us with no one; he wants our whole heart, and he is a jealous God. O my heart, this is the only honor of which you can boast. Just remember that you owe it not to your merits, but to the mercy of your God and to the abundance of grace—that grace which now super abounds, where sin once abounded.

⁶ Our life should have but one purpose: to sing the mercies with which our Lord has gratified us. Let us show our gratitude by our fidelity to every prescription of God’s holy law and to that adorable will and by continually sacrificing our own. If we do this, we shall live.

⁷ Farewell, my tender and dear friend; let us rendezvous at noon on the day of the Ascension on the holy mountain from which Jesus will rise to heaven. Let us ascend with him in mind and heart, and look with scorn on the earth and the things here below.

Adèle de Batz

⁸ Friendly greetings to the associates.

⁹ As to the practice suggested by Father Larribeau, should you feel that one of your sisters could adopt it, why not? However, complete freedom. Personally, I have made my choice.

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80. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 5, 1807

O Holy Spirit, come into my heart
and set it afire with your divine flame.

² Our divine Savior ascends into heaven, dear friend. Henceforth, this earth of ours should be nothing but a land of exile. Let us look with indifferent eyes on all that happens. May we have thoughts and desires only for heaven, which is our true fatherland. Let us work courageously and resolutely to win this divine and ineffable reward, and to enjoy the incomprehensible bliss of seeing face to face a God whom we possess here below under the veil of the sacramental species.

³ God’s goodness puts at our disposal all the means we need to be saved; let us use them. So that such treasures might not rot in our hands, let us hasten to put them to good use.

⁴ For almost a year now we have had the privilege of the presence of the holy Missionary in our Society. Do you remember, dear friend, when we went to the hospital? When we handed him the letter? When we approached him and heard these kind words: “Well, young ladies, what do you want of me?”

⁵ Oh, I shall never forget that moment and his air of holiness. How happy I am that he remembers us. In him we have good prayers and excellent deeds. Our very mediocre ones are invested in him at one hundred percent interest. Let us try to imitate to some extent the virtues of this holy man.

⁶ Yes, we have sinned and sinned grievously. Let us hurry and do penance, for death will come at an hour when we least expect it.

⁷ I had to interrupt this letter, my friend. I was very sleepy when I wrote it; hence the great number of mistakes and the scribbling. As I continue, I must tell you that I have just been informed that Father Dousset must go to Nérac on Ascension eve on urgent business. This means that I shall not be able to make my Confession, and I will not have the happiness of receiving Communion on that great feast.

⁸ It must be my sins that are the cause of this setback. I shall profit by this to work more intensely at my preparation for the holy day of Pentecost. Let us recollect ourselves, remaining in the company of the Apostles who are waiting for the Holy Spirit. Let us pray to that Spirit and draw him to us by the fervor of our prayers. This Spirit of love and fire will cast some sparks into our hearts to warm them and dispel their tepidity. Let us long for that happy day.

⁹ Farewell, my good Agathe, I embrace you tenderly in the Cenacle. Let us meet there often. The same goes for the associates. How long is it since you have seen Mlle Alexandrine Sérès? I also love her very much.

Adèle de Batz

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81. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 14, 1807

O Holy Spirit, make me docile
to your holy inspirations!

² We shall soon be commemorating the coming of the Holy Spirit, my dear friend. Have we prayed for his coming with as much fervor as the Apostles? Will we be worthy to have the tongues of the fire of divine love rest on our heads and in our hearts?

³ I recall, dear friend, that last year on Pentecost day the Missionary stressed the fact that the Apostles were united in the same spirit. So, to receive this divine Spirit we must all share the sentiment and the affection for a God who wants to enrich us with divine love's greatest gift.

⁴ Let us be extremely careful not to drive out the Holy Spirit by sin. Let us avoid it with a holy horror. During the octave from Pentecost until Trinity Sunday, our intention must be to please God in all things. Let us keep the ears of our heart open to catch the divine inspirations and to react to them faithfully. We must be more fervent, more eager for God, since the bond of love between Father and Son will have come to us.

⁵ Let us unite ourselves to Jesus during this great feast. Then the Holy Spirit, the author of all the holy and chaste unions, will unite us indissolubly to the divine Spouse of our souls.

⁶ Once the Apostles had received the Holy Spirit, they were different men. Like them, let us also be reborn of the Spirit. Let us be renewed creatures in Jesus Christ.

⁷ Let us have the courage of the Apostles. Let us defy those tyrants, that is, our passions that so cruelly war against us. Nothing can resist us if we are sustained by this strength from above. We shall conquer; we shall overcome our enemies.

⁸ What happiness if we could also, like the Apostles, convert souls to God.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe, may we rendezvous on the day of Pentecost in the Cenacle at nine o'clock in the morning to receive the Holy Spirit.

Adèle de Batz

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82. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 21, 1807

Woe to those persons, my dear Agathe, who cling to passing things, for they will vanish along with them. Let us attach ourselves to God alone, for only God is eternal. Let us follow him closely and free ourselves from this miserable world where all is trouble and mental affliction. You know that this is

our “challenge”; how do we respond to it?

² We are very much of the earth, earthy, and only what is earthly touches us. We would live in much deeper peace if we surveyed all the events of life with only a passing glance. Ah! We should observe everything with something akin to indifference, except what concerns the glory of God and the salvation of our soul.

³ The Holy Spirit, whom we must have received during the great solemnity we have just celebrated—at least if our hearts were pure and prepared—ought to have fired us with the love of God and consequently have instilled disgust for creatures. The heart cannot encompass everything. If it belongs to God, it cannot cling to creatures with a disorderly love.

⁴ Have we really received this Spirit of fire and love? Our works must prove it to us. For you know, dear friend, that the Apostles who came out of the Cenacle were totally transformed men. They had been cowards and timid, but now they were eager and ready to confess the faith of Jesus Christ, even at the cost of their lives.

⁵ Have we undergone a similar change, my dear Agathe? Has our lukewarmness been changed into fire? Our cowardice into fervor? Can we now say with St. Paul, “Who can separate me from the love of Jesus Christ? Will it be torments or death?” No, nothing can separate me from this adorable Master, to whom I have vowed eternal fidelity.

⁶ Let us perform our good works with enthusiasm. The Apostles went out to preach and convert all nations. As for us, let us try by our example and our judicious advice to contribute to the salvation of souls. It is one of the objectives of our Society; it is a practice dear to Father Larribeau. How happy we should be if we could cooperate in the salvation of a soul that has been redeemed by the blood of a God!

⁷ I am leaving for Condom at the end of the week. How delighted I will be when I can say the same for my dear Agen. How I would love to see you all. Meanwhile let us persevere in our efforts to advance in virtue, for whoever does not advance, falls back. This I recommend very sincerely to our dear associates, whom I embrace most affectionately.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend; always love the one who will love you until her dying breath.
Adèle de Batz

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83. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 23, 1807

My God, you are in me and I in you;
may we be thus united forever!

² Since I am about to depart for Condom, my dear friend, I am leaving a letter for you. I shall not write to you from Condom; the packet might be too big. Yet I want to have the joy of receiving a letter from you; that is why I am writing now.

³ My dear friend, the octave of the Blessed Sacrament should see many proofs of our love of God. This time is set apart for the reparation of the outrages which the Savior receives on our altars. Let our devotion, our recollection, and our respect in church compensate in a way for the irreverences which are committed there. If we had just a little faith, we should be most loving when we approach our holy tabernacles. Then we are, in a way, in heaven because we enjoy the presence of him who is the happiness of the saints. Oh, how to explain our negligence and aloofness toward this adorable mystery?

⁴ What a privilege to be able at any hour, at any moment, to petition our God at the very throne of his mercy. And we take so little advantage of it! Even the time we spend in his presence seems long, almost like a waste of time!

⁵ Yes, it is true, it is time wasted, if by our distractions and indifference we lose those precious instants. God wants us to pray from the heart. If the time seems long, we are praying with the lips only,

proof that our love is very weak.

⁶ During this week of the octave, let us try to make amends and to acquire a true devotion for the august sacrament of the Eucharist, for this prodigy of the love of God for us. Let us find our joy near this God, who says that his delights are to be with us. As I suppose the whole Society will receive Communion on that day, I suggest the following *acte*: “My God, you are in me and I am in you; may we be thus united forever.”

⁷ I am sending Dicherette the agenda for the day of the octave. If we march with the procession, let us do so with holy recollection, picturing ourselves as followers of Jesus Christ passing through towns and villages, and teaching. Let us ask him to give us his body, his blood, and his divine Word as food, so that we might muster enough strength to make in safety the great voyage to eternity, and not die of hunger along the way.

⁸ Farewell, my good and dear Agathe. I embrace you and I love you. I convoke you to a rendezvous in the tabernacle of Feugarolles, to make an act of love and reparation to the Savior on Thursday, at seven o’clock in the evening. That is the hour at which Jesus Christ instituted this adorable mystery.

Adèle de Batz

⁹ I congratulate you and myself that our dear Adèle³⁴ is in the Society. Encourage her to virtue and to the love of God. I embrace her and all the others.

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84. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle has returned from her visit to Condom.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 18, 1807

O my God, you alone can satisfy my heart.

² It seems centuries since I last wrote to you, my very dear friend. It is with the greatest pleasure that I take up where I left off in this correspondence, be it with you or with your dear sister.

³ How sweet it is, dear Agathe, even though we cannot be together, to be able by means of the pen to mutually encourage one another in the love and service of him who alone should fill our heart. I admit that I find next week’s *acte* very beautiful: “O my God, you alone can satisfy my heart.” It was proposed by Mlle Adélaïde Compagno.

⁴ Yes, my dear friend, who else but our God could fill our heart to capacity? Do we not feel a large void in all the other friendships of this world? Therefore, only God can fill a heart created for himself; it is too large to be filled by a creature. Let us say, therefore, from the bottom of our heart, “My God, you alone can satisfy my heart.”

⁵ Dicherette will have told you of the wonderful members we acquired at Condom, and I hope they will increase in number. Surely the Lord is blessing our little flock. May all the members please him in this life and glorify him eternally in the next.

⁶ I am enchanted to have Mlle Amélie de Rissan in our Society; please assure her of my friendship. I think we played together as children during our stay at Agen. I do not recall her but I remember her brother, who was a little older.

⁷ Let us all urge one another to love God and to desire to do his will in all things. That is what one of our associates in Condom proposes: to apply ourselves particularly to the virtue of abandonment to the will of God. That is, to seek only what might be pleasing to God and to be completely resigned to what

³⁴Agathe’s youngest sister, now fourteen years old.

might be contrary to our wishes. That is quite a program. Dear friend, I have no trust in my own strength. But sustained by the arm of the All-Powerful, what can we not accomplish?

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe. May you be blessed with much fervor and courage. Let us, like generous soldiers, die with our weapons in our hands.

⁹ I embrace you most tenderly in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I embrace our dear companions.

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85. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 24, 1807

O my God, save us,
for without you we perish!

² My poor Agathe, I hope that I shall soon have the consolation of seeing you. We shall have to profit by that time to strive together to advance along the path of salvation.

³ How happy I should be to see you. But let us refer everything to God, who must be the principle and the end of all our actions. Let us seek God's glory alone. Let us try to impress this point upon the hearts of our associates. For the greater glory of God. That should be the general objective of the Society. It was the aspiration of a great saint. And so, my dear friend, I hope to see us all united in the same heart and spirit, and working for the glory of our good Master, Jesus.

⁴ Our dear associates of Valeilles have put into practice part of Father Larribeau's proposal: to help someone else grow in virtue. I think that if we could succeed in this, much good would be accomplished. Certainly, if the number of ministers continues to dwindle, we must try to preserve the remnant of faith to the best of our ability.

⁵ Our Society certainly did not come to be by itself; an invisible hand has united us for purposes that are still unknown to us. Meanwhile, the Lord spreads his abundant blessings on the little flock and allows it to grow in a striking fashion.³⁵

⁶ Let us cooperate faithfully with the designs God has upon us, and by our conduct try not to be undeserving of being associates in so respectable a Society.

⁷ Let us all love one another, but in Jesus Christ. Let us love one another in the heart of this divine Spouse of our souls. Our assemblies must take place on Calvary, and it is at the foot of the Cross that we must all be washed in the same adorable Blood. It will preserve us from the temptations that originate from the flesh, the world, and the devil.

⁸ I am sending Dicherette a letter from Father Larribeau. Please have all the associates read it, including the Dumas sisters. He specifies the date on which he will say Mass for us; it is the first Friday of each month.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you tenderly in Jesus Christ.
Adèle de Batz

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86. To Agathe Diché, Agen

³⁵The Association was solidly planted in the Departments of Lot-et-Garonne, of Landes, and of Gers. Thanks to the efforts of Emilie de Saint-Exupéry, it had also penetrated into the Department of the Dordogne.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 2, 1807

O my God, be my guide and my consolation!

² Yes, my good friend, may the Lord be our only consolation. Any other consoler could not bring the proper alleviation to our ills. The Lord is the God of all consolation. Let us cast ourselves into his arms, and expose before him all our hardships, all our sorrows. Let us take the Lord as our confidant. Is not he alone worth more than the whole world?

³ Let us choose him also for our only guide, for he is the way, the truth, and the life. To abandon him is to become lost; far from him all is pitch darkness; he alone can carry the torch of light into our hearts that are obscured by sin. From the bottom of our heart, let us ask him in the course of the next week to be our guide and consolation.

⁴ I hope to have the happiness of receiving Communion next Sunday; you will probably be given the same grace. Oh! Is the Lord not then our true guide, who lights up our path and inspires us what to do and what to avoid?

⁵ Is he not the Consoler who spreads his divine sweetness into our oppressed hearts? O Sacrament of Love, O God of all consolation! O Bread, the sole consolation of the afflicted soul in this exile, my soul wants to desire you. Come to me, my Jesus, my refuge and my All. You alone I want; the rest is nothing without you. May my afflictions, O divine Spouse of our souls, not rebuff you. You alone can help me overcome them. They are the only claim I have to your mercy.

⁶ My fond friend, let us go with confidence to find a God who is so good, who loves us so much, who is so happy to see us at his Table. Let us stream to his banquet. How Father Larribeau is desirous that we approach the sacraments frequently. Let us try to be worthy of them.

⁷ I received a charming letter from Mlle Amélie; I shall answer in a few days.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you tenderly in the only object I want to love, who is my God.

Adèle de Batz

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87. To Agathe Diché in Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 9, 1807

All for God and for Jesus Christ!

² My dear friend, to recite this *acte* is to gain an indulgence. Say it with great attention and with a heart that is penetrated by the conviction that it can only find happiness by belonging to God unreservedly.

³ Dear friend, let us give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ as his handmaidens and his cherished spouses. Oh, how sweet it is to be his alone, to live only for him. Let us give him everything. "All for God and for Jesus Christ" must be one of our mottoes.

⁴ Our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole body, all our thoughts, all our love, all our being, in short everything: "All for God and for Jesus Christ."

⁵ Indeed, what creature could snatch us from our God? What enticements could we find preferable to those offered by our well-beloved Jesus?

⁶ Let us not be so unjust toward our good Master as to prefer a vile creature to himself. The countless graces he grants us every day are evidence that he is asking for our hearts. Let us not dare refuse him, but give them to him without reserve and forever.

⁷ O Jesus of my heart, O lovable and divine Spouse of my soul! I love you and wish to love only you. How paltry is this world when I compare it to you, O my sovereign and infinite goodness!

⁸ In tears, dear friend, let us atone for the unhappy and forever accursed moments that we have

spent without loving God. Alas! we do not love God when we sin, when we commit offenses; and this tragedy is so frequently ours. O, my gentle friend; let us change our hearts, and replace them with hearts on fire for Jesus Christ.

⁹ I am writing to our dear Amélie de Rissan. Please see that she gets the letter.

¹⁰ I hope our worthy leader will visit us soon. Pray to God that his visit will be accompanied by an increase in the love of God and in zeal for his glory.

¹¹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. I must stop here, to go to a Mass that will be said by Father Pachan. What a grace to be able to assist at the sacrifice on our altars, which represents that of the Cross!

Adèle de Batz

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88. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 16, 1807

O my God, never allow me
to be separated from you!

² What could separate us from the love of Jesus Christ? Could it possibly be illness, suffering, or death? No, nothing will separate us from our love. Our God is the same today as yesterday; he is always our God, our Savior, our Redeemer. We too, my dear friend, should always be the same toward him.

³ His love for us never lessens; may ours for him always increase.

⁴ Every day, God plies us with new graces; let us, every day, rekindle the fire of our love.

⁵ O my dear friend, let us be faithful to the most faithful of Spouses. A trifle causes us to forget our strongest resolutions. How long will this inconstancy along our journey continue?

⁶ My gentle friend, may the examples we have before our eyes stimulate us to their imitation. I am sending Dicherette a letter from Adèle de Pomier in which she states that every day some new progress in piety is noticed among our associates. In her great humility, she believes that she cannot rival them; she does not even dare to write as candidly as we do. But I know her, and I can assure you that she is one of those who are making the most progress. I also know this from Mme de Sainte-Agnès.

⁷ And, dear friend, what of our leader who is such a saint! And Father Grenier! . . . And the holy Missionary! . . . O how many holy souls in our dear little flock!

⁸ I am pleased with your short Friday meetings. How I wish I were there! But again, the will of God!

⁹ How we have increased, my good friend: at Agen, at Valeilles, at Condom, at Villeneuve d'Agen, Villeneuve-de-Marsan. . . . We are spreading far and wide; may we go far in our love of God, and run with giant steps along the path to perfection.

¹⁰ How far I am from that! However, we must never be discouraged. May we place no hope in ourselves, but all in him who strengthens us.

¹¹ Let us often have recourse to the protector of the Society, the most Holy Virgin. Oh, what influence she has with her divine Son! Let us place ourselves under her protection. We are her particular children, whether because of the Society or through the scapular we have the happiness of wearing.

¹² Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I love you most sincerely. My greetings to our dear companions.

Adèle de Batz

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89. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 23, 1807

Lord, if you will,
you can make me whole.

² Our Superior paid us a visit since my last letter to you. Oh, what a holy man! He refers everything to God and makes one see God in all things. I do wish you two could be here together.

³ He said he was going to write to a pious young lady of Tonneins, some twenty-five years of age, to ask her to join the Association. You can imagine that an associate chosen by him must be remarkable. I certainly hope he is successful in his attempt.

⁴ I have received, as you noticed, a charming letter from Mlle Elisa. How I long to make her acquaintance! She seems very attracted to you; take advantage of this to exhort her to put aside ever more and more the maxims and pomps of the world. Father Larribeau insists strongly on this point.

⁵ He would never allow us to be without a scarf or kerchief. That is truly much more decent, as it masks the contours of the body. A young lady will be the object of all the more attention, in proportion as her figure is all the more emphasized. On this point, Father is inflexible.

⁶ We spoke at length on this topic, and he used all his authority to make me promise to always wear a scarf or *fichu*. So, although Papa has bought me some dresses with very stylish bodices, I shall wear them only under a scarf.

⁷ I know, my dear friend, that this will not be quite fashionable, but what of it? My only wish is to please God, and to God alone do I want to consecrate all the affections of my heart. Let the world say what it will.

⁸ Father is very insistent also that we dress as simply as is possible. Not that he goes to ridiculous lengths, no, but he wants us to proclaim Christian modesty and simplicity, both interiorly and exteriorly.

⁹ Members of our Society should be noticed for a pronounced air of decency, for a dislike for the frivolities of the world. Besides, at death, we shall be covered with a simple shroud.

¹⁰ Farewell, my very dear friend, how I long to be able to embrace you. I convoke you to a rendezvous on Friday at eleven o'clock with the women who followed Jesus as he carried his Cross.

¹¹ My friendly greetings to the Society.

Adèle de Batz

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We have no letter of Adèle's between July 23, 1807, and January 19, 1809. However, this period is marked by events of importance both for the whole Association and for its inspiring leader.

During the summer of 1808, Mme de Trenquelléon and her daughter went on their annual visit to Adèle's grandmother, the Countess de Peyronnencq, at Figeac (Lot). There, the Baroness met M. Hyacinthe Lafon, a professor at the local collège. Mme de Trenquelléon made allusion to the Association which her daughter was directing. Lafon was intrigued and asked for more details. He found this work similar to the one existing on a larger scale in Bordeaux under the direction of Father William Joseph Chaminade. Lafon was himself from Bordeaux, and a disciple of this priest.

He told the Baroness how Chaminade had interested the youth of both sexes in a movement of religious renewal, and how this energetic group was bringing new life to a dying faith. Would it not be to Mlle de Trenquelléon's advantage to join forces with that strong organization? Lafon offered to act as go-between. The associates accepted the proposal. Chaminade was only too happy to affiliate this "Little Society" from the region of Agen. He named Mlle Félicité Lacombe de Puigeraud, of Bordeaux, as correspondent.³⁶

³⁶See Chaminade's letter, no. 32, of December 23, 1808.

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During this same period, Adèle's vocation underwent a critical trial. She received a marriage proposal, and this plunged her into a state of utter confusion. She resolved this crisis on November 20, 1808. She would belong to God and to God alone . . . but where?

Chaminade may have had a premonition of what Providence was reserving for Adèle. Eventually he would help prepare her for the work to which God destined her: the foundation of the Daughters of Mary.

Contacts between the Sodality of Bordeaux and the Little Society of Agen were many. There was an exchange of spiritual counsel, and the interests and members of both associations were recommended in prayer. Everything, even the canticles and the extra penances and work, became common to both groups. Adèle and her associates accepted enthusiastically the devotion of "loving Mary in the present," used by the young women of Bordeaux. In a very short time both associations formed one and the same large family.

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90. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle has begun reading the Manual of the Servant of Mary.

+ J.M.J.T.

January 19, 1809

My God, what good things
you have in store for your servants!

² How I love these little books, my very dear friend, all those beautiful prayers, fine instructions, and glorious canticles in honor of Mary. So we have the happiness of being her children, members of her privileged family! Oh, let us entrust ourselves to this tender Mother, she who is the refuge of sinners.

³ Let us often call on her under this title, sinners that we are; it is the one most appropriate for us.

⁴ Ah! My good friend, how many sins have I committed since my last letter! Faced with my constant infidelity, how can the good Lord grant me so many graces? Oh, what goodness! How boundless is God's mercy, and how great and generous is his love!

⁵ Alas! What would happen to us if the Lord allowed us to die after we had offended him? Hell would be our lot. What a reason for loving this good Master, who waits for us with such patience. However, let us not take advantage of his goodness to offend him. On the contrary, it must urge us never again to displease him. May we never experience the anguish of hearing this gentle Savior say to us, "If I am good, must you offend me? Your wicked heart takes advantage of me every day."

⁶ At this moment I am reading again the charming book about Virginie. My dear Agathe, what she had to suffer at home at the hands of her mother and her sister Lucie! How many temptations she had to face! She was truly a daughter of the Cross. Finally, she died of cancer. What a beautiful life; let us try to imitate her whenever possible.

⁷ Let us profit by our readings, my dear friend; otherwise, we might as well never pick up a book. It would be another account to render to God.

⁸ Let us not read in haste, just to read, but profit by what we read by applying it to ourselves. Peruse the article on reading in the instructions to the Children of Mary in the *Manual of the Servant of Mary*.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you tenderly in our Lord.

Adèle de Batz

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91. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 26, 1809

From this moment on, O my God,
I give myself entirely to you.

² Come, my dear Agathe, from this very moment on let us give ourselves entirely to the Lord. Away with our delays and reservations toward this good Master! He manifests none of that toward us, for he gives himself totally. Why not repay in kind, and give ourselves entirely to him? How he loves the offering of a young and tender heart! Let our offering be total.

³ Let us not forget to deposit it every Sunday and feastday on the altar of the Sodality of Bordeaux, there to be offered with the sacred victim who is being sacrificed for us. Let us do the same every first Friday of the month on the altar of Lompian.

⁴ My dear friend, we have so many means to attain salvation that we would have no excuse if we failed in our attempt.

⁵ Let us become saints, cost what it may. Let us constantly ask for the help of the Blessed Virgin. She is such a good Mother that she will not spurn the voice of her children, her daughters, who so need her help to pass safely through all the dangers of this life.

⁶ Let us offer ourselves to her by the [act of] consecration found in the *Manual of the Servant of Mary*. Urge all your sisters to make this act often, but especially next Thursday, the Feast of the Purification of this incomparable Virgin.

⁷ Blessed is the one who has made this consecration since infancy, and who puts her innocence under the protection of Mary's name. She has complete power over the demons. We can invoke her with confidence in all our temptations.

⁸ Mme Belloc must have shown you that part of the letter from Father Larribeau where he again exhorts us to renew our efforts to obtain the salvation of our neighbor. Speak of it to our dear Elisa, who is so well-placed to practice this apostolate. Embrace her for me.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; my friendship for you will last till death.
Adèle de Batz

+ + +

92. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Agathe does not agree with the advice Adèle gave her with respect to reading. To her, the rules offered in the Manual of the Servant of Mary seem too strict.

+ J.M.J.T.

February 2, 1809

Virgin most pure and most humble, pray for us!

² I can spend only a short time with you, my dear friend, and I shall take advantage of it on your statement in your letter with respect to reading.

³ I don't find anything too strict in the *Manual*. The reference is to novels; and, truly, all of them, even the best, are always very dangerous. They ought to be forbidden to the children of the most pure of virgins, who must avoid everything that could tarnish a virtue which we carry in a very frail vessel.

⁴ My dear friend, experience teaches us every day that a single word that is too affectionate can inject the poison of temptation into the heart. Let us avoid even the appearance of an occasion, and remember this advice of the Holy Spirit: "He who loves danger will perish in it."

⁵ I realize, my dear friend, that it is hard to break with this type of reading where the naiveté of youth and the cleverness of the enemy find nothing reprehensible. But I also know that salvation is costly, and only those who do violence to themselves will gain heaven.

⁶ The wisest thing to do is to consult a prudent and enlightened director on the choice of books; then we run no risk of making a mistake. There are many interesting books a person can read and find therein legitimate relaxation. One cannot always be concentrating on serious things.

⁷ I must leave you, dear Agathe, and let me repeat that I love you very much. Monday is the anniversary of our Confirmation; let us not fail to ask God's pardon for our lack of fidelity to the Holy Spirit.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

93. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 8, 1809

O world! I renounce you so as to love Jesus alone!

² How greatly is the Lord offended, my very dear friend, during this unfortunate [carnival] time. What horrible things are committed by blind worldlings! To what lengths do they go in search of a false happiness! Let us try to compensate our God for all these outrages by a conduct contrary to that of the worldlings.

³ They seek their criminal pleasures deep into the night; let us during these days rise somewhat earlier out of mortification. They give themselves over to excesses in eating and drinking; let us deprive ourselves of something we especially like.

⁴ These little mortifications may be of little consequence, but they are eminently pleasing to the Lord. Nothing is trifling in his service. He promises an eternal reward for a glass of water given in his name.

⁵ What a powerful motive not to neglect little things! They ravish the heart of the heavenly Spouse. "The Spouse of the Canticle ravishes his heart with a wisp of her hair, with one of her eyes." I read this touching phrase in the *Introduction* of St. Francis de Sales, in the chapter on "The care we should take in little things."

⁶ Dear friend, we must never be neglectful in anything that touches the service of God. "Woe to him," says the apostle, "who does the work of God negligently."

⁷ The same care and attention must be given to our letters, my good friend, for therein we speak of God. The word of God must be proclaimed, and listened to, with respect. If what we say comes from the heart, we shall profit by our writing; otherwise, we should be wasting our time and contributing to our condemnation. Much of our judgment will be based on what we write.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; give my regards to any associates you meet, especially to Mlle Elisa.

⁹ Be assured of my love for you in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

94. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 14, 1809

Grant pardon, O my God,
to all who offend you!

² Your last letter, my very dear friend, really touched me to the quick. My heart shuddered on hearing of the sorrow the good God had sent you, in allowing you to suffer a humiliation that reduced you almost to despair. No! We should not use that word! It does not suit a daughter of the most pure Mary, who is the Mother of our hope. She is the consolation of the afflicted, the refuge of sinners. Let us cast ourselves, dear friend, into her maternal embrace; she will never draw back or let us fall.

³ Courage, my dear Agathe. Such a humiliation is a good in terms of heaven. Don't you know that God sends them to privileged friends?

⁴ Look at so many saints. What humiliations have they not suffered: St. Marine, St. Gregory, etc. Instead of despairing, let us rejoice at following the same path, which hopefully will lead to the same destination. However, let us deplore our miserable state and humble ourselves for being such cowards when we have to suffer something for the good Lord.

⁵ Dear friend, let us not try to please others, for we shall rarely succeed. Let us try to please God alone. May all the misfortunes that befall us help to detach us from this miserable earth; it is only a valley of tears.

⁶ We must be like travelers, just passing through and not setting our hopes on this world, as our fervent Emilie de Bonnal so well put it.

⁷ Let us not seek our rest in this world, for it is not here. This is a time of work, of trials, and of struggle. The era of peace and rest will come in due time. Let us only try to deserve to share in it.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend; remember that I have vowed my sincere friendship to you for life.

Adèle de Batz

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95. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 19, 1809

Save us, Lord,
for without you we perish!

² Oh, how I love this *acte*. It is so suitable for young people. "Save us Lord, for without you we perish."

³ Yes, my very dear friend, the devil, the world, our very selves all join forces against us at our age. To what dangers are we not exposed! What would become of us without the help of God?

⁴ Let us ask for this help with insistence, with a lively faith and a firm hope, and it will never fail us. We can be battered by a tempest of temptations, but they will do us no harm provided we trust in God.

⁵ Let us confide our virtue and our resolutions to this good Master. They would be in very feeble hands if they were to remain in ours. Let us hide them in the wounds of the Savior; who could remove them?

⁶ Dear friend, it is certainly most trying to be engaged in perpetual combat. But our sweet Savior does not ask us to undergo a single suffering that he has not first endured himself. He even humbled himself to the extent of allowing the devil to tempt him.

⁷ He allowed it also to teach us the means to be victorious: flight, prayer, and mortification. Let us follow his example and flee from even the appearance of danger. Let us be vigilant in prayer and mortify our inclinations and desires. All these means must be used in moderation.

⁸ This advice was strongly recommended by our worthy Leader. He wants me to moderate my vivacity even in little things, such as my walk, etc. Pray to the good Lord that I will have the courage, and that he will give me the strength.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend, may we find that we have progressed somewhat when we come to the

great Feast of Easter.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ My greetings to our friends.

+ + +

96. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 2, 1809

O my God, when shall I possess you
so as never to lose you?

² I can give you only a moment of my time, dear Agathe, for already I have written many letters; however, I did want to send you a word.

³ Well, my dear friend, our Society is developing and is constantly acquiring new, holy members. Let us bless the divine Author for this, and try to show our gratitude by imitating the holy examples we have before our eyes.

⁴ Let us humbly admit that compared to them we are very backward. The young surpass the older ones. Let us at least walk in their footsteps. With the help of their prayers, in which we have a share, we may one day have the joy of imitating them.

⁵ I grant you, dear friend, that I feel humbled at being obliged to give advice to these privileged souls. I feel so different, and so distant from their virtue. Yet, let us not be discouraged. The same God who helps them is ready to help us, provided we show the same good will.

⁶ Let us spur our courage and our resolutions and, as our Leader says, let us become saints at whatever cost. What does it matter, after all, that we must do violence to ourselves and suffer for some days, provided we can enjoy repose for all eternity?

⁷ Let us long after this blessed fatherland, dear friend, and have a presentiment of all the happiness that awaits us if we are faithful. This thought should make us triumph over the attempts which nature, the world, and the devil make to overcome us. Look at all the saints who at our age trod everything under foot. Let us courageously follow them and, sustained by the grace which will not be lacking if we are faithful to it, we shall join them. Oh, how happy they are for having conquered their nature; so shall we be if we have the same blessed success.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend, I embrace you with all my heart in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Adèle de Batz

+ + +

97. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle refers to a letter from Chaminade dated February 28.

+ J.M.J.T.

March 15, 1809

O my God, you will not spurn
a contrite and humbled heart.

² My very dear friend, I am sorry I was unable to write to you last Saturday. I want to make it up to you today by spending a few moments with you.

³ Well, my dear Agathe, what have you to say about all the graces that are coming to us from Bordeaux? Father Chaminade certainly seems to be a holy man. How flattering the welcome he gives us.

Now, let us try to be worthy of the high opinion he has of the Society.

⁴ And the letter from our Mother, Mlle de Lamourous?³⁷ I find her most charming and affectionate. Let us respond to her exhortation to help each other to win hearts for Jesus Christ and for his holy Mother.

⁵ But above all, let us win over our own hearts by reforming their bad habits and stifling their resistance, their cowardice. Let this conquest be for our lovable Savior. Nothing we do would be more pleasing to him. This is the sacrifice he especially asks of us; we must not refuse him.

⁶ In order that the offering might be more agreeable to him, let us have the most Blessed Virgin, his Mother and ours, make the presentation. Could he turn down what was offered by so good a Mother?

⁷ The heart we offer him must be void of sin and selfishness. It must be decked out with the virtues he loves the most, especially meekness and humility. Let our “capital” consist of these virtues, and let us work at them with special care. He himself calls these the virtues of his heart. “Learn of me,” says this adorable Savior, “for I am meek and humble of heart.”

⁸ Could he have taught us these virtues in a more lovable way than when he said, “Learn of me”? Oh yes, Lord Jesus, it is at your school, at the school of Calvary, at the foot of the Cross, that we shall go to admire the meekness you display to your torturers and the humility that allows you, God that you are, to bear being placed between two criminals.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend, I leave you at the foot of the Cross. I embrace you with all my heart.

Adèle de Batz

¹⁰ I have just received your letter. But, my dear friend, I am just like you: always distracted during the hour [devoted to Mary]. But there is no obligation; if one cannot do more, it is sufficient to think often of the Blessed Virgin during one hour. So go ahead, be inscribed.

+ + +

98. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 4, 1809

May I live of your life,
O my divine Redeemer!

² Dear friend, our divine Master has risen, but can we say that we have risen with him? Do we have a new heart? Are we more detached from this miserable world on which Jesus pronounced his anathema? Are we more attached to our God? Does our heart belong to him more completely?

³ My dear friend, if we perceive no change in ourselves, it is to be feared that we have not risen with Christ during these sacred solemnities, that we have not profited fully from our partaking of the divine paschal Lamb.

⁴ How have we spent these holy feastdays? Ah! My dear Agathe, how badly I have spent them! What tepidity, what dissipation, on those days when I should have been all fire and recollection! Is there greater desolation than mine? How fortunate that we are dealing with a merciful God who sympathizes with our weaknesses. How can pride exist amid such wretchedness? Yet I am steeped in it!

⁵ If our sins could make us a little more humble, we might be able to say, “O blessed fault!” But not at all. Although our experience merely confirms our penchant for evil, we continue to have an erroneous, a very erroneous, opinion of ourselves. How this must irritate God who knows that, without divine help, we cannot have even one good thought.

³⁷Marie Thérèse Charlotte de Lamourous was one of Chaminade’s principal collaborators in establishing the Sodality of Bordeaux. She was “head” of the section for Young Women, with the title of *Mère* [Mother].

⁶ The Lord is closer to the great sinner who despises himself than to one who seems to lead a holy life but is very pleased with himself. The example of the Pharisee and the publican should make us tremble. One leaves the temple condemned by his self-glorification, even though he seems to attribute to the Lord the good that is in him when he says, "Lord, I thank you that I am not like the rest of men." He thanks him, therefore he acknowledges the Author. Yet his complacency is the reason for his condemnation, just as the humility of the publican is the cause of his justification.

⁷ Farewell, my dear friend, I cannot promise to be very punctual with my letters during my stay in Condom, for I shall be very busy. But you know that this will not lessen the tender friendship I have already vowed to you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

99. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 11, 1809
[Condom]

My God, give me that peace
which the world cannot give.

² In spite of my occupations, dear Agathe, I want to send you a few words while waiting for the happy moment when, without the aid of a pen, we can tell each other whatever we wish.

³ Oh, may this friendship serve to promote the love of God in us! Let us bind ourselves to God for life and be his completely. Let us free ourselves ever more from this wicked world, the enemy of the Cross of Jesus Christ, and against which he has launched so many anathemas.

⁴ We cannot at one and the same time belong to Jesus Christ and to the world. Could we hesitate for a moment in our choice? Eternal happiness awaits us if we follow the Lord, and eternal unhappiness if we follow the call of the world. Let us keep these two eternities before our eyes; we are heading toward them at a rapid pace. It may begin for us in a few days perhaps, so we must prepare ourselves with care.

⁵ Let us not listen to or follow our corrupt nature. Let us follow Christ, and to do so let us renounce ourselves. He says, "If anyone does not renounce himself and bear his cross, he is not worthy of me."

⁶ The virtues I see in this "fraction" truly edify me.³⁸ I feel very humble as I preside at our dear meetings. Our associates already practice perfectly what I tell them, and I do not.

⁷ May we vie with each other in imitating them. The same God who helps them is ready to do the same for us. It is up to us to correspond to all our grace.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend; I must stop here for I have other letters to write and besides, today, Friday, we have our meeting.

⁹ I love you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

³⁸One of the conditions set down by Chaminade for the definitive affiliation of the Agen associates to the Bordeaux Sodality was the grouping into "fractions." The group in Agen to which Adèle belonged adopted the name Fraction of the Conception; that of Condom became the Fraction of the Incarnation; Lompian, Tonneins, and Puch made up the Fraction of the Visitation; Villeneuve-sur-Lot, of the Nativity; the Landes, of the Assumption; and Aiguillon, the Fraction of the Holy Name of Mary. Each fraction had its officer, and Adèle was made overall officer by acclamation. Larribeau was still the Director of this Third Division of the Young Ladies Sodality of the Madèleine in Bordeaux. As to the married ladies, they were affiliated directly to the "Ladies of the Retreat" of Bordeaux, with Mme de Trenquelléon at their head.

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100. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 28, 1809
[Condom]

Lord, fill my heart with a holy joy!

² Just a hurried word, my dear friend. I have so little time to myself here that, were I to stay, I could not keep up with my correspondence.

³ Dear friend, may these letters be profitable to me, for what would it gain me to preach to others if I did not practice what I taught? And yet this is unfortunately my condition, and I expect to have a heavy account to render to our good God. I shiver at the thought.

⁴ However, I trust in the goodness and mercy of God, who pities our weakness. But pray to God, dear friend, for me; you have a special reason, being my correspondent. And so I am earnestly asking for your prayers. Pray that a little humility slip into my letters, that I might write them only for God and not with the view or desire of pleasing others.

⁵ Let us try, dear friend, to perform our actions as much as possible for God. Were this intention lacking, all the benefits would be lost. For, indeed, how could God reward what is not done for him?

⁶ Come, dear friend, for him alone! How happy we should be if our actions were seasoned with this excellent motive. Our least actions would have merit, since the Lord must reward even a glass of water given in his name. Follow the advice of St. Paul: "Whether you drink or eat, do all for the glory of God." I suggest that we ponder this recommendation.

⁷ Farewell, my dear friend, I yearn to be able to tell you in person how I love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

101. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 2, 1809

O Jesus, draw me to yourself.

² I am just as grieved as you are, dear friend, that our dear Fraction of the Conception does not show the same zeal as that of the Incarnation. But then, we must be patient and recommend everything to the good Lord and to the Blessed Virgin. Let us endeavor, above all, my dear friend, to be watchful over ourselves, to imitate our more fervent sisters, and to try to surpass them in humility. That is the virtue that should characterize our Society.

³ Your officer must have informed you that our associates of Condom were having a novena of Masses said by Father Ferret to obtain this beautiful virtue through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

⁴ Let us apply ourselves most seriously and not be content with idle speculation; it is time for action.

⁵ Let us support with resignation the humiliating taunts that may be directed at us; we can offer all that to the good Lord, acknowledging that we deserve greater scorn. We can refrain from saying anything good about ourselves and speak little about what concerns us. We can try to please God alone by doing nothing to attract attention. We can live a hidden life in imitation of the Blessed Virgin.

⁶ What a vast field we have to cultivate! This is the work of a lifetime. Each year we should try to practice one aspect of humility. What a feat if, with the grace of God, we could carry it off!

⁷ This point should be the topic of our particular examen. We can note our failings, to see whether

they are on the increase or not. But we must not depend upon our own strength for this work, but only on the grace of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin and of the saints.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend, may you spend in great fervor the ten days that precede Pentecost. May we prepare ourselves through love for the reception of the Spirit of Love.

⁹ I embrace you in this divine Spirit.

Adèle

+ + +

102. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 19, 1809

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflame and consume my heart!

² I did not think I would be able to write to you today, dear friend; I come in haste with just a few words.

³ Tomorrow is the great and wonderful day of Pentecost. May we be worthy to receive the Holy Spirit with all his gifts.

⁴ May tongues of flame consume our hearts. May we be filled with the gift of wisdom, so that all our actions might be guided by that Christian wisdom which makes them fruitful.

⁵ May we receive copious amounts of the gifts of understanding, knowledge, and counsel, which will enable us always to choose the better part and to know what we must do to please God.

⁶ Above all, let us be filled with the gift of Christian fortitude, so necessary if we are to triumph in our bitter and ceaseless battle with the devil, the world, and our own passions. This gift should be given high priority and must be urgently prayed for.

⁷ Let us also ask for the gift of piety, which endows all our works with the spirit of true devotion.

⁸ May the spirit of holy fear make us resolve to die rather than to commit sin.

⁹ Finally, may the Holy Spirit not only enrich us with all these precious gifts; may we also be nourished with those delicious fruits: joy, meekness, modesty, chastity, patience, longanimity, love, peace, etc.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear friend; I have just time to embrace you tenderly in the Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

103. To Agathe Diché, Agen

On the drawing which took place on the day of Pentecost, Agathe drew the Gift of Wisdom, with its accompanying fruit, humility.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 1, 1809

How frustrated I am, dear Agathe, to have to use a pen when I had hoped to have the pleasure of embracing you. That is how the good Lord mingles sacrifices among the joys of this world. May it be to our credit before God.

² Since the “Gift of Wisdom” was your lot, dear friend, try to acquire that true wisdom which will make you despise all the foibles of this world and allow you to set great store by the only true and solid good, which is God.

³ The fruit, “humility,” is very precious. It is the virtue the Savior insisted upon in his teaching,

and it should be the characteristic mark of the Society. Let us strive for it above all. It must be the prime object of our concern and efforts. We should love to be counted for nothing, to be forgotten. All glory to God alone; scorn and oblivion for us.

⁴ This is easily said, but more difficult to put into practice. Let us trust in God alone, for he alone can draw good from a nature that is as corrupt as ours.

⁵ Dear friend, will you kindly buy me a beautiful white rosary if you can find one for about one franc? I wish to make a gift.

⁶ I am sorry that I cannot write at greater length, but it is past eleven o'clock and Mme Pachan is all alone.

⁷ I embrace you tenderly in our Lord.

Adèle

⁸ I have not given up hope of seeing you. Both you and dear Dicherette must do all you can; Father Larribeau would also come.

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104. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 8, 1809

May the most holy and divine sacrament of the Altar
be forever praised and adored.

² The day on which you receive my letter [June 10], my dear friend. is the anniversary of my Baptism. What a wonderful day for me, on which I acquired, through this sacrament, my right to a heavenly inheritance!

³ What more had I done for God than so many souls who are born in the midst of godlessness and error? How awful must be the sufferings of a Christian who is damned! The abuse of so many graces and means make a Christian much more guilty than others.

⁴ In how many graces this exalted quality of Christian makes us participants, my dear friend! Even if it were only to become members of Jesus Christ and to have the happiness of feeding on his adorable flesh.

⁵ What a blessed commitment we made at our Baptism! Let us renew it wholeheartedly. Let us renew our pledge to love and serve the good Lord, and to march under the standard of the Cross.

⁶ How good it is to love and serve such a liberal Master! What return can we make for the inestimable benefit of being called to his service? Let us give ourselves to him without reserve; let us not spare ourselves in his service; let us be his eternally!

⁷ Father Larribeau strongly advises, as did St. Francis de Sales, that good resolutions be repeated every year according to the method outlined in the *Introduction to a Devout Life*. That is what I am doing these days to prepare for the anniversary of my Baptism.

⁸ Your local fair must be very distracting but, like St. Catherine of Siena, build yourself a solitude in the depths of your heart and often take refuge there to converse sweetly with our divine Spouse.

⁹ My dear friend, pray that I put into practice all that I counsel others to do, for I am very remiss in that regard.

¹⁰ Farewell, most dear Agathe; let us forever be God's. It is in him that I want to love you always.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

105. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 15, 1809

It is your glory that I seek, O my God!

² If we seek out God's glory in all our actions, dear friend, they will be of infinite value. Let us adopt the motto of St. Ignatius: "For the greater glory of God." Our Society should be totally dedicated to it.

³ Let us try to procure this glory by all the means in our power. Let our devotion be meek and loving; let us reform our characters so as to draw all hearts to Jesus Christ. What a motive to stir us to self-discipline, to realize that we might have the incomparable joy of plucking a soul from hell and of consecrating it to the Savior!

⁴ The practice of the Christian virtues is so attractive. Holy humility wins all hearts; may it be, as Father Ferret says, the characteristic of our Society.

⁵ May our love for holy purity be very special; it should characterize the children of the Immaculate Virgin. Let us put blinders before our eyes, a sentinel next to our ears, and a door to our lips, so as to see, hear, or say nothing that might tarnish it.

⁶ I have already met the de Pomier sisters four times. However, they are spending this whole week at Nérac, so we will have very few occasions to meet again. They are scheduled to return here for a few days, and then to their home.

⁷ They would have loved to meet you. Dear friend, try to arrange a visit here. One of the de Portets sisters is also supposed to come—not the one you have met but the second, Sophie. It is up to you to suggest to my aunt that she take me to Agen, for I dare not propose it.

⁸ Farewell, most dear Agathe; I cannot close without repeating that I love you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Adèle

⁹ I shall beg Father Larribeau to come during your stay; I hope he will accept.

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106. To Agathe Diché in Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 21, 1809

O my God,
I abandon myself entirely to your holy will!

² My dear friend, let us abandon ourselves to that divine will; may it dictate all our desires and thoughts and accompany all our actions.

³ What is more reasonable than to do the will of a God as wise as ours? Does God not know better than we what is most advisable? We are poor blind persons who risk stumbling at every step. Let us abandon ourselves to the conduct of this lovable Providence; it will guide us well.

⁴ Our nature must often be tamed, for it would very much like to have its own way. That, in essence, is the spiritual combat in which we are engaged. And we have been enrolled as "soldiers of Jesus Christ" through the sacrament of Confirmation.

⁵ Dear friend, let us try to keep with us that Spirit of Fortitude we had the joy of receiving together, and let us fight valiantly under the standard of the Cross. This life is a continual struggle. Our flesh, the world, and the devil are ever feuding with us. Oh, when shall we be delivered of this body of death which keeps us clinging to this earth!

⁶ Dear friend, please give me some details about our dear associates. You have not said a word about them for quite some time! Our dear Elisa? Please embrace her for me, and assure her of my esteem.

How sad that she cannot attend the meetings! I am urging her to go whenever it is possible.

⁷ Farewell, very dear Agathe. Let us help our Society stimulate us in the love and service of the Lord. "Everything for his greater glory" should be our motto.

⁸ I embrace you in the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

107. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 29, 1809

O my God, I want to love you more than myself!

² My very dear friend, let us love this God for his thousandfold goodness. Let us love God, not as he deserves to be loved—that would be impossible for us—but as much as our hearts are able. Let us love him more than any creature, more than ourselves. Let us be ready always to make every sacrifice God might demand.

³ Alas! What can we sacrifice that is not already God's, that he has not the right to demand? Dear Agathe, let us lament that, so far, we have loved God so little and resolve to love him now, wholly and forever. With St. Augustine, let us cry out, "O beauty ever ancient, ever new, too late have I begun to love you!"

⁴ Let us make up for lost time. May the ardor of our love compensate for our slowness in putting it into practice.

⁵ Although we are weighed down with sins and debts, if we but love, all will be forgiven. Speaking of Mary Magdalene, our divine Savior said, "Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved greatly."

⁶ Alas! Need we make all these reflections merely to excite us to love a God who is all love? Who shows this love to us by actually giving himself totally as our food? The sight, and especially the sharing, of this mystery of love should inflame our hearts. Let us burst out of this sacred furnace like lions full of enthusiasm and courage. O my God, I want to love you more than myself!

⁷ Well, my dear Agathe, for some time yet we shall have to sacrifice a personal encounter. May it contribute to our betterment; we must turn everything to our profit and be miserly with our spiritual riches.

⁸ Sleep is preventing me from writing more; the pen keeps slipping from my fingers.

⁹ A thousand greetings to our dear associates; you, dear friend, can count on my affection in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

108. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 6, 1809

O my God, you alone can fill my heart!

² I share your concern, my dear friend, about our very dear Elisa. Behold, the road to heaven is always strewn with thorns! But also, what a reward is ours when we have persevered and shown constancy!

³ The good Lord shares his cross with those whom he loves. He loves our friend and imposes upon her an ordeal. We can but pray to this divine and good Master to give her the strength she needs to profit by the distress he allows her to experience. I would like you to show her the letters from the associates,

especially from the leaders, so that she might absorb the spirit of the Society.

⁴ Ah! My dear Agathe, let us not lose a single instant, for time is passing and eternity is nearing. Let us work with untiring vigor to uproot all our defects; let there be no truce in our ongoing mortal combat with them. Let us concentrate on first eradicating one defect; then, we can move on to another. Father Larribeau recommends this method.

⁵ Here we are, my dear friend, already at midyear. How rapidly time flies. Alas! What have we gained in God's sight during this time? May the next six months be better occupied!

⁶ Next Friday is the first Friday of the month. Two years ago we began to have Mass said on that day for our intentions. That means twenty-four Masses, not counting those of the holy Missionary, the nine said by Father Ferret, and those of Bordeaux in which we share. Besides, we share in all the Masses which the priest associates or sodalists say every day. What an abundance of grace this divine Sacrifice would pour upon us, if we had well-prepared hearts!

⁷ What treasures we lose because of our sloth, or at least by our negligence! That must cease, dear Agathe; on the contrary, let us work to make up for lost time. Let us never depend on ourselves for anything, but rather expect everything from God and from our divine Mother, under whose protection we have the happiness to be.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend, I am all yours in the wounds of Jesus Christ and in the Heart of his Mother.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

For six weeks, there are no letters; Agathe was at Trenquelléon.

+ + +

109. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 25, 1809

My God, have pity on my distress!

² It is to you, dear friend, that I am writing today. I do so shortly after my meditation, which was not a great success, although the topic was a good one: self-knowledge.

³ Ah! Dear friend, I was captivated by the reading I had done on the topic. First, we do not know ourselves for lack of introspection. We do not pause to reflect on our tendencies, on the motives that spark our actions, and on the intentions that determine them.

⁴ Secondly, we normally compare ourselves to people who have many defects and who live a worldly life, so it is not surprising that we conceive an utterly false and vain opinion of our own merit.

⁵ But our conduct must be compared to that of Jesus Christ, our divine Model, and to that of the saints, who are his perfect imitators. Then we shall see how wrong is our self-image. My dear Agathe, reflect on how God judges us, what we are in his eyes, and what he thinks of our best actions.

⁶ Alas! What are we in the eyes of his infinite majesty? Miserable sinners, dirt and ashes, always inclined to evil. And how repugnant to us is the practice of the least good action! Could we even perform it without the all-powerful help of the grace of God?

⁷ Let us confess very humbly, dear friend, that our nothingness and our destitution are our only lot. What little good is in us, is the work of God and of grace. Only deepest ingratitude could make us appropriate it and pridefully revel in it.

⁸ Have you seen Mlle Elisa since your return? I saw Father Larribeau, but only for a day. He had questions concerning how our sisters dress. He wants me to speak of that often; you know that I am doing just that!

⁹ What are you working at now? Are you embroidering the alb?
¹⁰ I am comforted to know that your stomach ailment is better. Let us hope that everything noxious has exited both your body and your soul.
¹¹ Farewell, dear and very dear friend. I am running out of paper; count on my feelings for you in the divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Adèle

+ + +

110. To Agathe Diché, Agen

The château of Gajeau, not far from Trenquelléon, was the residence of François de Batz de Trenquelléon, the Baron's younger brother; he had settled there in 1801.

+ J.M.J.T.

September 25, 1809

I am yours, O divine Savior;
do not allow me to be lost.

² Dear friend, I am about to leave to have dinner at Gajeau, but first I would like to send you a short message.

³ Next Sunday I hope to be nourished with the Bread of the strong; it is the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Pray to the Lord that I have the dispositions I need to draw all the fruit contained in the sacrament.

⁴ I wish to receive it as a viaticum, for that Sunday is the closest to the first Friday of the month. You know, dear friend, that every time we approach the sacraments it should be as if for the last time; that is possible, of course, because we are never sure of the next instant in our lives.

⁵ Oh, how would we wish to make our last Confession! With what contrition, with what firm resolve rather to die than to offend God, and determined to give up generously every occasion that could lead to sin.

⁶ Our last Communion: with what fervor, love, and profit!

⁷ Let us realize, my dear Agathe, that partaking of the sacraments is the most important affair in our lives. Let us therefore prepare ourselves with extreme care by avoiding sin, cultivating great purity of conscience, and renouncing creatures in order to follow closely the Creator who gives himself totally to us. Can we in justice refuse him anything?

⁸ I am pleased with the *acte* of this week: "I am yours, O my divine Savior; do not allow me to be lost." Let us repeat it frequently with great love.

[The remainder of this letter has not been preserved.]

+ + +

111. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 2, 1809

Lord, give them eternal rest!

² Today, dear friend, is a happy day for the souls in purgatory, for on this day very many Masses are being offered for them.

³ Let us join our prayers to those of the rest of the faithful, to obtain from the sovereign Judge their liberation. What satisfaction, if by our prayers we succeeded in helping one soul to enter heaven! What a powerful protector we should then have!

⁴ Let us not be indifferent to the sufferings they undergo. Let us perform for them the same duties of charity that we would want if we were in their condition.

⁵ Let us note, for our own profit, dear friend, that their extreme sufferings are in expiation for their slight faults. Alas! How dare we commit so easily, and look upon so complacently, something that can have such dire consequences—consequences which justice itself considers justly deserved?

⁶ Simple voluntary mortification in this world would suffice to save us from purgatory. Why are we, then, so spineless in the face of mortification? This indicates a faith that is very weak and almost dead.

⁷ Note also that some souls may be in purgatory because of us, for some sin we may have caused them to commit, such as acts of impatience for which we are responsible, etc. This is an added reason why we should pray for them.

⁸ O dear friend, what a wonderful thing is this communion of saints, this communication of merits between the just in heaven, those on earth, and those in purgatory! What consolation we find in religion! Let us not mourn as the pagans do at the death of our dear ones, but console ourselves with the hope of meeting with them in eternity. May we all find ourselves reunited there in God and in his love.

⁹ Farewell, dear friend, I am very busy. Once again, be assured of my friendship in the Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

112. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 6, 1809

What delights, O my God,
you reserve for those who fear you!

² Dear friend, I am sending Mme Belloc a letter from our dear Lacombe. What a letter! It is full of the spirit of God!

³ As she says, “Let us vie with one another; let us all form one heart that belongs to God alone.”

⁴ Yes, my good friend, let us sacrifice ourselves to God and offer all our actions to him. “Whether you eat or drink,” says St. Paul, “do everything for the glory of God.” Our God is so good that he accepts the least thing done in his name. We are in this world only to gain eternity; let us not lose a single instant. Every action can obtain this for us; let us make them all serve to that end.

⁵ If we desire and seek God alone and do his will, we shall be at peace in spite of all that can happen to us. Let us accept all the trials that it will please God to send us from his paternal hand. Anything he sends can be of benefit to us.

⁶ Let us go to him with redoubled trust. He who hopes in the Lord can never be deceived. Gold is purified in the fire, and the Christian soul amid the afflictions of this passing life. This is not our homeland, the place of our rest; so let us long for the true land promised to the meek and humble of heart.

⁷ Let us practice with increased zeal those two virtues so dear to the Heart of Jesus, and make a special study of them. How happy we shall be once we possess them! They may cost us a great deal of sweat, but our efforts will receive their reward.

⁸ Courage, therefore, courage always! The crown is hanging over our heads, and we shall receive it if we are faithful. Every victory brings us closer to it.

⁹ Farewell, dear friend of my heart. I am yours for life in our Lord.

Adèle

¹⁰ P.S. How I long to know whether Elisa has returned to Agen. The hope you give me is very consoling.

+ + +

Scarcely a year after her vocation crisis, Adèle was stricken with a serious illness which lasted for six weeks. She recovered; but this first attack of the illness had undermined her robust constitution, as subsequent years would show.

113. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 21, 1809

Poverty of the heart of Jesus,
teach my heart detachment!

² In your goodness, my very dear Agathe, you wrote to me several times during my illness, and I want to thank you. I longed to be able to write to you, dear friend, and I hasten to do so now that I am able.

³ Well, my friend, we are now in a season which is exactly suited to revive our devotion. What a number of solemnities await us! Let us try, my dear, to be reborn with the sweet Infant Jesus on the great Feast of Christmas.

⁴ Let us circumcise, that is, curtail the number of our bad habits in honor of the circumcision which our Savior willingly underwent.

⁵ Let us enter truly into the spirit of the feasts we are about to celebrate, so as to draw from them profit for our soul.

⁶ We have no time to lose, dear friend, for we may have little left. Death spares no age. See, I am only twenty years old, and I came very close to paying the tribute. But the merciful God has wanted to give me more time to do penance for my sins, and to acquire some currency for eternity. He would have caught me empty-handed had he taken me at that moment!

⁷ I intend to write to our very dear Amélie on Wednesday; I think she will soon return to Agen.

⁸ I am enclosing the letter from Father Chaminade,³⁹ so that our friends might read it. I beg Mme Belloc, whom I embrace, to formulate the questions the venerable priest asks for, and to give me an account of the results of the consultation.

⁹ Papa wants you to tell your father not to be surprised if he does not receive the promised money on Saturday. Papa's debtor may repay him directly from Condom.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear friend; I am yours for life in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Adèle

+ + +

114. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 8, 1810

You are the God of my heart, and you will be
my eternal treasure and my inheritance.

² And so, dear friend, all the solemnities surrounding the birth of the Savior are now past. How have we benefited from them? Our divine Savior has so often fed us with his adorable Flesh. What graces! What strength should we have derived from them! Yet, we are the same; at least, I am. The same temptations always find us just as weak. How long before we exhaust the infinite goodness of our God toward us?

³⁹See Chaminade's letter, no. 38, of November 21, 1809.

³ Dear friend, this gentle Jesus loves us with a particular love; of that we have the most tender proofs. Let us not hesitate to take advantage of it, or we might hear the reproach Jesus made to those towns where he had performed so many miracles: “Woe to you Bethsaida, woe to you Chorazin, for if the miracles that have been wrought in you had been done in Sodom and Gomorrah, they would have done penance!”

⁴ My dear friend, is that reprimand not aimed at us? Had Jesus Christ performed all those prodigies of love which he continues to do among us, how their behavior would have changed!

⁵ If the damned souls had been given our special graces, they would now be in heaven.

⁶ Dear friend, let us listen again to the gentle warning Jesus gives us when he addresses Jerusalem: “Oh, if only you knew the day of the visitation of the Lord!” Let us know it, dear friend. While the torch of faith is still burning among us, while religion has not yet been torn from our hearts, let us draw fruits worthy of eternal life. Let us try to appease the anger of God, who is so incensed against us.

⁷ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

115. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 11, 1810

You are the God of my heart, and you will be
my eternal treasure and my inheritance.

² At last, dear Agathe, I have had the great happiness of possessing my lovable Jesus after two months of privation. He came to be united with me.

³ In olden times, the Magi went to adore him in the crib; today, it is he himself who comes to us. He takes the first step; let us at least take the second.

⁴ Let us neglect no means of pleasing him. Let us not divide our heart between him and the world. May this wicked world be nothing to us, not worth any consideration whatsoever. We do not belong to it, but to God. He purchased us rather dearly, since the price he paid was his blood.

⁵ Oh, dear friend, we are so thankful for the slightest concern shown us by others; is it only toward God that we do not fear to show ingratitude?

⁶ Dear Agathe, let us carefully treasure the grace we have recovered in Confession; let us preserve the religious fervor of our holy Communion.

⁷ My dear, you have seen how people die at any moment. How foolish it would be to remain for a single instant beyond the pale of God's grace, and in a state in which one would not wish to die.

⁸ Let us redouble our fervor, dear friend, in an attempt to appease the anger of God. He is so upset with us and threatens us with some great calamity. Let us associate ourselves with so many holy souls who at the present time are trying to do violence to heaven. Let us grieve that, in the midst of such calamities, people are about to immerse themselves in the follies of the world.

⁹ I suggest that during this carnival time we pray *Have mercy on me* [Psalm 51] daily, and perform one mortification during the week, in reparation for all the excesses that are committed. On Friday, propose the same to your friends.

¹⁰ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. Believe me, no one loves you more sincerely than I, who ardently wish that the heavenly reward be yours.

Adèle

¹¹ P.S. You could admit as an associate the young lady of whom you spoke. That would bring an increase in grace.

+ + +

116. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 19, 1810

O my sovereign Good,
I love you above all goods.

² Yes, my dear friend, let us love the sovereign Good above all goods, for God is the only good that can satisfy our heart. But a purely passive love is not sufficient; let us love with an active love, a love of action. Let us work for the sovereign good of our souls.

³ My dear friend, I confess that in every one of my good actions I am seeking myself, and not God. I experience this in everything I do. What disgrace! How can God reward what is not done for him?

⁴ My cherished friend, let us strive to purify our intentions ever more and to free ourselves from every human motive. Let us act for God and for his glory. Let us offer to the Divinity all that we have and all that we do; let us refer all our actions to God.

⁵ We should make this offering every morning and renew it often during the day. O my God, I wish to act for you. If I eat, it is to be able to serve you; if I enjoy innocent recreation, it is to be in a condition to serve you better; if I work, it is in obedience to your decree; if I take my rest, it is the better to serve you, etc. Even the most insignificant action done for God has value for eternity. Oh, what a motive, to perform all our actions for God. Let us pray earnestly for that grace.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. I embrace you; I love you with all my heart in the divine wounds of the feet of the Savior. We should go there often to make reparation for the follies into which people's feet lead them in these dismal days [of the carnival].

Adèle

+ + +

117. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 28, 1810

O world, I renounce you,
so as henceforth to love only Jesus!

² Yes, my very dear friend, let us abjure this perverted world, the main enemy of our salvation. Let us hold it in horror, and detest it more and more. Let us seek complete separation from the world, in heart and mind if that of the body is not possible.

³ I admit, my dear friend, that in the difficult days⁴⁰ in which we may well find ourselves, it is a blessing not to be involved in the affairs of this world. Of course, God does allot his grace in proportion to the needs of those who ask him, provided they in turn do what they can.

⁴ What goodness in this lovable Master; he gives of himself according to the needs of his children! But how guilty we are if we do not serve him with all possible fidelity!

⁵ Please remember in your prayers our poor Mme d'Occion.⁴¹ Her life is caught up in a whirlwind, and she is very vulnerable. How lost she must feel in a world she knew only by hearsay! I admit that I am terribly upset by it all. Fortunately she will soon leave Condom, where she is merely visiting, and return to her home, which I believe is in the country. She will be close to the Portets sisters, whose saintly

⁴⁰ Perhaps an allusion to military preparations in southern France, preliminary to Napoleon's invasion of Spain.

⁴¹ A newly-married associate, Gabrielle de Fortisson, who became Mme d'Occion.

mother will be able to give her practical advice in her new role.

⁶ No less than you would I like to have Mlle Derny join us. Dear friend, as the little flock keeps growing, our fervor should keep pace with it. Let us all be of one heart, and may that heart belong to God alone.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; let us belong to God forever. It is in the bosom of this good Father that I embrace you tenderly.

Adèle

+ + +

118. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 25, 1810

The Word was made flesh
and dwelt among us.

² I suggest that we meditate together, my very dear friend, on the great mystery of this day. God, the Creator of heaven and earth, did not think it demeaning to assume our human nature in order to raise it from the degradation into which sin had plunged it.

³ For nine months, he shuts himself up in the womb of a virgin; what a lowering of himself! This surely should teach us how to practice that holy virtue of humility, which he later says we should learn from him.

⁴ How dear and precious this virtue should be to us. How we should strive to practice it, so as to become worthy of receiving Jesus Christ into our hearts in Holy Communion. He chooses humble hearts as his resting place.

⁵ Was there ever a creature more humble than the holy Virgin? She is literally crushed at the sight of her lowliness. When she is chosen to be the Mother of her God, she professes that she is only a handmaid. What a condemnation of that pride which gives us such a high opinion of ourselves!

⁶ Today's mystery should also motivate [us to] holy purity, and urge us to avoid any occasion that could blemish it. The holiest of virgins is troubled at the sight of an angel in human form and we, who are weakness itself, would dare expose ourselves to so many occasions!

⁷ The Holy Virgin exchanges very few words with the angel; but we love those lengthy conversations where humility is a likely victim!

⁸ Let us draw some profit from this great mystery. Let us prepare ourselves by purity and humility to celebrate worthily the great solemnities of Easter. Let us attract the divine Lamb into our hearts by the most sincere humility. That is what attracted him to the womb of the Blessed Virgin. The practice of this priceless virtue will also attract him into our hearts.

⁹ Farewell, dear friend; my next letter will probably be from Condom. There or here, rest assured that my friendship will end only with my life.

Adèle

+ + +

119. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 31, 1810

O my God, you will not reject a heart
that is contrite and humble.

² No, my dear friend, however guilty we may be, our all-merciful and good God has his arms

outstretched to receive us. Let us not insult God's goodness by doubting his mercy, for it is without limit.

³ God takes pleasure in saying he is rich in mercy; how often have we not experienced its admirable effects!

⁴ The web of our lives, dear friend, is woven with the graces with which God's mercy has indulged us. God has preserved us in critical situations and has plied us with holy examples, pious inspirations, and good advice. A thousand times he has warded off evil and pardoned our sins.

⁵ What does God ask in return? Our hearts, so that we might love him alone, and renounce a world that can only make us unhappy, both in this life and in the next. Then he promises us eternal happiness and, even in this life, that peace and joy of soul which is the greatest of temporal goods.

⁶ Let us surrender ourselves to this good Father and be his without reserve and forever. Let us support the trials which the Lord, a just Father, imposes. Let us confess that we deserve them a thousandfold, for we have so often deserved hell!

⁷ We would already have spent several years in the fires of hell, if God had taken us from this world on certain days and moments of our past! How great has God's mercy been for us in this regard! A frequent and serious reflection on this truth will stimulate our gratitude and increase our love for our divine Master.

⁸ I shall be in Condom when you receive this letter. Pray, dear friend, that I might draw heavenly profit from this trip.

⁹ Farewell, I embrace you in the sweet Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Adèle

+ + +

120. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 14, 1810
[Condom]

O my God, engrave on my heart
the memory of your sufferings.

² This is the week, my good friend, when we recall the sorrowful mysteries of our divine Savior. What Christian eye would not be shocked at the outrages he endures! Such a spectacle should inspire us with the greatest horror for sin, and immense gratitude and love for God.

³ What a model of humility and patience is presented to us by the Savior! Can we remain proud-hearted and sensual, and still call ourselves the disciples of this God who is degraded to the extent of dying on a Cross?

⁴ Let us fasten ourselves in mind and heart to the Cross of this divine Model and nail to it every single one of our pious affections. Finally, let us plumb these sacred wounds. Let us learn from them to detest a world that is in every way the opposite of him who is the divine Model of the predestined.

⁵ Above all, dear friend, let us not limit ourselves to mere speculation; let us translate reflection into practice. What fruit must we draw from the consideration of the Passion of the Savior? The renewal of our lives. After Easter, we must begin a new life.

⁶ Come, now; let us really change. We owe it to the glory of our good Jesus and of his most holy Mother, whose sorrows we commemorated last Friday. I had the joy of receiving Communion on that day. Pray that I may benefit from the many graces I receive here, for I shall have a heavy account to render.

⁷ Farewell, my good friend. You can always count on the affection that I have for you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

121. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 15, 1810

O my God, fill my heart with holy joy!

² Dear Agathe, I shall write to you on Wednesdays from now on, because Mme Belloc will write on Saturdays.

³ You can imagine, dear friend, the joy that is mine now that she is with me. Pray fervently to the Lord that my poor soul might profit by this visit. I am in great need of your prayers. Since my return from Condom, I have committed many faults. I seem to have left there the few good resolutions I made.

⁴ My dear friend, how sad to find oneself so unfaithful to so many of God's graces! But what am I saying? If we really felt that sadness, we would not expose ourselves so easily; we would exercise more careful watch over ourselves; we would keep better guard over all our thoughts and actions.

⁵ You know, dear friend, that this Christian vigilance is most necessary in the work of our salvation. What would happen to us in the midst of so many enemies seeking our perdition, if we opened the door of our soul? In the prophet's words, let us always keep our soul in our hands so as constantly to examine its nooks and crannies.

⁶ The saints have good advice to give us in this matter: in the morning, to foresee everything we shall have to do during the day so as to see how we might behave in a Christian manner; in the evening, to check to see whether we have been faithful. I know how repugnant this is to sloth, but is this not the price of our salvation? Is heaven not worth purchasing? Should what the martyrs acquired at the price of their blood be presented to us on a platter?

⁷ We expect Father Larribeau to come any day now. Imagine the number of things we shall have to talk about in general and in particular! The de Pomier sisters are also expected at any moment.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend. I embrace you very tenderly in the sweet Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

⁹ Greetings to our friends, and don't forget to greet your family for me. Mme Belloc embraces you all.

+ + +

122. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 23, 1810

O beauty ever ancient and ever new;
too late indeed have I begun to love you!

² My very dear friend, how much time have we wasted in the course of our lives! How many moments lost for all eternity!

³ Let us hasten to redeem by our tears a time that should have been spent in loving and serving God; make up for it we must. Let us resolve never again to lose a single instant of this most precious time, which escapes us so easily and passes so rapidly. Everything we do, all our actions, must be for God and for God's pleasure. If we adopt this program, our days will be full before the Lord; and we shall forestall painful regrets at the hour of death and for all eternity.

⁴ Each minute is worth no less than the Blood of Jesus Christ; he redeemed time for us with his

Blood.

⁵ Let us be miserly with the little time that may be left to us. Courage, my friend, let us bestir ourselves. Who does not advance, falls back. Let us therefore continue our efforts to increase in the love of our good Master.

⁶ Our repeated infidelities should make us humble. At the feet of the Master, let us shamefacedly admit that punishment is all we deserve, and that his graces are pure acts of his infinite goodness and mercy. Let us stop abusing them, dear friend, and finally respond generously to this love. O my God, help my extreme weakness. Without you I can only perish.

⁷ Dear friend, may I ask you to send me a large green sequin, plus two 45-centime packets of small gold sequins, one packet like the larger one I sent you and one like the smaller.

⁸ Kindly exchange the piece of fringe we are sending for a narrower one, similar to the one around the top of Father Larribeau's tabernacle. It is wider than the one around the column, but less wide than this piece. It should be as long as this thread. It should be cheaper because it is narrower. If they will not exchange it, don't buy another; just send it back. But do get the gold sequins and the large green one.

⁹ Please excuse me, dear friend, for putting you to so much trouble. We are in urgent need of the articles. Please try to send them by return messenger.

¹⁰ Farewell, dear friend, I love you very much in our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹¹ Mme Belloc also embraces you all.

Adèle

+ + +

123. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 31, 1810

O Jesus, draw me to yourself!

² We have just come from church, my very dear friend, where we adored Jesus Christ ascending to heaven, and I want to say a few words about the sacred solemnity we are celebrating.

³ It should really fill us with a holy joy. Jesus has gone to prepare the place that has been reserved for us in the celestial residence. Let us not lose it through our own fault.

⁴ Now this appealing inheritance was promised us with the same conditions under which the Redeemer himself bought it: at the price of suffering. The crown we expect is one of justice; therefore, it must be earned. Let us therefore work with renewed zeal to merit heaven.

⁵ We have been created for heaven, so let us work for it. We should go there now in spirit. All our actions, desires, and thoughts should be geared toward heaven and be concerned with it. Let us look upon earth with contempt. It can be for us only a place of exile and of pilgrimage. Let us live here as travelers who are constantly sighing for the blessed destination that is heaven.

⁶ Dear friend, we are concerned that the very unstable weather we have been having will postpone our trip to Lompian. In fact, that is almost a certainty. Knowing my willful nature, you will realize that I am somewhat chagrined; but the will of God demands submission.

⁷ Father Larribeau gave us two meditations, one on the love of God and the other on humility; he also presided at the Friday exercises. You can imagine how thrilled we were. Both the good Lord and our common interests were seriously discussed.

⁸ Greet our good friends, especially Elisa when you see her. I wish you a holy retreat in [preparation for the coming of] the Holy Spirit, one that will be most profitable for all of us.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; you can count on my unfailing attachment in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

124. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 7, 1810

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflame our hearts and set them aglow!

² May he come, dear Agathe, this divine Spirit, this Spirit of fortitude, wisdom, counsel, understanding, knowledge, piety, and fear of God.

³ Let us strive to acquire the Christian strength that will allow us to overcome all our passions and all the enemies of our salvation.

⁴ Let us strive to acquire a truly Christian wisdom which will let us see the vanity of the world and inspire in us esteem only for heavenly things.

⁵ Let us strive to acquire that understanding which recognizes the path that leads to life, and that knowledge of the saints which is so different from that of the world and so opposed to it. Worldly knowledge seeks the glory of vain display. That of Jesus Christ consists in being hidden from the eyes of a world blind to the things that concern salvation.

⁶ Let us acquire that piety which makes us love and appreciate the things of God, and that salutary fear which induces us to avoid sin and all occasions of sin.

⁷ At long last, we [Adèle and Dicherette] made our greatly desired trip, and a most happy one it was. We left Saturday afternoon and arrived at seven o'clock. We went to the little church for our meditation. Then we returned to the residence of the gracious Leader, where we stayed until eleven o'clock. And then to bed.

⁸ The next day we arose shortly after five. We went to church for Confessions. Then, since Mass would be said only after seven o'clock, we took a short walk with our dear Jeanne Larbès.⁴² We conversed about our good God.

⁹ Then came holy Mass, the homily, the thanksgiving; after that, we went to dinner. Messengers had been sent to spread the word, so that after dinner five of our friends arrived: the two Momus sisters, Mme Fabre, and the two Poitevin sisters. One is already an associate. The other was received: Marie Seurette Poitevin, who is fifteen years old. So now we have three Poitevin sisters.

¹⁰ After vespers, we met at a country site. There were eight of us; you can imagine our joy. We spoke at length of our concerns and of God. Then we returned to the church for prayers and to have the young Poitevin girl recite her Act of Consecration.

¹¹ There is an atmosphere of the love of God in this little parish. Dicherette and I consider this day as a salvific exercise.

¹² I thank you for all your trouble with my errands. I am sending the money to Mme Belloc.

¹³ I have just time enough to embrace you in the tender Heart of Jesus.

Adèle

+ + +

125. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle is 21 years old today.

⁴² Jeanne Larbès was an associate from the area.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 10, 1810

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflammé our hearts and set them aglow!

² My very dear friend, I am writing to you just after having left the Holy Table, where we partook liberally of the graces and Gifts of the Holy Spirit. O dear Agathe, let us be careful not to lose the graces attached to so great a sacrament. We have just made some great promises; we must now be filled with holy courage to carry them out.

³ Let us not rely on ourselves, but on the help of the Holy Spirit who made strong and courageous men out of timid and weak apostles. Dear friend, we have received the same Spirit; he will produce the selfsame effects in us, if we have the same dispositions.

⁴ Human respect must no longer seal our lips. When we have occasion to manifest our religion, we must be oblivious to the jeers and stares of the world. Let us seek only to please God. He gives himself totally to us, so let us live only for him.

⁵ Let us place our hopes, our desires, and our joys in the Well-Beloved, for he alone is able to fill a heart which has been created for God alone.

⁶ This holy octave of the Holy Spirit must be spent in greater alertness and discretion, so as not to lose the inspirations of the Spirit. May Jesus and Mary hold sway over our hearts.

⁷ Please, dear friend, send us immediately six packets, at 45 centimes, of sequins like the one I am enclosing and one packet at 20 centimes like the smaller I am sending. We need all these to finish the work we have started. Please excuse the bother I am causing you. But this will be your way of sharing in a good deed.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you and I love you with all my heart in that of our sweet Jesus.

⁹ Make sure we can return any leftover sequins.

Adèle

¹⁰ I am enclosing a letter for Mlle Caunes, which you can send on to Clotilde.

+ + +

126. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 20, 1810

Blessed Trinity, I adore you!

² Our devotions, my dear Agathe, should prepare us to spend in a fitting manner the holy octave [of *Corpus Christi*] we are entering. We should be filled with love for a God who is about to give us proof of his exceeding great love.

³ During this octave, we should be occupied principally with the love of God, with gratitude for such a prodigious benefit, and with the spirit of reparation for the widespread lack of reverence toward this adorable mystery.

⁴ Above all, let us regret our own failings against this august sacrament through our timorous attitude, our distractions in his holy presence, our indifference toward holy Communion, etc. I repeat, let us try to make reparation for all these failings and take strong resolutions for the future.

⁵ In honor of this ineffable mystery of the love of God for us pathetic creatures, let us prepare ourselves through true humility to partake as often as we can of the Bread of Angels. Here is where we shall find the strength and the vitality to make in safety the great voyage of eternity and to withstand the temptations of this present life.

⁶ Tomorrow I am going to Confession. Alas! In spite of all the graces given me by the Lord, my conscience is burdened with sins. Pray for me, dear Agathe, as I will for you. May the good Lord help us

to reform and to serve him faithfully during the few remaining days of our life. May we then deserve to possess him eternally in heaven.

⁷ Mme Belloc must have told you, my dear Agathe, how busy I am, so you will not be surprised at the shortness of this letter.

⁸ Be assured, dear friend, of my lasting friendship in the gentle Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Adèle

+ + +

127. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 25, 1810

Praise and thanks be forever
to the most holy and divine Sacrament of the Altar!

² May everything in us be renewed: our heart, our speech, and our apostolate. These thoughts, my dear friend, are from the first verse of *Sacris solemniiis [On this holy festival]*. They are appropriate for inspiring many holy reflections.

³ May this great feast signal a great renewal. We should love God alone, and everything for God; speak only of God or for his sake. Let us perform all our actions for God.

⁴ In fact, should not our hearts, our tongue, and our hands be consecrated to him who gives himself to us without reserve? How can we refuse anything to him who has refused us nothing?

⁵ How great is our ingratitude, my dear Agathe! Is there, can there be, anything comparable to it? We are touched by the smallest favor received from those around us; would we be indifferent only to the good Jesus? How good it is of him to invite us so often to his Table in spite of the offenses which we continue to commit!

⁶ O my dear friend, let it not be so in the future. Let us finally give the Lord proof of our gratitude, by our efforts to act for him, and to overcome ourselves.

⁷ The task is an imposing one. But what ought we to do for a God who is so prodigal toward us? Let us spend this holy octave piously, and renew our love and zeal for the service of our good Master.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; this is my second letter today, and I am very busy.

⁹ I embrace you in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Adèle

+ + +

128. To Agathe Diché, Agen

It is the Feast of the Visitation of Mary.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 2, 1810

All for your glory, O my God!

² My dear friend, a few hours ago I had the happiness of harboring in my heart him who sanctified John the Baptist. I have more reason than Elizabeth to exclaim, "How have I deserved this happiness, that my Lord and God should come to visit me?"

³ How could I, who am guilty of so many sins and infidelities, expect such a great favor? Ah! but the gentle Jesus forgets in an instant all that I have done against him; he remembers only that I am his child, redeemed at the price of all his blood.

⁴ What a blessed day for me, if I know how to appreciate it! Dearest Savior, never distance

yourself from me again. Through your grace, take up your abode in my heart. May I never again be so unhappy as to displease you by sin. May I never drive you from my heart by mortal sin; I would rather die on the spot.

⁵ Dear friend, let us imitate the love of our Blessed Mother. Like her, let us render to all our brothers and sisters the corporal and spiritual services in our power. God considers as done to himself what we do to others. How this should motivate our charity!

⁶ Between now and our next Communion, let us apply ourselves to overcoming any lack of love on our part. How could we be intolerant of our neighbor, while God is so prodigal toward us? We shall be judged with the same rigor that we use in judging others.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you tenderly in the gentle Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

⁸ Please excuse my awful writing; I wonder whether you will be able to read it!

+ + +

129. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.7

July 10, 1810

My God, I abandon myself entirely to your will.

² My very dear friend, I find this *acte* most fitting this week, since I have had quite a few minor annoyances.

³ I had placed one of my students at Lompian with a good family. The poor child became depressed; she coughed, there was even blood in her sputum; in short, she is unable to be of any service, at least for the moment. Imagine my disappointment. However, in all life's eventualities, let us adore Divine Providence, which often draws a greater good from something seemingly bad.

⁴ Let us show that filial confidence in God to which he is entitled on so many counts. In everything that happens to us, our spontaneous cry should be, "My God, may your will be done!" May we never murmur against our circumstances, but rather have the firm conviction that God will work it out for the best.

⁵ What peace would be ours if we possessed that beautiful virtue of conformity to the will of God! With confidence in God, our most bitter anguish can become our sweetest consolation.

⁶ Alas! We see so many persons who are overwhelmed by their crosses; let us humble ourselves because God spares us so much. God does so because of our weakness. Let us at least put up with the little trials that are allowed to come our way. Seen with the eyes of faith, they will be precious treasures, our coin for the purchase of heaven.

⁷ Our dear Lolotte⁴³ is taking the waters at Bagnères, and our dear Férétonne is taking those of Cauterets. The word from Cauterets is that neither seems long for this world. I am so sorry, not for them but for us, because of the example they have set.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. Till next week. I embrace you and love you much in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

130. To Agathe Diché, Agen

⁴³Charlotte de Lachapelle, of Condom. She eventually entered the religious institute and became superior of the new foundation of the Daughters in Condom.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 15, 1810

O my God, I wish to love you
more than I love myself.

² This is Sunday, my very dear friend, and I am writing to you on the day I have had the happiness of feeding on heavenly bread. Ah! My good friend, this sweet Savior has taken me back into his good graces. But for how long? Shall I be so unfortunate as to fall back almost immediately into the same sins? O my God, you know the sincere desire I have to serve you and to please you for the rest of my life. Strengthen my weak will; be my strength, my guide, and my support. Without you I can do nothing, I have nothing, and I am nothing.

³ You congratulate me, my dear Agathe, on the good use I make of my time! Alas! My good friend, are you not aware that we are rewarded, not for the number of our good works, but rather for the perfection we bring to doing them? Yes, if all I did was for God, I might have some merit. But I do everything out of a certain natural activism; I enjoy simply bustling about. Often a craving to be esteemed by the world is not absent. So everything that I have done to this day is worthless.

⁴ In the midst of so many riches, I linger in squalid poverty. My dear Agathe, let us both strive to purify our intentions even in the least of our actions; then nothing will be lost for eternity.

⁵ “Whatever you do,” said the apostle, “do it in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I offer you a pious challenge to do this, and to succeed I suggest that, from now till our next Confession, we ask this grace from God morning and evening with a *Hail Mary*.

⁶ Farewell, I can hardly keep my eyes open. I love and embrace you with all my heart in the Hearts of our sweet Jesus and of his holy Mother.

Adèle

+ + +

131. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T

July 24, 1810

O my God, you alone can fill my heart.

² My dear friend, it is a truism that only God can fully satisfy our hearts; they are too large to be filled by creatures. All our affections should be centered on our lovable and adorable Benefactor. Let us seek him alone, for therein lies true happiness.

³ The sight of our frailty should not discourage us, my good friend. It should rather induce us to despise ourselves and to shed our vain self-esteem. Let us reflect on how often we sin in spite of the graces we have received from God. Let us also remember that, had we not received much more than many other persons, we would have plunged into the worst disorders.

⁴ Reflections like these can also help us acquire enough charity to excuse the failings of our neighbor. Courage, my good friend; let us embark on a renewal course. The urgency is never greater than at the present time. If we cannot renounce ourselves in simple things, how could we resist even to the shedding of our blood if we were called to do so?

⁵ Let us not overestimate our strength for, as it happened to St. Peter, we could be left to our own devices. If the cedars are toppled, what will become of the frail reeds? Let us repeat, “Save us, we perish!”

⁶ A year ago, dear Agathe, we were together. How I hope to have the same pleasure this year. Do you think that is possible?

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend, I embrace you in our Lord with all my heart.

Adèle

⁸ I am surprised that Elisa has not answered me.

+ + +

132. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 30, 1810

Lord, I sacrifice all that I am to you.

² My good friend, let us work at sacrificing all that we are to the Lord. Let us practice this renunciation of self by bearing in silence the frustrations we experience, by submitting our wills to the judgment of another, by discounting our own views, and by obeying promptly and without objection.

³ While these may seem to be of little consequence, my dear friend, before God they are preferable to great austerities. Interior mortifications of the will profit us much more than the exterior, because they are hidden. Our pride, therefore, cannot so readily rob us of the merit.

⁴ Some saints have led an apparently very ordinary lifestyle, but they acquired infinite merits. To smile at someone who displeases us, to speak with him in a friendly manner. . . .

⁵ My dear friend, what treasures are within our grasp! Why not stoop to gather them? Let us banish far from us spiritual sloth, that great disorder of our soul. If we find such satisfaction in working for this life, let us show more stamina in the work that will profit us for all eternity.

⁶ Courage! This is something we can never accomplish ourselves; but with God we can do everything, and his help will never be lacking!

⁷ You disappoint me, dear Agathe, when you seem to abandon a plan on which I had counted so much. Would you not be able to work here to your heart's content? Think this over, both of you.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend, and do not doubt for an instant my affection for you in the dear Heart of Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

133. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 13, 1810

My God, may I desire you alone.

² My very dear friend, I hope we shall both be seated at the holy Table next Wednesday to gain the indulgences which the Sovereign Pontiff was gracious enough to grant for that day.

³ My good friend, the Church is constantly laying this treasure open to us. How many indulgences in the course of the year! What riches we could have amassed had we known how to profit from the graces poured upon us! What would become of us, sluggish and weak as we are, without the help of all those indulgences? What an impressive debt we would have piled up, had not the mercy and clemency of our God, who is all love, opened in our favor the inexhaustible treasures of Holy Church, composed of the superabundant merits of Jesus Christ and of the saints?

⁴ But, my dear, the best dispositions are necessary to gain these indulgences; in spite of our need, we gain very few. Let us hate and detest the least venial sin, be resolved to practice every self-sacrifice so as not to sin again, and have the firm resolution to do penance according to our ability. You know, dear friend, that indulgences do not dispense us from the obligation every Christian has to mortify himself; but they do compensate for what we are unable to do.

⁵ We should never cease thanking God for so many benefits. He overwhelms us with them every day.

We owe him the most sincere gratitude for taking us by the hand in a special way. We can try to repay him somewhat by offering ourselves to him totally and unreservedly.

⁶ Farewell, my dear friend. Please return to Emilie the book I am sending you. Be assured of my tender affection in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

134. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 20, 1810

O my God, be my refuge and my hope.

² During the holy octave [of the Assumption], my very dear friend, let us reflect on the virtues that raised our glorious Mother to the highest peak of glory to which a creature could aspire.

³ She was raised to such a height not only because of her status as Mother of God, but also because of the eminent virtues without which she would never have had that happiness.

⁴ It is above all her humility that won for her the extraordinary graces with which she was filled, as she admits in her canticle. Let us pay special attention to the practice of this beautiful humility by imitating her hidden interior life. It seemed so ordinary in the eyes of others, but it was most precious in the eyes of God. Let us avoid vain show; let us love to be unknown and counted as nothing.

⁵ My dear friend, how long is the row I have to hoe before I get there! However, a courageous will sustained by grace can achieve anything. Let us invoke the powerful intercession of the Blessed Virgin. If we trust in her and count on her help, we shall not be deceived.

⁶ Let us also imitate her purity. O God, what must have been the modesty of dress of the Queen of Virgins! How different it must have been from ours. I grant you, dear friend, that I would like to see the children of Mary stand out for their austere observance of this point. Close fitting dresses that are too tight, that reveal almost completely the shape of the legs, should be avoided. Some may say that there is no evil here, but the devil will always find some there. How tragic to be perhaps the cause of a mortal sin! You may be sure that this reflection is not mine alone!

⁷ Please excuse my frankness, dear friend, but can we keep silent about what might be advantageous to our soul? I implore you to be just as frank and open toward me. I embrace you tenderly in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

Adèle

+ + +

135. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 3, 1810

O my God, pardon my so often repeated offenses.

² My dear friend, how very suited to me is this aspiration, for I am frequently guilty of the same infidelities toward our good Master. How long will this two-sided struggle continue, between his mercy and my ingratitude?

³ And yet it is at this very time that we should try, through sincere repentance, to appease the hand of the Lord raised against us.⁴⁴ Instead we provide him every day with new causes of irritation.

⁴⁴The Sodality had just been suppressed by order of Napoleon. See Chaminade's letter, no. 39, to Archbishop d'Aviau, December 1809.

⁴ However insignificant the opportunity which presents itself, I find myself guilty of some infidelity. What further proof do I need that I am called to renounce the world? For, while some may be able to work out their salvation there, I might find it to be impossible. How grateful should I be to Providence for sheltering me from so many dangers where my feeble virtue would undoubtedly have suffered shipwreck.

⁵ How good of Divine Providence to watch over us and even to control the least incidents that happen to us, as if it had none but us to care for.

⁶ O my God, how can we repay you for so many benefits? Take all of me: my heart, my body, my soul, my whole self, without reserve and forever.

⁷ I suppose you will be joined with us in receiving Holy Communion on the Feast of the Nativity. Let us celebrate fittingly the birth of this good Mother, our special protector and powerful advocate with God. Our aim again is to be reborn in grace and to lead an entirely new life.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend. Don't doubt for an instant my great attachment to you in the gentle Hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

Adèle

+ + +

136. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 10, 1810

O my God, have pity on my miseries!

² Let us say this *acte* from the bottom of our hearts, my very dear friend. Let us beg the Lord to have pity on our wretchedness, for it is very great indeed.

³ The most cursory examination of our situation, dear friend, reveals only indigence and sin. Let us keep our eyes fixed steadily on our condition. Then we can avoid the pride which, in spite of our miseries, tends to vitiate all our actions.

⁴ My dear friend, how imperfect and sordid are our best deeds! How many of our actions will be judged of little value in the eyes of the Sovereign Judge! What carelessness in our practices of piety! That we can give in to pride in the midst of our shame must be due to some satanic illusion.

⁵ Look at those great saints, dear friend, who performed such marvels. They were convinced of their nothingness and had a lowly opinion of themselves. Humility is the trademark of true sanctity, and there is no holiness without it. Let us ask the Lord for this virtue from the bottom of our hearts and sincerely hope to obtain it. For our part, let us reject every favorable opinion of ourselves and every desire for the esteem of others.

⁶ I hope, dear friend, that you will be granted at least a week. I am so anxious to have you make the pilgrimage to Lompian with us; it would do you good.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend; let us be God's own forever. It is in this loving center that I embrace you.

Adèle

+ + +

137. To Agathe Diché, Agen

On September 24 Adèle and her aunt, Mme de Saint-Julien, went to Agen. Adèle had hoped that Agathe could then accompany them on their return to Trenquelléon

+ J.M.J.T.

September 26, 1810

O my God, prepare my heart

to receive your grace.

² Just a little word, my dear friend, to tell you how sorry I am that we could not take you along. Believe me, it would have given me the greatest pleasure, but the Lord did not permit it. Let us submit to that holy will in and for everything. This spirit of compliance will prepare us to receive the grace which we so greatly need.

³ For what can we do without grace? Of ourselves, we are capable only of sin. Let us go to God with perseverance and absolute trust, for he holds everything in his hand. He bestows his gifts on the humble, but looks askance at the proud.

⁴ Even to recognize our wretchedness and nothingness, dear friend, is a great grace. Let us truly humble ourselves, and not seek the vain esteem of others. Furthermore, may our loyalty to God be ever more pronounced. Let us bolster our courage, so as not to give up at the sight of our weaknesses. May we rather recover promptly after a fall.

⁵ The life of a Christian is a struggle. We are not here to enjoy ourselves, but to save our souls. That is our main and principal occupation. If we succeed in this, we shall have won everything; but if tragically we fail, then all is lost for us. "What does it profit us to gain the universe if we lose our soul?"

⁶ Aunt Saint-Julien sends you the enclosed sum of money; I presume it is to pay for the material.

⁷ Farewell, my very good friend; I embrace you and love you tenderly in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

138. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 22, 1810

O my God, give me renewed courage
to follow your way.

² I have just written to our dear Elisa, my very good friend. But I must also send you a brief word to tell you of the favors which my God again granted me yesterday. My heart had the happiness of hosting the divine Spouse.

³ My dear friend, how grateful I should be to a God who is all love and goodness in my regard. And yet, yesterday and today I have frequently offended him. How can so much wretchedness be coupled to so much grace? Pray for me, dear friend, that I no longer abuse such gifts.

⁴ I like to believe that we were both present at the holy Table at the same time, and that you, too, received Communion yesterday.

⁵ My dear friend, our weaknesses should not intimidate us; God has come not for the healthy, but for the sick. He is the cure of all our ills. Let us say to him with love and confidence, "Lord, the one whom you love is ill," and he will heal us.

⁶ My good friend, let us prepare to celebrate well the Feast of All Saints. If we merit their powerful protection, we may one day have the privilege of being in their saintly company. They were people like you and I, dear friend, in the same situations and with the same temptations. If they overcame them with the help of the same graces offered us, why cannot we? Let us long for that blessed time when we shall be united to them, and when we shall be forever in the happy impossibility of offending God.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you in the gentle Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

⁸ My dear cousin sends you a thousand greetings.

+ + +

139. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 28, 1810

My God, I love you;
you are all my strength.

² Oh, yes, my very dear friend, you can expect a scolding from me. What! Your first reaction is one of discouragement! You don't dare ask for anything any more! But, my good friend, it is precisely because you are poor and unhappy that you have greater need of prayer. You even need to cry out to the Lord, so as to obtain the help without which we are impotent, but with which we can do anything.

³ Alas, if discouragement should follow naturally upon a fault, who would be more exposed to it than I? In spite of the manifold graces with which I have just been overwhelmed, I am constantly offending this good Master by my pride, my impatience, my unfounded suspicions.

⁴ How good God must be, to put up with us! With all our heart let us say, "I love you, O my God, who are all my strength." Yes, God alone is our strength. We are but weakness compared to him. We are incapable of any good action unless he helps us with his sustaining hand. When God crowns our puny merits, he is crowning his own gifts.

⁵ Courage, my dear Agathe, courage; our God is the same today as he was yesterday, always our Father, our friend, our Savior. He came for the sick and for sinners, not for the healthy and the just. What a consoling thought, and what a motive for confidence!

⁶ Let us go to him in loving confidence then. Let us go as Mary Magdalene did, to weep for our sins with tears of love. Many sins will be forgiven us, if we shall have loved greatly. I love you, O my God, who are my only strength.

⁷ My cousin sends her greetings. She received Communion a week ago, and she expects to receive again on All Saints. I suppose you are preparing for the same happy event. By our fervent reception, let us deserve to obtain the conversion of the mother of our dear sister.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I embrace you and love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

⁹ P.S. Mme Pachan⁴⁵ wants to be remembered to you.

+ + +

140. To Agathe Diché, Agen

For lack of a confessor, Agathe could not receive Communion on All Saints.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 5, 1810

What would it profit me if I gained
the whole universe and lost you,
O my God?

² How true this is, dear friend. What futility to have gained the whole universe, if we had the

⁴⁵Mme Pachan, who is mentioned several times in Adèle's letters, was a former religious expelled from her convent by the Revolution. The Trenquelléon family had taken her in and treated her as one of their own. In return, she rendered various services to the family. Her brother was a priest.

misfortune to lose our God! What an irreparable, infinite loss!

³ My very dear Agathe, let us not be too concerned about advancing our temporal affairs, but turn our efforts to spiritual matters, to the unique business of our salvation. Let us seek that purpose in everything, purifying our intention in all our concerns.

⁴ My dear friend, I, too, am distressed by the absence of your confessor, especially because that spoiled for you the beautiful day of All Saints. How unpleasant it is, to have a confessor who absents himself so often and for so long!

⁵ Try not to lose your fervor, my good friend. On the contrary, this little setback should serve to make you feel more keenly your need for God. How weak we are, my dear friend, when we are deprived of this God, who is all our strength.

⁶ What a pitiful life this is, my dear. We are in constant danger of losing our God; we offend him repeatedly. Ah! Who will deliver us from this body of death? When shall we be in heaven, reveling in the happy impossibility of offending or of losing our Lord?

⁷ What a blessed moment, dear Agathe, when a predestined soul finds itself before God, who recalls all its good deeds and shows the soul the reward prepared for it. My good friend, it is up to us to procure this happiness; our lot is in our hands. How blind and senseless we are to be so indifferent to the attainment of such a great good!

⁸ Think of the despair of the damned soul, knowing that it could have but did not save itself, that its loss is entirely its own fault, and that so many gained what it lacked the will to do.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe, let us celebrate fervently Sunday's feast which is that of the Dedication. Let us try to atone for all the sins we have committed in the Holy Place, in the House of the Lord. Let us rendezvous there, to make due amends. I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹⁰ Elisa sends her greetings.⁴⁶

+ + +

141. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 14, 1810

O my Savior, deliver me
from all these passions that tyrannize me.

² How horrible is the world, my very dear friend! Its very sight is prejudicial to our soul. Alas! What would have become of me if I had frequented it. The slightest glimpse of it leads me to sin. This is what I am experiencing these days.

³ I had the happiness of receiving Communion last Sunday. Well, in spite of that, I have committed numberless faults. Conceit and dissipation are partly the cause. How weak we are, dear Agathe. Experience should convince us of this weakness, and urge us to practice humility and distrust of self.

⁴ How can a high opinion of ourselves exist in the midst of so much wretchedness? We feel so strong and determined on leaving the holy Table, yet moments later we are yielding to the same weaknesses!

⁵ O my God, have pity on my destitution, pardon all my infidelities, and free me from all those passions that tyrannize me.

⁶ If I yielded to my feelings, dear friend, I would allow myself to sink into despair. But no! I expect everything from the goodness of God, who is ever ready to pardon a truly repentant soul. O my God, this repentance is again a gift of your grace; please grant it to me. I ask this of you through the wounds of our

⁴⁶Probably Adèle's cousin, Elisa(beth) de Casteras, on vacation at Trenquelléon.

divine Jesus, which were inflicted only to obtain pardon for me and to open to me a haven of safety.

⁷ Let us seek out this haven, dear friend. Let us take refuge in spirit in these sacred wounds, for they are a fortress impregnable to the devil. Let us seek refuge therein, above all when the sight of the world becomes a danger to us. Let us there recite many pious aspirations, even multiply them, for the danger is greater than we may think.

⁸ Let us pronounce with respect the lovable names of Jesus and Mary. They are a powerful force to overcome the devil.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you and love you in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and Theresa.

Adèle

+ + +

142. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 20, 1810

How true it is Lord, that holiness
is the only thing necessary.

² I have just been saddened, my dear friend, by the departure of my dear aunts. They left here this morning. Another example, dear Agathe, that the joys of this world are always mixed with sorrow and of short duration. Only in heaven, in that celestial homeland, shall we be forever exempt from all sorrow and able to enjoy permanent and eternal happiness.

³ Dear friend, let us not lose the happiness that has been promised us, and that depends entirely upon ourselves. Just a few more days of self-discipline, and we shall be crowned. There is a crown suspended above the heads of those who persevere in the struggle; let us be among that number.

⁴ We should take heart at the sight of so many saintly men and women of varying situations who, in spite of obstacles that were the same as ours, or even greater, have nonetheless attained holiness.

⁵ Take note also of the great number of holy persons of our own day who lead a life that is more angelic than human; we should be ashamed of our cowardice and lack of zeal.

⁶ I had planned on receiving Communion tomorrow. But I have been so light-minded these days, and I think I had better wait a few days. I have great need of your prayers, dear friend. My head is not made for such daily routine.

⁷ Dear Aunt Saint-Julien wants you to put off again the purchase of her sheets. She wants to see whether she can find some at the Condom fair the day after tomorrow. In either case, she wants some very ordinary ones and does not want to spend more than five francs per *canne*.⁴⁷

⁸ Farewell, very dear friend; I embrace and love you very much in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

143. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 10, 1810

O divine Infant Jesus, come,
be born in my heart!

² The great feastdays are approaching, my dear friend. Let us prepare for them by fervor, by

⁴⁷An ancient unit of length varying, depending upon the locality, from 1.71 to 2.98 m (5.6 to 9.8 feet).

mortification, and above all by humility.

³ May we meditate on the profound humility of Jesus in his Incarnation, his birth, his life, and his death. Alas! What a contrast with our pride.

⁴ What an abomination this sin must be in the sight of God! Let us rid ourselves of it, applying our best efforts; let us make it the subject of our particular examen.

⁵ Humility is the foundation of all Christian virtues. There are no true virtues without humility; without it, they are like counterfeit money for the purchase of eternal life.

⁶ My good friend, why is it that humility is so difficult for us? Is our own wretchedness not reason enough to be humble? On the other hand, do we have any reason for self-glorification? The little good that may be in us is solely the work of grace; even that is often disfigured by a much more abundant evil.

⁷ What depth of corruption do we not find in ourselves, what inclination to evil! An extraordinary effort is required to do good. We must truly be blind to think that we are of some value before God. And if we are nothing before God, why want to be of some importance before others?

⁸ Let us ask this precious virtue of humility for one another, dear friend, through the merits of the birth of the Savior. He is such a wonderful model of humility. Let us not stint in our efforts to acquire and practice this virtue. That would be a good way of celebrating the birth of the Savior and of profiting by it.

⁹ The sight of our numerous setbacks should not discourage us. Were we to sin a hundred times a day, we must start again a hundred times with renewed courage. In the spiritual combat, only discouragement leads to defeat.

¹⁰ Farewell, very dear friend; I embrace you heartily in the crib of Bethlehem.

Adèle

+ + +

144. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 16, 1810

Heart of Jesus,
may your poverty free my heart!

² Of course I accept with pleasure, my dear friend, your suggestion that we prepare together to celebrate the arrival of our divine Savior.

³ We must be truly reborn and become a completely new creature in Jesus Christ. Let us take a very strong, solid, and courageous resolution to practice self-discipline and to engage in continuous combat.

⁴ How happy we shall be at the hour of death for having loathed this miserable and sinful flesh, which will be destroyed, and for having given all our esteem and concern to our soul, which will live forever.

⁵ However, we have a great deal of work to do; yet, let us never give way to discouragement. What can we not obtain from a God who is born in a crib for love of us? If we place our hope in him alone, we shall not be disappointed.

⁶ Let us ask the divine Savior, through his poverty and abnegation, to detach our hearts from this earth and its creatures and to bind them to himself alone and forever.

⁷ How worthy of our love is the newborn Jesus! Let us therefore love him dearly. Nothing is a burden for one who loves!

⁸ I suggest a midnight rendezvous in spirit next to the crib, to meditate for a few minutes on the Babe's deep humility, his burning love, and his unsparing mortification.

⁹ I imagine you have gone to visit poor Serène [de Saint-Amans]? It is a duty in the Society to visit the members who are ill. What is wrong with her? What is the nature of her sickness?

¹⁰ You say, dear Agathe, that you have great need to control the sprightliness of your gestures. But what about me? Alas! What of this distressing impatience which dominates me? Mark my words, I have a pretty bad character; if people knew it, no one would love me. Let us, though, try to overcome that defect, my gentle friend, cost what it may.

¹¹ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ and in the crib of Bethlehem.
Adèle

+ + +

145. To Agathe Diché, Agen

*Agathe followed up the suggestion to visit Serène de Saint-Amans, but can only report on her death. She was the second associate to die, the first being Aminthe Motier.*⁴⁸

+ J.M.J.T.

December 24, 1810

Come, divine infant Jesus, come!

² Dear Agathe, our Society now has two members less. Alas! One day we shall be a part of that number, perhaps very soon. If we reflected deeply on this truth, would we be so fond of our ease and of the comforts of this life, which will soon be over for us?

³ Remember that one of the principal objectives of our Society is to prepare ourselves for a holy death. Let us center our efforts on an effective detachment from this world, which passes so quickly. We must look upon ourselves as strangers, travelers, in a land of exile. Let us make heaven the goal of all our projects and undertakings.

⁴ Let us seek to purify our intention in all our actions so that not a single one will be lost for eternity.

⁵ May we pass this new year in this spirit. May it be for you a most happy one and a most fruitful one before God.

⁶ During the remaining days of this year, let us, dear friend, undertake a serious examination before God of the state of our soul, of our more pronounced defects, of the means to salvation, the graces we have received, and how we have profited by them. Then let us formulate resolutions aiming at greater fidelity in the future. Let us begin a new life as we begin a new year.

⁷ I am surprised that our dear Elisa has not answered me. Did she make any reference to my letter? Wish her a happy New Year for me.

⁸ Pray for me, dear friend, for I believe my faults are increasing by the day! O my God, how can you overwhelm me with your grace when you see such lack of correspondence?

⁹ Farewell, very dear Agathe; my friendship is with you in the crib of Bethlehem. We should often visit there and learn how to suffer, to be humble, to free ourselves from the world.

Adèle

+ + +

146. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 12, 1811

O my God, how good you are
to all your servants!

⁴⁸See Chaminade's letter, no. 37, of November 7, 1809.

² Yes, my very dear friend, how good God is to those who serve him! Every day we experience this kindness, for every day this good Master forgives us many infidelities.

³ You would not believe the number of faults I have committed since Epiphany, when I had the joy of reconciling myself with God. I began to offend him on leaving the holy Table, and I have kept it up ever since. However, I expect to experience his mercy again next Sunday.

⁴ Pray to God that I might go with true contrition and a sincere resolve to avoid every appearance of sin, since a trifle causes me to lapse.

⁵ What gratitude must I show the Lord for the retired life I lead, safe from so many occasions where I would have foundered!

⁶ My good friend, today's Gospel says that Jesus grew in age, wisdom, and grace before God and before men. It can hardly be said of us that we are growing in age and in wisdom, we who are Christians and therefore Christ's imitators! On the contrary, it could often be said that we are decreasing. And yet, life is slipping away, death is getting ever closer; when we appear before the tribunal of the sovereign Judge, we shall be empty-handed. How shall we counterbalance so much wickedness?

⁷ O my Jesus, on that terrible day hide me in your sacred wounds. See, I and my sins are bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ, which is the price of my ransom.

⁸ But, dear friend, if the blood of Jesus Christ is to wash away our crimes, it must be mixed with our tears. A single mortal sin is cause enough to shed tears for a lifetime, for that single sin would have consigned us to hell. And here we are, after many sins, unrepentant and unmoved!

⁹ Yet, where would we be, had God taken us at such and such a moment of our life? Our gratitude must be eternal, for having allowed us time to do penance. However, what will we become if we do not profit by it?

¹⁰ Farewell, dear friend, I embrace you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

147. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 30, 1811

O my God, make me realize the shortness of my life
and the uncertainty of my death.

² My very dear friend, I have not written you in two weeks. At last I have time today to carry out this agreeable task.

³ Like you, my dear friend, I have been deprived of the happiness of receiving Communion because of the illness of my confessor. He is better now, and I hope to receive on the Feast of the Purification. My last was on Epiphany, and that is almost a month ago!

⁴ Dear friend, we realize well that we need this celestial food, this mystical bread, this divine nourishment without which our soul is weak and flagging. What return can we make to the Lord for so great a gift? For this most singular consolation he has left us in this vale of tears?

⁵ We can best show our gratitude by frequent recourse to the sacraments with faith and love, and by profiting from the benefits that are attached to them. Let us draw from this fountain of living water those graces we need so much, surrounded as we are by so many enemies. What would become of us if we were deprived of this important help? Let us brush aside what is terrestrial; may we become worthy, little by little, to savor ever more the gifts of God.

⁶ Dear friend, ask the good Lord to deliver me from certain temptations, or at least to give me the strength to resist them courageously.

⁷ Come, my dear friend, let us pick up our courage! This life is a constant warfare in which we must conquer or perish. Let us not drop our arms like cowards, but fight like valiant soldiers.

⁸ We have been made such at our Confirmation, and we shall celebrate the anniversary of this event on February 6. On that day, let us ask for the Gift of Fortitude, and all the others, too. Let us not forget to reflect on this sacrament and on the duty it imposes to despise all human respect. And let us thank the Lord for having allowed us to receive it.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; I embrace you heartily in our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹⁰ I must leave you, to go teach my class.

Adèle

+ + +

Adèle's School

At this moment in the history of France, few villages had schools. The Civil Constitution of the Clergy had despoiled the Church of all its possessions. In so doing, it had deprived it of the possibility of continuing its centuries-old mission of educating the poor. It was only in 1833 that the Guizot law gave the State the right to reorganize elementary education in the communes.

Catechism classes in the parishes were the only means the parents had to impart to their children the elements of religion and of their social obligations. But this possibility was denied most of the children of southern France, where the hamlets and farms were a good distance from the church. Most children never attended these classes and grew up in ignorance.

Adèle was profoundly touched by the condition of these children. She therefore determined to give them classes herself, at the château. She taught the little boys and girls their catechism, the essential Christian prayers, and the elements of reading. Later her cousins living at Trenquelléon would help her.

Because her young pupils were isolated from one another and lived on farms far from Trenquelléon, they arrived at all hours of the day. This handicap could not dampen the enthusiasm of the teacher. She would drop everything the moment the pupils arrived—prayers, reunions with the family and friends, correspondence—and would run out to meet them. Her letters testify to this: "I must leave you, to go teach my class." (no. 147; January 30, 1811). "Here come my little girl pupils, I must leave you" (no. 169; December 2, 1812). "My little school is waiting for me, I must leave you. Pray God for the pupils and for their teacher" (no. 176; February 23, 1813).

+ + +

148. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 5, 1811

Whatever is not done to please you,
O Lord, is emptiness.

² Today is the Feast of Saint Agatha, my dear friend, and I have prayed to that great saint for you.
³ What an example for us: in the full bloom of her girlhood, she despises both promises and threats. She wants to belong to her God and to keep faith with him.

⁴ Dear friend, could we flatter ourselves that we have such courage? We who easily succumb to the least temptation and who cannot brook a harsh word?

⁵ How presumptuous of us to think that, with our frailty, we could confront tyrants. We must plead with God to give us the Gift of Fortitude and the virtue of courage, both so necessary for salvation.

⁶ Some day we may have to confess our faith. What blessedness if we could imitate the holy

martyrs! They were creatures like us, just as weak. Yet, sustained by that force from above which is also ours, what a victory was theirs!

⁷ Dear friend, we must prepare ourselves by success in minor conflicts to sustain more serious ones, should Providence so decree.

⁸ What a privation it must have been for you not to be able to go out on the Feast of the Presentation! I finally had the happiness of receiving Communion, which had been denied me since Epiphany. The Presentation was a beautiful feast. Did we offer ourselves generously to the Lord: our hearts, our souls, our bodies, everything that is in us and ours? We belong to him for so many reasons; could we deny him dominion over what is his?

⁹ I am greatly distressed, dear friend. Some gossips in Condom rumored that dear Férétone was spending too much time with the young ladies. Her guardians have forbidden her to attend any more meetings and have imposed other restrictions on this dear friend. She took all that very much to heart. Well, she made the sacrifice with truly admirable submission and humility. Doubtless the Lord has wonderful designs on that soul; he wants to free her from everything that is too earth-bound. See the kind of things that happen in this life!

¹⁰ Farewell, very dear friend; believe in my loving friendship in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

149. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 12, 1811

O my sovereign Good,
I love you above all goods.

² My dear Agathe, I had prepared myself for the happiness of receiving Communion on Septuagesima Sunday. To do that, I was up at five o'clock. However, when I arrived at Feugarolles, I found that Father Dousset was ill. So I had to retrace my steps in the same condition in which I had gone.

³ We were expecting Father Larribeau these days, but the awful weather we have been having—you know whereof I speak—prevented his coming. You see, dear friend, how life is filled with annoyances. They could be worth an infinity of merits, which we carelessly lose.

⁴ The good Lord promises eternal life for a glass of water given in his name. What would then be the value of the daily sacrifices which, by their very number, try our patience? Whatever be our stratagems, we cannot avoid them. Let us bear with them and earn merit for heaven. Remember that these sacrifices are nothing compared to the reward.

⁵ Let us bestir ourselves. Our days of suffering are so few, and then comes eternal happiness. Let us look at the saints, our elder brothers, who have preceded us in this life. How blessed are they now for having despised their bodies in order to attach themselves to Jesus Christ. How richly they have been rewarded! But the hedonists, who thought only of amusing themselves and satisfying their senses, now endure horrible torments.

⁶ The sight of their plight should spur us to work at our renewal without being discouraged by our relapses. Were we to fall a hundred times, we must take up arms for the hundredth time. We are never overcome so long as we continue to struggle.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. Sleep prevents me from adding any more. I embrace you and love you in the dear Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

150. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 27, 1811

[Ash Wednesday]

Remember, O creature, that you are dust,
and unto dust you shall return.

² Your last letter, my very dear friend, arrived later than usual because of the flooding, so today is my first chance to pen an answer.

³ Dear Agathe, what can I say? I have the same, and even more serious, defects as you. And yet, dear friend, we must work at correcting them. The season we are entering should stimulate us. However, we must not think we shall succeed in one day. It takes a long time, a very long time, to correct one's defects. God permits this to humble us, to make us aware of our weakness and to destroy our self-satisfaction.

⁴ Here are some suggestions that could help us to correct ourselves. In the morning, before or during our meditation, let us foresee the occasions where we might fall. Let us work out the strategy we shall use. Let us sincerely ask for God's grace to avoid offending him. By fervent aspirations, let us renew this prayer several times during the day. Let us make a particular examen of this defect every night, to ask pardon of God, to take new resolutions if we have succumbed, or to thank God if we have been faithful.

⁵ After that, dear friend, let us suffer humbly and in a spirit of penance the humiliation we deserve for having lost patience. Let us accept, for love of God and in expiation of our sins, that others should consider us unbearable or that they have a lowly opinion of us. And let us impose a small penance on ourselves for each time that we have fallen.

⁶ We should also, like St. Francis de Sales, make a pact with our tongue never to speak when the heart is agitated.

⁷ This practice should eliminate many failings. If we speak quickly, we run the risk of saying too much. If, on the contrary, we speak with more moderation, there is less danger for ourselves and more profit for our neighbor.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; I am being called. I embrace you with all my heart.
Adèle

+ + +

151. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 12, 1811

O my God, when shall I possess you,
never to lose you again?

² My dear Agathe, when shall we be in that holy City, to enjoy forever the supreme Good and to be in the blessed impossibility of offending the Lord?

³ Let us bend every effort to deserve entry there; we must not count the cost at the prospect of such a reward. We would be preparing eternal remorse for ourselves in the other life, if for lack of self-restraint we lost forever this sovereign Good. What a catastrophe!

⁴ I suggest that we spend a moment reflecting on this even as we go about our work. Let us cultivate the habit of entertaining pious thoughts in the course of the day, and of frequently recalling the presence of God. Let us ask the Lord for that grace, for again, what can we do if left to ourselves?

⁵ Let us develop the holy habit of speaking to God, to the angels, and to the saints. Our hearts

would then be less attached to things earthly, and we would avoid a number of sins.

⁶ We should often thank our guardian angels for their charitable concern and ask their pardon for being so little faithful to their good inspirations. Once and for all, let us work seriously at the task of our salvation.

⁷ Not a precious instant is to be lost, for we may not have many left. Let us live as if our end is near; then we shall be spared the surprise that overtakes so many.

⁸ The thought of a possible imminent death should be present whenever we are doing something important, especially when we receive the sacraments. Can we say, “This may be my last Confession, my last Communion.” Take poor Serène, for example. She did not think that her Communion on All Saints would be her last; but it was.

⁹ How long is it since you last saw our dear Elisa?

¹⁰ Farewell, my good Agathe; I embrace you most tenderly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

152. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 18, 1811

Loosen my heart and my tongue, O my God,
so that I might love and bless you eternally.

² My very dear friend, I share your sorrow; but, dear Agathe, let me not hear of discouragement! The Lord allows all this to humble you, to make you feel your helplessness. Work at humility.

³ To punish our pride, the Lord often allows humiliating temptations, or even great lapses. He knows how to draw good out of evil.

⁴ Resolve generously to do better and to forget the past. If you do recall it, do so only to humble yourself and to thank the good Lord for giving you time to know yourself. The sorrow inspired by grace is bitter, but peaceful. Nothing is gained by allowing yourself to be discouraged, for then you can do nothing worthwhile.

⁵ Courage, dear friend; all will be well. “The palm tree,” says St. Francis [de Sales], “bears fruit only very late, but it is delicious.” Let us never count on ourselves, but rely very much on God. He is the one who will never fail us.

⁶ I hope you will have the consolation of reconciling yourself with God on the great Feast of the Incarnation on Monday. I also hope to have that privilege. At that Communion, let us ask for humility and modesty. These are the virtues of which the incomparable Virgin gives us such a beautiful example on that day.

⁷ I have to make several copies and am obliged to leave you, but not without assuring you of my tender attachment in our suffering Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

153. To Agathe Diché in Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 26, 1811

O my God, you will not disdain
a heart that is contrite and humbled!

² My very dear friend, let us pronounce this *acte* with true repentance for our sins and great humility. What would be gained by these prayers if we pronounced them with the tip of the tongue, while the heart had no part in them?

³ This type of prayer has the merit of being extremely short; it can be said with a minimum of distraction and very fervently. But how do we usually recite them? With what negligence and lack of sincerity!

⁴ Really, my dear friend, how do we serve the Lord? The way we might serve the least of humans! We are most attentive to everything except to God's service, and yet we claim to have faith! Good Lord, what faith! A dead faith, of no value for eternity; a faith that will only increase our guilt for having known what to do and not having done it.

⁵ Let us change our behavior, dear Agathe, as we come closer to the great solemnities we are about to celebrate. Let us try to lead an entirely new life, totally consecrated to the glory of God and to the salvation of our soul.

⁶ We should envy the happiness of those most holy souls who serve the Lord with so much love and fidelity. With the help of the same grace that is their driving force, we can walk in their footsteps. Let us waste no time; let us "put the hand to the plow."

⁷ "The axe is already at the root of the tree; every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and cast into the fire." Take care, for it is not said, "the one that bears bad fruit," but "the one that does not bear good fruit." Let us shiver, and tremble, but act.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I love you greatly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

154. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 29, 1811

Prepare my heart, O my God,
to make it your dwelling place.

² My very dear friend, may this adorable Jesus prepare our hearts to become his dwelling place. What sort of a worthy dwelling place can we establish for him?

³ Let us purify ourselves of the old leaven and try to celebrate the Passover of the Lord with the unleavened bread of holiness and innocence.

⁴ Let us bury ourselves completely with Jesus Christ in his tomb and die to our bad habits, to rise to a new life.

⁵ The change in us should be noticeable, and this Easter should be a season of conversion and salvation. Personally I am in great need of it. I shall be surrounded by such fine examples [at Condom] that I will be very guilty if I do not improve a little.

⁶ My dear friend, how weak I am. Yesterday I committed a deliberate fault, for which I am very sorry. What would become of us if you judged us without mercy, O Lord? Pour that mercy abundantly upon me; may the abundance of my iniquities draw down the superabundance of your grace.

⁷ Dear friend, we have reason to be humbled when we see our companions who are so fervent, striding so rapidly along the path of God, and we trailing so far behind them. What a grace from the Lord, for us to be united to so many holy persons! May they draw down upon us many graces, especially at this time of our special need.

⁸ Farewell, my very good friend, believe in the tender attachment I have vowed to you for life, in our sweet Savior.

Adèle

+ + +

155. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle has been to Condom for a visit. Now she is planning to go to Figeac to visit her grandmother. Her cousin, Elisabeth de Casteras, will go with her, and they will pass through Agen.

+ J.M.J.T.

April 25, 1811

O my God, give us the peace
that the world cannot give.

² Just a hurried word, my dear friend, because with the trip so near, I am overwhelmed with things to do. So on Monday I shall have the pleasure of seeing you. It will be a real joy for me, as also to present Elisa to you.

³ So, dear friend, what shall I say? Simply that we must love our God sincerely, serve him with all our heart and soul and strength, and practice self-denial for love of him.

⁴ Life is so short. How could we not use it all in his love? O my God, I wish to love you. Tell me, what do you want me to do? Everything undertaken for your love will be most gratifying.

⁵ I visited some heavenly friends. How embarrassing to see these holy souls acquiring self-mastery with so much courage—for they have the same tendencies as we—while we are so tepid and so cowardly, giving free rein to our evil propensities. Let it no longer be so, dear friend; let us arise to an entirely new life!

⁶ Farewell. I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

156. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 11, 1811

Figeac

O my God, have pity on my misery!

² What misery, dear friend, what helplessness! How sadly are these confirmed by my experience. I have nothing to be proud of. If I do not fall into certain sins, it is because the good Lord in his infinite mercy has removed all occasions from me; otherwise I would commit even greater ones.

³ How I need the help of your prayers, my good friends. How weak I am in doing good, so different from those generous souls that nothing can stop and who walk with a firm step along the path of virtue.

⁴ I am going to seek a remedy for my weakness, dear friend, in the wounds of Jesus. I want to go into retreat into those sacred places of refuge. I want to throw myself at his feet, weeping for all my offenses against the best of all Masters. He has been so generous to me, who am, in a way, a child of grace.

⁵ I could, in a short time, become enamored of the world. O false world! Away with you, for you are no longer my destiny. I have given my heart to Jesus, and he is my heritage. What a precious heritage is Jesus, and how precious is that legacy! O my God, never take it away from me!

⁶ And you, my dear Agathe, how are you doing? I am just as disappointed as you; my confessor, too, is in very poor health, and it is often difficult to have recourse to him. I don't find that very amusing.

⁷ Try to be ready to join us as we pass through. What a treat that will be, one which I need badly.

⁸ Elisa sends her greetings. My good and dear friend, I embrace you with all my soul in our merciful Savior.

Adèle

+ + +

157. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 6, 1811

Figeac

My God, divine Spirit,
enlighten us with your divine light.

² What joy you give me, my very dear Agathe, at the prospect of accompanying us to Trenquelléon! What a glorious time we shall have. I am full of plans.

³ We shall have to profit by the time we have together, to serve our good Lord to the best of our ability.

⁴ I shall be twenty-two years old on Monday. I hope to spend this year more profitably, and to make some progress toward heaven. How shameful of me never to have improved in spite of the many graces conferred on me!

⁵ Alas, dear friend! How often have I been unfaithful during my stay here! And yet this good Father still wishes to take me to his heart and to ply me with the graces that I have spurned for so long. I must, finally, take a firm resolution and adhere to it unfailingly.

⁶ It is more imperative than ever that we initiate a change of heart in an attempt to appease the anger of the sovereign Judge, so upset with us.

⁷ We are nearing the Octave of the Most Holy Sacrament. The occasion is ripe for an increase in our love of God, who is so prodigal in our regard. Let us adore him every day with renewed fervor, placing particular stress now on one quality then on another, one day as our God, on the morrow as our King, or again as our Father, our Judge, our Physician, our Master, our Friend, or our Spouse.

⁸ Let us make due amends for all the outrages he receives in his adorable Sacrament and, above all, for the indifference of which we ourselves are so often guilty.

⁹ May all these feasts, dear friend, be accompanied by our spiritual progress, so that, once they have passed, we may find ourselves improved.

¹⁰ I would indeed love to see our dear Elisa [de Beauzeil] as I pass through. Let her know of my wish, and tell all our friends. What joy it would be to challenge each other as to who best serves God, with greater love and fidelity, and more courage. Does that good Master not deserve to possess all our hearts?

¹¹ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. My cousin was so pleased that you remembered her; she sends you a thousand greetings. I embrace you with all my soul in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

158. To Agathe Diché, Agen

It was not Agathe, but Mme Belloc who accompanied the family to Trenquelléon on their return from Figeac in the first part of July.

+ J.M.J.T.

July 18, 1811

O my God, you alone can fill my heart!

² I profit by this instant, my dear Agathe, to share with you the consolation that was ours this week because we had our common Father with us.

³ Father Larribeau arrived Tuesday morning and left Wednesday evening. You can imagine that we spoke a great deal of our interests.

⁴ Tuesday evening he gave us an instruction on faith. The next day, I asked him to speak to us privately on the duties of the Society. Here is a summary of his presentation.

⁵ He explained to us the advantages of the blessed protection of the august Mary, how she is a sign of predilection provided we invoke and imitate her faithfully. He developed these ideas at length.

⁶ Then he reminded us that the objective of our Society was to obtain a happy death, and that we should therefore prepare ourselves by directing all our actions to that end.

⁷ He exhorted us to a greater fidelity and a more reverent performance of our practices, such as the Friday prayers, the three o'clock rendezvous, our private prayers; and how to improve our meditations and our readings. He suggested that we implore the Holy Spirit before reading and, after reading, ask him to help us profit from what we have read. We should never be ashamed before others of our service of God. We should recite the *Angel of the Lord* punctually, whoever might be present; say with greater attention the prayers before and after meals; and make the sign of the cross at meals with more care and respect.

⁸ During the rest of the day, he expressed a strong desire to see us win souls for God by a well-placed word about God; by some short and appropriate reflection; by using, indeed, a thousand means suggested by enterprising zeal.

⁹ But above all, he recommended staying away from the world as much as possible or, when obliged to mingle with it out of duty, preparing ourselves beforehand in the morning by foreseeing certain occasions and the means to avoid them or to resist their allure.

¹⁰ I beg you, dear friend, to read this letter to our friends at your next meeting.

¹¹ Farewell, dear Agathe. I promise to take you along this autumn. I hope you will not disappoint me. I embrace you as I love you, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹² P.S. Please buy me a quarter-yard of deep blue cotton.

¹³ We have been asked to make a novena for two persons. Use St. Bernard's prayer and the *Hail, Holy Queen*.

¹⁴ Please tell Amélie [de Rissan] that I do not understand her reticence. Why not simply tell everything to her confessor? It would be to her advantage, and she would have avoided so many complications.

¹⁵ There is good news in the offing; God grant that it may be true. It is contained in a letter from Paris.

¹⁶ Mlle Adèle is adding one franc to mine as our alms. You could use for that the one franc and fifty centimes of Mlle Sérès which we will refund her. Add another fifty centimes for me.

+ + +

159. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 24, 1811

O my God, I sacrifice to you all that I am!

² My dear Agathe, let us sacrifice ourselves to the Lord; let it be a total sacrifice. No more gratifications at the expense of his law. Let us work steadily at taming our characters; this is a sacrifice and a penance very pleasing to God.

³ If we had the joy, finally, of becoming fully mistresses of ourselves, we would then obtain many graces and perhaps the spirit of kindness. We have examples to prove this. How the courage required to overcome in one instance strengthens us for later encounters!

⁴ That is how, dear friend, we are supposed to conquer heaven. It can be bought only by violence, and we would shy from self-discipline! If the work scares us, let the reward motivate us. We have only a few more days of combat to look forward to, and then we shall enjoy unalterable repose and peace.

⁵ So, let us get to it and take all possible means to improve ourselves. But let's not be discouraged if success does not come immediately; sometimes a long time is needed to get rid of a single defect. The Lord allows this, so that we might be more aware of our weakness and of the depth of our distress. Then we shall place all our confidence in God's infinite mercy and in the support of God's grace.

⁶ Like St. Francis de Sales, let us make a pact between our tongue and our heart so that, insofar as is possible, the tongue will not speak when the heart is agitated. Not only can we avoid many sins this way, but it is also an exercise in mortification that is very profitable to the soul. The good Lord provides us, through our character, with a means of acquiring more merit than by any other means. Let us not spurn all these riches.

⁷ I am enclosing a letter for Elisa. How I wish you could include her in your meetings. But what can be done? We must want what God wants.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. Be assured of my tender attachment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

⁹ Dicherette and Elisa [de Casteras] embrace you.

¹⁰ I know not how you understood my letter, dear friend. I was referring to the trip to Lompian, and not the one to Agen. Alas! That one is not on my schedule for this year.

+ + +

We have no letters of Adèle to Agathe from July of 1811 to October 15, 1812. From this period we have only three letters from Adèle, to Seurette Poitevin, an associate of the Tonneins Fraction (Lot-et-Garonne).

+ + +

160. To Seurette Poitevin, Tonneins

Adèle's trip to Lompian took place on October 6.

+ J.M.J.T.

October 14, 1811

O my God, give me renewed courage
to follow your path!

² It was a great disappointment for me, my dear friend, not to be able to meet you, nor our dear sisters from Tonneins, on my last little trip to Lompian. That really put a damper on the joy we had.

³ Notice how Divine Providence mixes even our consolations with sorrows, to tell us that it is vain to seek happiness in this life, that our true fatherland is only in eternity, that the world is a land of passage and exile, a valley of tears not deserving of the heart's attachment. I truly experienced it in this instance.

⁴ No sooner had I arrived from Lompian than we received news that my dear papa, who had left for Paris, arrived there with a fever. Imagine how worrisome this is at a distance of 200 leagues!⁴⁹ Please

⁴⁹League: a measure of distance varying for different times and countries from 2.4 to 4.6 miles. The distance from Agen to

pray for him, both you and all our dear sisters.

⁵ I heard with the greatest satisfaction that you had made the trip to Bordeaux and that you had the great happiness of meeting our admirable Father and his worthy daughter, Mlle Lacombe. I would have liked to share your happiness, but I am very unworthy of it.

⁶ At Lompian, we drew lots for one of Mary's virtues; I drew lively faith. May I acquire that lively faith which makes all actions so meritorious, even the most ordinary, when they are performed according to the views of faith. Let us do everything for God, dear friend, for we belong to him for so many reasons.

⁷ Ah, my dear Seurette, God showers us with graces every day. How ungrateful of us if we are not faithful. On the contrary, we must correspond to so many favors. Let us deal in favors as was done in the parable of the talents, so that if we have been faithful in little things God will establish us over much greater ones.

⁸ I wonder if our dear Momus⁵⁰ has informed you of the novena we will make, to obtain the return of three of our friends whom the world has drawn away, and also to obtain that the rest of the Society will have fortitude and a loathing for the world. We shall begin with Communion on All Saints. Every day we shall say the *Come, Creator Spirit* and the litanies of the Blessed Virgin, and call on the saints and the guardian angels of the Society.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friends, I beg you never to doubt my most tender attachment to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹⁰ Pray to the Lord for a sister who will perhaps change her state. The *Come, Holy Spirit* and the litanies of the Blessed Virgin for her, please.

+ + +

161. To Seurette Poitevin, Tonneins

+ J.M.J.T.

March 13, 1812

O my God, you do not despise a heart
that is contrite and humbled!

² My dear friend, your letters are always a source of great joy to me, for in them I recognize the good sentiments which the Lord inspires in you.

³ Continue to find your only happiness in the service of this most good Master, who is so generous toward us, who keeps track of our least good thought, and who hears even the slightest movement of our heart.

⁴ How different from the world, which has only ingratitude for those who serve it. If at first it offers some false enticements, these are soon changed into bitterness; whereas even God's strictness is always accompanied by some consolation.

⁵ Let us, therefore, abhor the wickedness of this world. Let us break with it forever. Let there be a barrier between it and us. Remember, we cannot serve two masters, God and the world. Can we hesitate?

⁶ The fact that we keep at a distance from the world should be noticed in our dress, which must always be simple; in our language, which must be unaffected; and in our appearance and behavior, which must be modest.

⁷ This is the ideal time for making resolutions. Let us try to draw profit from the remembrance of the mysteries of the Passion of our divine Savior. Let us die to sin, to the world, and to ourselves, in order

Paris is approximately 500 miles

⁵⁰ Mlle Anne Momus, an associate from Puch, belonged to the Tonneins Fraction.

to begin a new life with Jesus Christ and to be worthy of a spiritual resurrection.

⁸ I can hardly wait to hear about your trip to Marmande.⁵¹ May it contribute to the glory of God and the sanctification of souls.

⁹ Farewell, very dear friend; I embrace you in the sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Adèle

¹⁰ A thousand greetings to our dear sisters and affiliates.

+ + +

162. To Seurette Poitevin, Tonneins

Adèle has just spent two months with her aunts at Condom.

+ J.M.J.T.

May 22, 1812

Come, Holy Spirit,
enlighten us with your divine light!

² My very dear friend, I am returning the letter from our esteemed Mother⁵² which I received at Condom; I also received yours and that of our worthy Father.

³ Oh, my dear friend, let us humble ourselves as we see that we are so far from imitating the fervor of our dear companions. May their example stimulate us to follow them, at least from afar.

⁴ Our friends in Condom are wonderful indeed. We made two conquests, one being my first cousin, Mlle Caroline de Batz,⁵³ and the other Mlle Constance Vigier.

⁵ Our new friends in Figeac also made one: Mlle Françoquette Lacaze. I am anxious to hear of the success of your trip to Marmande. However, be very prudent in all your tactics; by going too fast we sometimes lose more than we gain.

⁶ We are approaching a beautiful octave, one calculated to revive our zeal and our love for the adorable Savior, who gives himself freely in the divine Sacrament. How can we continue to live in indifference at the sight of such a love! Could we not desire to be united to him, after all he has done to unite himself to us?

⁷ Dear friend, we should be constantly disposed to approach him frequently. It is in the frequent use of this adorable mystery that we shall obtain the graces and the necessary fortitude to overcome our enemies. Let us hasten to this furnace of love of our God, to be consumed by a love that destroys all earthly affections.

⁸ I sympathize with our dear Descomps in her illness; I hope it will not have any serious consequences. I ask you to pray for one of my uncles, and for some of my friends who are in great need. Ask the Lord to transform them radically.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; don't forget to greet all of my sisters and affiliates. Be assured of my tender attachment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

⁵¹ A town on the right bank of the Garonne, midway between Agen and Bordeaux.

⁵² Mlle Lacombe, of the Bordeaux Sodality, was designated by Chaminade to correspond with Adèle's Association.

⁵³ Daughter of François de Batz, younger brother of the Baron.

Mme Belloc has taken country lodgings with Mme de Galibert at Saint-Avit, overlooking the Garonne near Port-Sainte-Marie.

+ + +

163. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 15, 1812

What would it profit me to gain
the whole world, O my God, if I lost you?

² Oh, what a fearsome and formidable loss, that of my God! My dear friend, let us flee most carefully the accursed sin which is the cause of that loss; we must avoid it, whatever the cost.

³ The saint whose feast we celebrate today generously resolved to avoid sin after seeing, in a vision, the place God had reserved for her in hell. With the eyes of faith, we also can see our place if we continue to offend God. Can we do too much to avoid an unhappy eternity? Certainly not. Let us henceforth turn a deaf ear to our corrupt nature, which seduces and blinds us on every occasion. May it be burned at the stake of the love of God.

⁴ My dear friend, I never change in spite of all the pious reproaches and the saintly advice I receive. How guilty I shall be before the justice of God for abusing so many graces which others have not received.

⁵ I wish I were with you, dear friend, for my fervor needs to be revived by example. My nasty character has never been tamed; I dread the efforts needed to overcome it.

⁶ The bad weather we are having has prevented Mme Belloc from coming and also prevents me from going to her. You know how greatly I would have enjoyed being able to visit with her!

⁷ My aunts left today [for Condom]. Aunt Saint-Julien is rather upset; her confessor has been appointed pastor at Casteljalous. Pray for her in her disappointment. We all have our crosses in this world.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

164. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 21, 1812

O my Savior, deliver me
from all the passions that tyrannize me.

² Dear friend, how much longer shall we be subjected to these miserable passions, which so often deprive us of God's grace? Which of these passions have we extirpated during all the time that we claimed to be servants of God? Are we not still groaning under their yoke? Are they not the cause of several sins every day?

³ Once and for all, let us work seriously at overcoming ourselves with the help of the grace of God, which is never refused to us.

⁴ St. Francis de Sales was the most choleric and impatient of men, yet he became a perfect model of gentleness. He was flesh and bone like ourselves. Why could we not do what he did? The trouble is that we are never fully determined to wage a real struggle with ourselves. What if nature rebels? It is a wretched creature which must be trampled underfoot, so that our divine Master can reign as King and Sovereign.

⁵ Come, my dear Agathe, we are almost at All Saints. Let us confidently implore those saints of all ages, of every condition and state, who overcame their nature. They became saints in spite of all the obstacles which constantly deter us. We must try, between this feast and the birth of the Savior, to accomplish something for God. To God alone be the glory, for of ourselves we are capable only of sin. We have nothing but dire poverty.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

⁷ Our weather is so bad this month; we hope to see an improvement in November.

+ + +

165. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 27, 1812
Saint-Avit

O my God, the saints await us;
let us hurry!

² How happy I am, dear friend; I have come to spend a few days at Saint-Avit with our dear Mme Belloc. I am as happy as can be.

³ There are some very virtuous people here. I hope to make some precious conquests for us and for the Ladies. I hope to spend All Saints here. I should go to Confession, but I do not know yet to whom I shall go.

⁴ I am embarrassed to find myself among such wonderful people, dear friend. What examples! Good Lord, how culpable of me if I do not improve, and if I persist in that tepidity which flaws all my actions.

⁵ Let us advance, dear Agathe. The saints, our elder brothers and sisters, are waiting for us. To catch up with them, we must imitate their virtues, practice self-control, and crucify our nature. Long live Jesus Christ!

⁶ Once more it is in him that I embrace you.
Adèle

⁷ Do not forget the *cher projet* of Trenquelléon.

⁸ Mme Belloc embraces you.

⁹ Pray God for my poor papa, who is still in a most regrettable condition.

+ + +

166. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Shortly after Adèle's return to Trenquelléon from Saint-Avit, she received disquieting news about the health of Dicherette's husband.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 11, 1812

O my God, may your will be done!

² I dare not write to our poor friend, dear Agathe, so I am writing to you to express my uneasiness concerning our dear M. Belloc. The religious details given us by his worthy wife are most edifying indeed! Yes, religion alone can console in certain circumstances, and religion alone can bring consolation

to afflicted hearts. We experience this every day; it is the only recourse of the afflicted.

³ Embrace dear Dicherette for me. Tell her that I am not writing out of discretion; I sense that right now it could be a burden for her.

⁴ I am sending you a letter for Amélie.

⁵ I forgot to bring back Mme Belloc's books from church. I shall send them on at the first opportunity.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart.

Adèle

+ + +

167. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Doctor Belloc died on November 14, a victim of his dedication to his patients during an epidemic. He was thirty-five years old.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 19, 1812

O my God, I resign myself to your holy will!

² Dear Agathe, I know only too well your warm attachment to Mme Belloc and her worthy spouse, and I can sense how drastic a blow the death of the latter must be for you. Good Lord, what a loss! Your designs, O God, are impenetrable, yet always adorable.

³ Let us seek now, dear friend, only to be resigned to the will of God, to join this painful chalice to the one of Jesus Christ, and to offer this sacrifice with that of our Mother, the Blessed Virgin, who offered her dear Son. Let us not, like the pagans, give way to excessive sadness. May you be consoled by the happiness which your precious deceased now enjoys. I am sure that he would not want to return to this lowly world, now that he knows its nothingness and emptiness.

⁴ So, my dear friend, let us be concerned with following our own path, for our turn will come sooner or later. We can only despise a world which passes so rapidly and which we must leave at an instant when we least expect it. Rich or poor, happy or unhappy, we are all equal at the hour of death.

⁵ Dear Agathe, once you have recovered from the shock, I wish you would give me some edifying details about the poor deceased and his dear wife.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; I am totally at Agen in spirit. May the good Lord grant you all some consolation.

Adèle

+ + +

168. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 26, 1812

Break, O my God,
the bonds of human respect in me!

² I have only an instant, dear Agathe, for the meal is about to be served. What can I say? All we see should detach us from this world and make us think more seriously about our salvation, which we must achieve at any cost.

³ Let us die to self, to all our defects, and bind ourselves to the Lord with more fidelity than in the past. We must keep our lamps well-supplied with oil and be ready to follow the Bridegroom, for he does not give everyone the same time for preparation.

⁴ Farewell, I embrace you in Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

169. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 2, 1812

Come, Lord, and show us
the effects of your mercy!

² Dear Agathe, I hope this is the very last letter I shall write before we have the great satisfaction of meeting and expressing face to face how strong is our friendship.

³ Let us prepare as best we can to celebrate worthily the great feast of our Society, the Immaculate Conception. A feast of this nature can best be celebrated by great purity of heart, of body, and of mind. Let us bathe our souls thoroughly in the salutary waters of penance and try to arouse our hearts to perfect contrition. This we should ask of him who alone can grant it. Our fervor can also gain for us a plenary indulgence, which the Church so kindly grants on this day. If we are fortunate enough to gain that indulgence, our soul will become pure like that of a child.

⁴ How consoling and beautiful is our religion! Pity those who have no knowledge of it or who do not practice it. The Lord deserves our undying gratitude for the priceless grace of allowing us to be born in it, and for providing so many means of practicing it. Of course, we shall be judged more rigorously than many others.

⁵ I am worried about Amélie; it seems centuries since I had any news of her. Can you tell me anything about her?

⁶ My little girl pupils are arriving and I must leave you, but not without assuring you again, dear friend, of my most sincere friendship in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

⁷ Let us try to make some progress during Advent; so many saintly souls will be spending it in an edifying fashion.

+ + +

170. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 30, 1812

I shall recall my years in bitterness of heart,
for I have made such poor use of them.

² Allow me, my very dear friend, to extend to you my warmest wishes for the new year. May it be a holy year, a satisfying year, a year that is fruitful for heaven, one during which we shall garner a rich harvest of good deeds.

³ Let us excise from our hearts that pride which is the primary cause of all our failings. If only we could become truly humble, unimportant, and contemptible in our own eyes, and allow ourselves to be trampled upon and cast aside! Alas! How far are we from that goal. Our miserable self-love spoils everything, poisons everything. It is a mortal poison that infects even our most virtuous actions.

⁴ To extirpate it is the work of a lifetime. Let us apply ourselves without pause and take up the challenge with renewed courage. Heaven, eternal happiness, is certainly worth the price. How happy we shall be at our death for not having yielded to our vicious inclinations, and how we shall regret not

having done more for the divine Spouse of our souls.

⁵ Dear friend, the thought that should occupy our minds this year is that it might be our last. That will help us to practice detachment from this world. This is the virtue I propose as the Society's objective for the new year.

⁶ Alas, last year, it did not occur to poor M. Belloc that it would be the last New Year's Day he would see on earth. The same thing could happen to us. We must always be in readiness, for we know not the day nor the hour. And the Son of Man will come like a thief, at an hour when we least expect him. Let our lamps be well-trimmed so that we might follow the divine Spouse when he knocks at the door.

⁷ Dear friend, Mama asks that if the dress on display at the shop managed by the Jew is still there, please buy it and send it on.⁵⁴ But if it has been sold, don't bother looking for another. Thank you for your trouble.

⁷ Farewell, dear Agathe; I embrace you and love you dearly in spirit in the Crib of Bethlehem.
Adèle

⁸ Please see whether you can find an old secondhand woolen camisole in a used clothing store, for a girl of my stature. Tell me the cost. Excuse me for the trouble I put you to.

+ + +

171. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 5, 1813

O my God, I consecrate this year to you,
in reparation for the faults of the past years.

² Let us return to the crib, my very dear friend, and with the Magi bring our gifts to Jesus. Let us present him with our fervent, ardent, and mortified hearts represented by the incense, the gold, and the myrrh. May this feast fill us with a holy joy, for on that day the gentiles, whose descendants we are, were called to the bosom of Mother Church.

³ We must manifest our gratitude to God for having chosen us, among so many others who have not had the same happiness, to be born into the true Church, in which alone salvation is to be found.

⁴ Boundless is the gratitude he has the right to expect from us! Now what kind of a return ought we to make for such a grace? You know the answer, dear friend: we must follow the teachings and the spirit of the holy religion which we have the inestimable honor of professing. We cannot be Christians in name only; we must be such in practice.

⁵ What does our religion teach us? Blessed are they who weep . . . woe to you who are rich . . . love your enemies, do good to those who persecute you . . . hate your own life . . . carry your cross . . . deny your very self.

⁶ There you have a series of maxims greatly opposed to our natural tendencies. Yet they are the mark of the true Christian. Either throw the Gospels into the fire, or believe and practice that sublime morality whose sublimity alone proves its divine origin. For what mere human could have invented things so contrary to nature? Dear friend, a true Christian is a hero more worthy of admiration than the greatest of conquerors.

⁷ Yet how far we are from this virtuous state, which we are called to by our baptism! Let us find the strength we need at the foot of the crib of the divine Jesus, through the intercession of the holy Magi. They conquered every difficulty which might have prevented them from coming to adore the new

⁵⁴ Times were hard throughout the land in the years 1811-12, and Adèle and her mother did their utmost to provide food and clothing for the more disadvantaged.

Messiah.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe; I embrace you and love you well, in our lovable Jesus.
Adèle

+ + +

172. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 21, 1813

How good you are, O my God,
to all those who serve you!

² I have very little time to spend with you, dear friend; this is my third letter today.

³ If we are to be little apostles, our zeal will need to be constantly invigorated. But since example is the best teacher, let us begin with ourselves.

⁴ Let us be very gentle and charitable to our neighbor, and be all to all so as to win them all to Jesus Christ. The idea and hope of winning a soul is a good stimulus, urging us to mollify our temperament and to render our character more pliable. Both our neighbor and ourselves will gain by it.

⁵ Let us discipline ourselves, dear friend; only by doing ourselves violence can we conquer heaven. Heaven is well worth the cost. Come, if we love God, nothing will be difficult, for love makes everything easy and simple.

⁶ I read Elisa's letter with pleasure. Write to her once in a while, let her know what we are doing; we must keep her at all costs. Try to get her to undertake works of zeal, if she is able. Because she lives in the country, this may be easy for her. Tell her that our Society must be dedicated to the greater glory of God and has for its motto "to love God, to spread his love; to hate sin, to spread disgust for it."

⁷ Farewell, dear friend; I embrace and love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

173. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 27, 1813

From this moment on, O my God,
I give myself entirely to you.

² We are very busy this week, dear friend, putting our time and energy into the making of a vestment. For this reason I can spend only a short time writing to my dear friends, although my heart is always with them in spirit and in love.

³ Tuesday we celebrate the Feast of the Purification. Let us prepare our hearts to provide a lodging for our divine Jesus on that day. Let us offer ourselves with all we have and all we are. Let us sacrifice to the Lord the firstborn of our heart, I mean, our dominant passion, that disorderly self-love which is the great obstacle to our salvation.

⁴ Like Mary, let us accept with submissive spirit the hardships which, like a sword, pierce our soul. Let us unite our distresses to those of the Blessed Virgin under her title of Mother of the Afflicted. For who, indeed, had more sorrows than she?

⁵ After Holy Communion and in union with venerable Simeon, let us recite with all possible fervor our *Now you may dismiss*. We can imitate the holy man and press Jesus to our heart as he did, for we possess the divine Infant just as truly as he did. At his example, let us awaken our faith and our love for the divine Savior and take the firm resolution to serve him better than ever.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Agathe, I embrace and love you in Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

174. To Agathe Diché in Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 1, 1813

My God, make me realize the shortness of my life
and the uncertainty of my death.

² How true is that sentence, my dear friend; the daily examples that come to our notice certainly help to convince us.

³ The thought of the shortness of this life should be constantly in our minds, for then it will help us to detach ourselves from this world and to tackle courageously the painful things which God demands of us. Is it worth our while to coddle ourselves for a few days, then to lose eternal happiness? What does it matter if this short life be spent in delights or in mortifications? It is soon over and is succeeded by an eternity.

⁴ Come, dear friend, let there be no more world for us. How often have we said that! And how often has saying it produced no results! Let it today be from the bottom of our hearts and with complete determination. Let us distrust our weakness and place our hope only in the grace of God, which alone can give us the necessary strength.

⁵ Ah, dear friend, how often have we experienced what we truly are! How can we rely upon ourselves? A recent event again sadly confirmed that for me. O my God, how can you overwhelm me with your grace in spite of all my serious and countless infidelities? Dear Agathe, what ought we to be, after all the graces we have received? And yet, what in fact are we?

⁶ I am consoled, dear friend, when I note the good desires God inspires in you, to serve him better than ever. Cultivate this new grace, make it bear fruit through a holy correspondence with it. It will then earn you many others, just as the deal with the ten talents won for the faithful servant the governorship of ten cities.

⁷ Farewell, very dear friend; how I wish I were closer to all of you, so that I might be reanimated a little! I embrace you with all my soul in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

175. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 16, 1813

O my sovereign Good,
I love you above all other goods!

² I am stealing a moment, my dear friend, from my ordinary chores to have a word with you.

³ Dear friend, let us make reparation for the excesses committed during this unhappy time [of carnival]. By our renewed fervor and a more prompt flight from sin, let us try to compensate our lovable Master for the outrages he is made to suffer. By mortification and penance we can prepare for the great penitential season.

⁴ Dear friend, penance is most necessary for us. Had we committed but a single mortal sin, we should weep during our whole life for having caused the death of our God, who had given his life for us. If God had not shown us such great mercy, we would have been in hell for a number of years already.

Whatever the penance we perform, can it ever compare with the penance we have so often deserved?

⁵ Let us think of that when we experience great reluctance to discipline and mortify ourselves.

⁶ I am pleased that you are again writing to dear Elisa. Ask her to make some conquests if she has the opportunity.

⁷ Let us spread the family of the most pure Mary. Let us gather as many young hearts as possible under her protection and for the glory of our divine Master.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe, and do remember before God one who is in great need and who assures you of her eternal friendship.

Adèle

+ + +

176. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 23, 1813

O world, I renounce you
so as to love only Jesus.

² My dear friend, I believe you will have seen our dear Alexandrine Duffau before receiving this letter. She is a very pious friend whom you will love once you get to know her. She is a little timid, so try to put her at ease.

³ During these unhappy days, let us try to make reparation for the outrages which our God receives. To compensate him somewhat let us be more fervent and zealous in his service, more attentive in our devotions, more vigilant in avoiding sin. Finally, dear friend, let us imitate so many good people who will perform such a number of good deeds. The Carmelites take the discipline during these three days. What a difference between the worldly and the Christian spirit!

⁴ We should be confounded, dear friend, for doing so little for God, we who are so guilty and who have offended this God so often. A Christian life is a mortified life, a crucified life; let us not forget it. Let us be truly convinced that unless we love the Cross, we must renounce our faith.

⁵ My little school is waiting for me; I must leave you. Pray to God for my pupils and for their teacher. May God give all of us his holy love and make us worthy of possessing him one day in heaven. But we must earn our heaven, and we shall do that only by constant self-discipline.

⁶ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

⁷ May I ask you, dear Agathe, to buy me a shawl of mixed cotton and silk, of a solid color, according to your taste, about two yards long. Go to the merchant who sells them for eleven francs, according to what Mother says. Excuse me for the bother I give you.

+ + +

177. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 3, 1813

Remember, O creature, that you are dust,
and unto dust you shall return.

² Let us never forget, dear friend, that this miserable body is only dust, and unto dust it will return.

Is it really worthwhile to lose our immortal soul in order to procure some gratification for this body and to exempt it from the least discomfort?

³ No! let us rather tame it and treat it as a rebellious slave. Let us be really mortified during this Lent, not only by corporal fasting but still more by a spiritual fast. Our mind, our tongue, and our passions must fast.

⁴ Let us serve and love God more than ever. Let us belong to God without reserve and forever. May we prepare ourselves to become entirely new creatures on the great day of his resurrection. Meanwhile, dear friend, let us tackle the task more seriously than we have so far.

⁵ This week I have committed a thousand sins, despite the promises I had made last Sunday at Holy Communion. Alas! In his frequent visits with us, this adorable Jesus always finds us the same. Let us change once and for all, and stop afflicting his adorable heart.

⁶ Poor Euphrosine [Gabel] is going to die, but she is the edification of all our friends over there [Lompian]. Exemplary child. How happy she will be; but already I miss her!

⁷ Farewell, my dear friend. Let us imitate the wonderful models God has set before our eyes. He has united them to us, so as to encourage us to follow them. Let us look up to heaven and spurn this land of exile.

⁸ I embrace you in the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Adèle

+ + +

178. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 8, 1813

Save me, Lord, for without you I perish!

² How often have we not had the experience, dear friend, that without the help of the Lord we were lost! Since we are convinced of our helplessness, let us not cease clamoring for this powerful aid, with which we can do anything. The Lord has promised never to turn us down.

³ My good friend, I have an example in my entourage which makes me tremble. A young girl, the very model of fervor, has adopted an attitude of nonchalance. However, she is beginning to make a comeback. I know her well, and I can hardly get over it. We must work out our salvation in fear and trembling, but also with full confidence in our good Jesus, who is so lavish with his grace and who has singled us out with so much love.

⁴ Courage, dear Agathe, let us react to so many blessings by being consumed with zeal for the divine Savior of our souls. Let us despise a world which passes so rapidly, and not set our hearts nor our hopes on it. Let us love our divine Master more than ever, in imitation of so many of our friends who are running at top speed along the path of salvation.

⁵ I believe you have written to dear Elisa. I am happy to know that she is corresponding with you.

⁶ In imitation of the first Christians, let us all be of one heart and one mind, which will belong to God alone.

⁷ Farewell, my dear Agathe; let us rendezvous in the desert with our divine Savior.
Adèle

+ + +

179. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 16, 1813

O my God, when shall I possess you

so as never to lose you?

² We are well into the sacred Forty Days, my dear friend. Are we more fervent and more mortified? I am afraid that in my case, at least, this Lent will leave me as did the others, with sterile resolutions.

³ Every day we move closer to eternity. Soon the prime of our youth will be behind us. What will remain of it? What regrets for having so misused it! We must not wait for old age, that sad period of life. Let us give the Lord the first fruits of our mature years. Let us be completely devoted to the glory of God, and full of holy ingenuity to obtain it.

⁴ But, above all, let us glorify the Lord in ourselves through an entire submission to his adorable will. Let us support with resignation and confidence the divers afflictions Providence may be pleased to send us. These are destined to embellish our crown, if we accept them as the Lord intends.

⁵ Courage, my friend; let us take our cross upon our shoulders, however heavy it may seem. The Lord will lighten it by the unction of his grace, and he will help us to carry it. It will be the precious ladder by means of which we shall storm heaven.

⁶ O my God, we are aware that when you chastise us, it is as a tender Father full of concern for his guilty children. We have deserved hell a thousand times, yet you are satisfied with a few passing tribulations. Why should we not support them with patience? Our nature will revolt, but let us tame it; let it surrender to the blessing of Jesus Christ.

⁷ Pray a great deal for my poor papa; his condition is very serious.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe; doubt not for an instant my tender friendship in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

Baron de Trenquelléon had always enjoyed robust health. But in 1811, he took ill on his journey to Paris to visit his son.⁵⁵ Back in Trenquelléon, he was afflicted with a creeping paralysis that could not be cured. The following year⁵⁶ the paralysis had affected his limbs, though it left his mental faculties intact. While Mme de Trenquelléon substituted for the sick man as head of the domain, Adèle had become his nurse. He wanted no other care but that of his daughter.

+ + +

180. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 29, 1813

O my God, you will not despise a heart
that is contrite and humbled.

² It is so important that he despise it not, dear friend, for I am most miserable, and without God's great mercy I am lost.

³ O gentle Jesus, after so many graces received from your infinite goodness, how could I have been so unfaithful to you? No, this is it; I want to be yours forever.

⁴ A single mortal sin should make us weep for all eternity, and how many have we committed? Let us cry out, "O my God, you will not despise a heart that is contrite and humbled!" But let us try to form

⁵⁵See Adèle's letter to Agathe Diché, no. 160, October 14, 1811.

⁵⁶See Adèle's letter, no. 165, October 27, 1812.

such a heart in us through a vivid idea of the malice of sin, of what we lose by sin, and of what we [might have] merited. But above all, because contrition is a gift of God, we must ask for it earnestly from the Author of all grace. Let it be accompanied by a firm resolution to reform ourselves, cost what it may.

⁵ St. Francis de Sales was by nature impatient and choleric, but he became the mildest of men. Now there is a thought that can restore our hope! So let's give it a good try. The great feastdays are approaching; will there be any noticeable change in us?

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; I must leave you to go to Mass.

⁷ I embrace you in our Jesus.

Adèle

+ + +

181. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 21, 1813

May I live of your life, my divine Redeemer!

² May we be born to a new life during this holy season, my dear friend. If we share the life of our divine Redeemer, others will discern in us his spirit, his maxims, and his actions.

³ Alas! I have relapsed into my old habits since the great feastday. I certainly have good reason to believe that my resurrection was not a great success.

⁴ The resurrected Jesus dies no more. He must be the model of our own resurrection. His body was agile, subtle, and impassible. Similarly, our souls must be insensitive to the attractions of the world, prompt in following the will of God, and disengaged from the senses and from creatures.

⁵ Let us belong to God forever, without reserve or relapse; we owe this for so many reasons. We are privileged children of the grace of a God who has always had for us a preferential love. Oh, let us give him love for love, if we cannot give him life for life.

⁶ The world should no longer have any value for us. Let us love God above all, and all things in God and with reference to God. May this adorable Spouse of our souls satisfy all our desires and all our affections.

⁷ Pray to God, dear friend, that I may calm my exuberance. It is the cause of so many faults and, I fear, is increasing day by day. Let us work seriously to repress it, cost what it may. Let us, like St. Francis de Sales, make a pact with our tongue so that it will be silent when the heart is agitated; then let us be faithful to that pact!

⁸ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you and am all yours in our Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

182. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 27, 1813

O my God, give me that peace
which the world cannot give!

² Ah, yes, dear friend, it is only in the service of our excellent Master that we find the peace for which we hunger. It is one of life's most precious gifts. It is not to be found in the midst of the world's greatest pleasures; it is found, rather, amid the most trying situations.

³ This peace emanates from a heart that is pure, unattached, and resigned. With the help of grace, let us strive to acquire it; we shall then be flooded with that delightful peace which, according to the

apostle, surpasses all understanding.

⁴ Let us try to correct ourselves ever more and more. I have a pious challenge for you: let us see whether, between now and Pentecost, we can temper our characters. What joy if this slight victory would obtain for us the effusion of the Holy Spirit! The abundance of grace we would receive would help us afterward to be more self-disciplined.

⁵ Our God never allows himself to be outdone in generosity. The least thing we do for him is requited a hundredfold. What a good Master, and how delightful it is to serve him! Let us follow him ever more closely, and let us thank the Lord for having called us in so gratuitous a fashion. Let us regret having corresponded so poorly to his call thus far.

⁶ When you write to Elisa, inform her of the death of poor Euphrosine. Also tell Father Malroux,⁵⁷ so that he might remember her at Mass.

⁷ Farewell, my dear Agathe; let us rendezvous in spirit at noon on Saturday in the church at Feugarolles, there to adore Jesus Christ, who will be alone and abandoned. I embrace you in him with all my heart.

Adèle

+ + +

183. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 3, 1813

O my divine Shepherd,
lead me into your heavenly pasture.

² Yesterday, dear friend, he led me into his heavenly pastures, for I had the happiness of eating this celestial food. It should have changed me into a new being, but, alas, I am still the same! How long will we continue to cause our Savior the pain of witnessing these unproductive trips? O my God, help me appreciate as much as I should the great grace that it is to be able to possess you really and in person. Then I will share in the happiness of the Blessed Virgin.

³ Come, let us love God as much as such a love of his would require of us. Let us live of the life of God, since we live of God's flesh. What an anomaly: we receive this delicious food so often, yet our Christian conduct is no more edifying than the behavior of those who receive it but rarely!

⁴ Every Communion should prepare us for the next. Our heart should be constantly turned toward this celestial sacrament; may it be the source of all our delights, the satisfaction of all our desires. This Blessed Sacrament should be our paradise on earth, for in it, under a veil, we possess the same divinity that we shall possess without veil in heaven.

⁵ Farewell, my dear friend, I embrace and love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

184. To Agathe Diché

+ J.M.J.T.

May 11, 1813

Fill my heart, O my God, with holy joy!

² My very dear friend, in order to possess that holy joy which comes from a peaceful conscience,

⁵⁷ Assistant at a parish of Agen.

the heart must not be divided. It must belong entirely to the Lord with all its affections. It is precisely that hesitancy that we too often exhibit toward him that prevents us from experiencing all the gentleness of his yoke. Only those can experience it who have completely renounced the false joys of the world.

³ Dear friend, how can we hesitate? What comparison is there between the unmixed joy of serving God and the bitter joy of serving the world? Let us abandon this perverse world completely, once and for all. Children of Mary must detest and avoid it, after the example of their holy Mother. Though she had nothing to fear from its contagion, she always remained aloof from it in heart and affection. And we, dear friend, who stumble at the least occasion and are resolute only when danger is nowhere near—can we expose ourselves to its contagion without fear?

⁴ Christian virgins, spouses of Jesus Christ, should be happy with their solitude; that is where they can hear the voice of the Beloved, where they are sheltered from the seductive call of the sirens. How blessed is our dear Euphrosine for having experienced its futility, and for having fled from it. She would not exchange her present lot for that of the happiest worldlings.

⁵ By the way, did you inform Elisa of Euphrosine's death?

6 Farewell, my good and dear friend; never doubt of my love for you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

185. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 19, 1813

O beauty, ever ancient and ever new,
too late have I loved you.

² My very dear friend, let us prepare ourselves for the great Feast of the Ascension. Let our hearts be indifferent to this miserable earth. Let us endeavor to follow in spirit our divine Savior as he rises to heaven. Some day we shall have the happiness of taking possession of the place he is going there to prepare for us through a pure act of his mercy.

³ Let us climb the holy mountain with him and his disciples, watch him ascending to heaven, and beg him to drop the mantle of his virtues as did the prophet Elijah for his disciple Elisha. The sight of heaven, which is to be our eternal abode, should make us look with disdain on this earth of exile. Let us be careful not to lose this heaven! On the contrary, let us bend every effort to win it. Why reckon the cost when the reward is the possession of the very blessedness of God himself?

⁴ When shall we be freed from the bonds of this mortal life? From this body of death and sin that is continually dragging us down?

⁵ Alas, dear friend, you would hardly believe how poorly I have responded to our challenge. In spite of my resolutions, I practice no self-control. Yet we must not give way to discouragement; the few days that are left should help us arouse our courage and launch us headlong into this cruel war.

⁶ Farewell my dear Agathe; do not forget me before the Lord, for I am the poorest and feeblest of creatures.

Adèle

+ + +

186. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 23, 1813

O my God, draw me to yourself!

² So the good Lord has once more visited you with his cross, my good friend! But this time, I hope he will be satisfied with the sacrifice of your will. This new trial will have contributed to your preparation for the great approaching feasts. Let us not leave the Cenacle, for there we find ourselves in very good company.

³ Let us try to deserve the full outpouring of this divine Spirit. May the Spirit change us into new creatures, entirely crucified to the world and living from now on only for God.

⁴ How I need this Spirit of Fortitude to rid myself of all worldly preoccupations, and of that mental dissipation caused by the upcoming event. My brother is getting married, dear friend, and that very shortly. You know how my weakness will be subjected to repeated assaults. After it is over, I know I will need to make the desired pilgrimage [to Lompian].

⁵ Last week I had the satisfaction of seeing our worthy Father [Larribeau], who is always so full of zeal and holiness. If only we could follow his example and give ourselves to God without stint! We have to turn away from the world, dear Agathe, and use it as though we used it not. We can establish a retreat in the recesses of our heart, as did St. Catherine of Siena, and there dialogue with our Beloved.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear and good friend; I embrace you and love you with all my heart in our heavenly Spouse.

Adèle

⁷ Mlle de Pomier is in the neighborhood; I shall probably see her soon.

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187. To Agathe Diché, Agen

The marriage of Adèle's brother to Adèle de Sevin was originally scheduled to take place the week after Pentecost; the feast that year fell on June 6. In fact, the marriage did not take place until October 7.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 2, 1813

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflame and consume my heart!

² May this Holy Spirit descend upon us, my very dear friend, and transform us into new creatures in Jesus Christ. I have great need of him, for I must admit that I am spending very poorly the ten-day retreat in the Cenacle. Charles' marriage and the accompanying hubbub has me so preoccupied that I am distracted in all I do.

³ Pray, my dear friend, that the Holy Spirit will give me that fortitude which I need so much in this circumstance. Is it possible, dear friend, for the world and our heavenly Spouse to have equal place in our heart? Could the world make us lose all those graces which the good Lord wants to give us if we are faithful?

⁴ Let us look upon ourselves as dead to the world, as crucified for the world, and the world crucified for us. The life of a Christian virgin must be hidden in Christ. What a wonderful example we have in Virginie! Let us try to imitate her. You will be my Agathe de Casa Sancta; it so happens that you, too, are one of five sisters.

⁵ Farewell, my good Agathe, you have no idea of how busy I am. I must go now, and I leave you in the good company of the Cenacle.

Adèle

+ + +

188. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 15, 1813

O Trinity most holy, I adore you!

² Most dear Agathe, a number of small tasks prevent me from giving my heart the satisfaction of a long exchange with you; I shall have only a few words for you.

³ I am far from having acquired any merit in the painful trial that we have just experienced. On the contrary, I must have committed a thousand serious faults, which reveal to me my consummate frailty. My mind was also completely absorbed and in no condition to recollect itself for prayer.

⁴ May the Holy Week we are entering rouse my fervor. Let us spend it in spirit in the holy tabernacles, contemplating, loving, and especially imitating the adorable person of Jesus Christ.

⁵ Auntie Saint-Julien wants you to send her the sheets with the small apple designs, at 15 francs, and the cotton ones at 12 francs.

⁶ Farewell, dear Agathe; I embrace you with all my soul in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

⁷ I am returning Coures' letter; consult with Mme Belloc as to how I should answer it. Not knowing these young ladies, I do not want to do it on my own.

+ + +

189. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Baron de Trenquelléon's health requires that he take a cure in the waters of Barèges (Hautes-Pyrénées). The imminent departure of her parents adds to Adèle's responsibilities.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 24, 1813

Praise and thanks be ever
to the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar!

² I have but little time to give to this letter, dear Agathe, for the proximate departure of my parents for the spa keeps me very busy; and today being the Feast of St. John, I am going to Mass.

³ My dear friend, what a great saint! St. Francis de Sales had great devotion to him; he was struck by the pronounced abnegation of the saint while doing God's work. He deprived himself of the company of Jesus Christ, with whom, as you may imagine, he would have been most happy to live. A fine example for us, to know how to forsake God for God, that is, to give up our own inclination and devotion in order to fulfill the purposes of the Lord and be faithful to our duties of state.

⁴ Let us imitate in some way the virtues of this great saint: his mortification, his humility, the absence of any human respect.

⁵ Consummate praise is given him when he was called the greatest of those born of woman. Blessed is he who deserved to be praised by him who is eternal Truth.

⁶ Come, my friend; let us hesitate no longer! Let us work definitively at the acquisition of the virtues which we lack so completely.

⁷ Farewell, my good friend; you know of my constant and tender friendship for you in our Lord.
Adèle

+ + +

190. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 6, 1813

O my God,
I abandon myself entirely to your will.

² I can only write very briefly, dear friend, because for several days I have been copying a large notebook for Father Laumont.

³ I am saddened at the state of our poor Amélie, and I admit that I fear for her. I would regret her, not for herself, but for us, for I believe that those who die in the Lord are very blessed.

⁴ Let us try to imitate her patience, her resignation, her humility; she is giving us an outstanding example of these virtues.

⁵ Come, dear friend, let us withdraw as much as possible from this unhappy land of exile. Let us live here as though we had no dwelling here. Let us work unceasingly to acquire that crown of the blessed which is given only to those who are victorious over their passions and their defects.

⁶ Let us study how to perform better our every action, especially our prayers. If these were well said, they would draw down an abundance of grace. But poorly said, they are worthy only of blame and become the cause of more sins.

⁷ Farewell, dear Agathe. If we are able to make that little trip together, we shall try to benefit from it as much as possible.

⁸ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

⁹ Dear friend, Papa asks that your father let him know as soon as possible once he has set a time for his departure for Barèges. It is rather urgent, for his health is sinking rapidly.

¹⁰ Wednesday I shall send you a pound of wool; please have it spun triple stranded; it will be used to make stockings. A thousand pardons for putting you to all that trouble.

¹¹ Father Pachan sends his best greetings and asks that you give the enclosed certificate to your father.

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191. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 21, 1813

O my God, it is your glory
that I wish to seek!

² This morning, dear friend, I was meditating on Holy Communion in order to prepare for Sunday, should I be given permission to receive.

³ Alas, dear friend, I blush when I see how little I have profited by this delicious food of our souls. How unworthy is my conduct, I who have the honor of dining so often at the table of the Master. And I am not mending my ways at all!

⁴ What abuse I make of this fearsome sacrament, dear friend! I am determined, at long last, to work more assiduously at my sanctification. I must stop my abuse of this heavenly bread. By its very nature, it promotes our growth in the spiritual life, provided we are properly disposed.

⁵ If our soul is well-prepared to profit by this heavenly food, there should be some tangible result from one Communion to the next. This would give honor to Jesus Christ, who distributes his graces with such lavishness.

⁶ Holy things are for holy people. Let us not forget that. Our purpose is to acquire that sanctity, so that we might be more worthy to approach the divine mysteries more often.

⁷ No, I shall not give in to discouragement; my powerlessness will be the throne of the power of my God, and my wretchedness the seat of his mercy. If it pleases him, he can make his strength shine forth through my weakness.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I am waiting impatiently for the next delivery to bring me news from you. I embrace you in our Lord.

Adèle

+ + +

In the course of the year 1813, Chaminade decided he could delegate his power to admit members into the Sodality. He chose Father Pierre Laumont as his delegate.

Laumont, frequently mentioned in Adèle's letters, had been forced into exile at the time of the Revolution. He had settled in Saragossa. Undoubtedly that is where he made the acquaintance of Chaminade when the latter resided there from 1797 to 1800. When Catholic worship was reorganized in France, Laumont was appointed pastor of Sainte-Radegonde d'Agen. Because of Larribeau's poor health, Chaminade asked Laumont to help care for the various fractions of the Sodality in the Diocese of Agen. Laumont acquitted himself of this ministry with great enthusiasm and was very involved in the foundation of the Daughters of Mary. In 1825 he was appointed professor at the Major Seminary of Agen. Shortly thereafter, he retired to the motherhouse of the Daughters, where he died on September 5, 1827.

+ + +

192. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 25, 1813

Lord, to you I sacrifice all that I am.

A circular letter to our friends in Agen.

³ My very dear sisters and friends, the Lord has showered new blessings on our dear flock. Our worthy Father Chaminade has just given our esteemed associate, Father Laumont, the power to receive candidates. Father Laumont, who works tirelessly for the glory of God and the devotion to our incomparable Mother, wants you all to share in this new source of graces.⁵⁸

⁴ This week, he and your worthy Officer will go to Agen. There he will bestow on you the sacred, sweet, and lovable name of "Child of Mary." You are going to be enrolled in a very special manner under the standard of our august Mother. Prepare yourselves with all possible fervor for this glorious alliance you are about to contract with her.

⁵ Try not to lose the plenary indulgence which our Holy Father the Pope grants on the day of their consecration to those who are received, provided that, contrite and humble, they approach the sacraments of Confession and Communion.

⁶ Oh, what qualities ought to distinguish the children of Mary! To be under the protection of the most saintly of virgins is to promise to wage war against all vice. The world is no more for us, its vain pleasures no longer are attractive. The object of our quest will now be a humble, retired, and prayerful life.

⁷ We must expect to meet with crosses. Our Blessed Mother gave birth to us at the foot of the

⁵⁸It is probable that Laumont first exercised his new functions by officially receiving Adèle (principal Officer of the Sodality) and Mme Belloc (head of the Fraction of the Conception) at the château de Trenquelléon.

Cross of her Son. The daughters of the Virgin Mary, who was transfixed by a sword of anguish, must expect to suffer. But this is the path to that immortal glory to which we aspire.

⁸ Farewell, my dear friends, I wish you the peace of the Lord and I embrace you with all my heart.
Adèle

⁹ Show this letter to Amélie, that she might prepare herself. My dear Agathe, see to it that all our friends will be received and that poor Amélie will not be left out. What graces! Confession is a prior requirement.

¹⁰ P.S. I received the cotton; it is very nice. I was told to ask you for another half pound of a beautiful light blue color, priced at 10 francs, if you can find any. Saturday, I shall refund what I owe you.

¹¹ I still have no news from my dear parents [at Barèges].

+ + +

193. To Agathe Diché, Agen

While her parents were at Barèges, Adèle was in charge of the household, with Agathe to keep her company at first. Together they made the trip to Lompian. Mme Belloc then came to Trenquelléon in turn, replacing Agathe.

+ J.M.J.T.

September 3, 1813

O my God,
pardon my numerous infidelities!

² I am stealing away from my chores, my dear Agathe, to relax a few moments with you. I want to tell you how sorry I am that you are no longer here with me. However, we can continue our togetherness near our good Jesus, in the wounds of his feet. Let us humbly install ourselves there, not aspiring to rise any higher, sorrowing for our sins and hoping through our love—as did Mary Magdalene—to obtain their pardon.

³ Come, dear friend, we must summon all our courage to combat, with a great and generous heart, all the enemies of our salvation. We must not be discouraged. With the help of God, we shall finally accomplish something worthwhile.

⁴ I hope to hear very soon that you are enjoying peace and tranquility, and that you have been admitted once more to the banquet of the Spouse. Don't forget to write to our admirable Ananie⁵⁹ to console him; besides, his letters will do you a great deal of good.

⁵ Dear Mme Belloc is at Feugarolles, where she has gone to feed on the Bread of Angels. I, like Martha, am busy about many things, while Mary has the better part, which shall not be taken from her.

⁶ Farewell, farewell, dear Agathe; Mme Belloc and I embrace you with all our heart in Jesus Christ.

Adèle

⁷ I am sending you a piece of organdy so that you can finish what you are doing and still have enough for the surplice for young Dubrana.⁶⁰ Let me know how he is doing.

⁸ Please ask Mme Galibert to send me a packet of gold sequins, no.10, at 35 centimes a packet.

⁵⁹The name by which they often referred to Father Larribeau, their spiritual guide.

⁶⁰Charles Dubrana, born in 1797 at Nérac, was a poor young man who wanted to study for the priesthood. Adèle persuaded her friends to contribute to his upkeep until his ordination, which took place May 28, 1825.

+ + +

194. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 8, 1813

O my Beloved,
you are all mine and I am all yours!

² Today, dear Agathe, the Lord has given himself entirely to me. What a favor! Can I ever forget it, or repay such generosity with ingratitude? Oh, much rather, Lord, to die than willingly to displease you.

³ But, my dear friend, how many times have I not made the same reflection! And I am always just as unfaithful to a God who never ceases to be generous toward me.

⁴ Today my thoughts turn to our good sisters in Puch who are making their consecration. But I am also thinking of my dear Agathe, who is suffering hardships with which, I assure you, I empathize. Ah! my dear friend, how I long to know that your soul is refreshed and at peace.

⁵ Courage, dear friend; make the effort once and for all. Then they will be completely happy with you. Afterwards, I beg you, write to our good Father. He wants you to; perhaps he has something good to tell you.

⁶ I can tell you that our dear Aimée promises to come tomorrow, but because of the awful weather I am afraid it will be a missed opportunity. You know how much this distresses us . . . but not everything in this world can be a consolation. We must know how to make sacrifices, and that will be one for us.

⁷ If only we could be reborn, my friend, along with our divine Mother: have a birth similar to hers and live as she did, in humility, kindness, and submissiveness.

⁸ We shall be happy if, after imitating her here below, we can join her one day in heaven to love, bless, and praise our divine Spouse.

⁹ Farewell, dear Agathe. I am always pressed for time, as you know. Receive the assurance of my most sincere regards.

Adèle

¹⁰ A thousand greetings to our friends; the same to your dear parents.

+ + +

195. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 16, 1813

O my God, do not abandon us!

² Dear friend, how grateful we should be to our good Master! Father Laumont arrived on Monday and stayed until Wednesday evening.

³ We had three instructions: one on the imitation of our Lord Jesus Christ, one on frequent Communion, and the third on prayer. Marvelous!

⁴ Our dear Aimée was inducted in grand style, and he made her a very touching exhortation. That afternoon he told us that he had had a distraction during holy Mass: he had consecrated the three of us to the Blessed Trinity. Oh, what a holy man, and what a wonderful time we spent with him!

⁵ Dear Mme Belloc left with Aimée to visit Mme Galibert. She will be back tonight, or tomorrow at the latest. They had urged me to accompany them. Luckily I did not. My parents came home yesterday and in good health, except always for poor Papa's infirmity; his general health otherwise is excellent. You can imagine how excited I am this morning after their return.

⁶ I must cut this short, but what shall I say? That we must, as Father Laumont was saying, accept the

bread of tears as part of the daily bread we ask for every day.

⁷ Désirée made her first Communion on Sunday and, I hope, in excellent sentiments. She is here. So is Elisa, and I think permanently. Pray to God for all these young girls.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe. I keep thinking of your troubles in spite of my joys of the moment, and they disquiet me.

⁹ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹⁰ Hearty greetings to our friends.

¹¹ Dubrana will have to take along the sheet until he can get others. I am sending you the second pair of stockings to have them dyed.

¹² We have not yet received the package of dresses; I shall send someone to the Port to claim it.

¹³ I must try to find some linens for Dubrana.

+ + +

196. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 22, 1813

O my God,
prepare my heart to receive your graces!

² O my dearest Agathe, here, we are caught up in a whirlwind of activity.⁶¹ How will my poor and weak heart support it all? Rather poorly, I think. Please recommend it to our good Jesus. Henceforth, may that heart be his alone, depend on him alone, and look at this world askance.

³ I am happy that you have decided to write to our worthy Father. I hope he will bring you some consolation in your distress and give you renewed courage.

⁴ Dear friend, let us embrace courageously the cross which our divine Master places on our shoulders. We must not drag it, but carry it. We can be sure that if we do carry it, it will in turn carry us right into heaven. We have so few days to spend in this world; is it really worthwhile stopping here and clinging to it?

⁵ O divine Jesus, I want to be yours alone, uniquely yours, unreservedly and irrevocably yours.

⁶ Courage, dear Agathe, let us detach ourselves from ourselves by practicing salutary self-discipline. Let us spur on our courage with the sight of the reward which surpasses anything we can imagine, and which will follow these short periods of hardship. May we find ourselves in that sojourn of ineffable bliss, to contemplate and love the sovereign Beauty for all ages. Amen.

⁷ In this happy expectancy, I beg you to believe me forever your sincere friend and sister in Jesus Christ.

Adèle

⁸ Greetings to our friends. Mme Belloc embraces you all. Many best wishes to your worthy family.

+ + +

197. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 29, 1813

O my God, I place all my confidence in you!

⁶¹Charles' wedding was only two weeks away.

² Thank you, dear Agathe, for your timely advice. So great is my weakness that I very much need it in this circumstance, and your prayers also. May God engrave these words profoundly in my heart: God alone, God alone. Yes, may God alone reign forever in me, may I live for him alone, may he be ever the King of my heart.

³ The world is no longer for us, dear Agathe. Let us live in it as strangers who are constantly pining for the celestial fatherland, like travelers who put down no roots.

⁴ So, you still do not have the happiness of possessing the gentle Jesus! The Lord is trying you, so that you might undergo a complete renewal. May it be a lasting one, and lead you to eternity.

⁵ Dear friend, God grants me so many graces! How badly, how very badly, do I respond to them. You would find it hard to believe.

⁶ Yesterday I received a fine letter from Father Larribeau. I cannot send it on, for it is personal. However, I am sending some others from friends, which will please and edify you. Please return them for my edification, and also because I shall need them.

⁷ Farewell, dear friend, I assure you of my sincere attachment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

198. To Agathe Diché, Agen

The wedding of Charles de Trenquelléon took place in Agen on October 7; the young couple then set up house in Trenquelléon. There was a constant going and coming of visits made and visitors received.

+ J.M.J.T.

October 11, 1813

O my divine Savior,
do not allow me to be lost!

² I want to slip in a word now, very dear Agathe. Oh, dear friend, how I wish I could repeat that trip to Lompian! That is what I need, so that my head might recover somewhat from this hurly-burly that is so dangerous to my weakness. If I did go, I should be taken severely to task.

³ Let us shun the world, dear friend, as much as we can. It is a dangerous reef to our feeble virtue, which is safe only when it avoids every occasion.

⁴ Let us humble ourselves, dear friend, at the sight of our great weakness, and take all necessary precautions. Humility, self-distrust, and a great confidence in God are what will attract his grace and allow great things to be accomplished with the poorest of instruments.

⁵ When you have the time, dear Agathe, I wish you would buy the needed ribbon and embroider two cinctures [for sodalists]. A thousand pardons for the inconvenience.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend. Only the eternal is worthy of our immortal soul, so let us despise a world which vanishes so rapidly.

⁷ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

199. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 20, 1813

Lord, give me new courage

to walk in your footsteps!

² How pleased I was, dear Agathe, when I heard of your good fortune; my heart rejoiced.

³ While I was absorbed by the affairs of this world, my dear sisters were tasting heavenly delights. I envy that blessedness, but I am very happy that it has come to you after all the painful trials through which you have passed.

⁴ You see how the good Lord mixes, in this life, the crosses with the consolations, and does so with admirable wisdom. Everything God does is for our good. Oh, how gentle, how good, how lovable a Master! Let us devote ourselves ever more to his service and despise the world, which cannot give happiness to our hearts. They are made for God alone, and God alone can satisfy. How avaricious must be a heart for whom God does not suffice!

⁵ O my lovable Spouse, will you take me into your arms after so many infidelities? I cast myself into them with confidence. In vain did I seek repose elsewhere; I can find it in you alone. Oh, the blindness of the worldlings who seek their vain satisfactions in perishable goods, instead of seeking satisfaction only in God, who alone can satisfy!

⁶ How long has it been since you have heard from Elisa? I think you should write to her. What does Mme Belloc think?

⁷ I must leave you, dear friend, to say a few words to our good Amélie who, I believe, is striding with firm step along the path of perfection.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe; be convinced of my tender love for you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

200. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

October 27, 1813

I love you, O my God,
who are all my strength!

² Today, dear friend, I am going with my brother and sister-in-law to visit Gajeau. But first I want to pen a few words to you—spend a few moments with my dear Agathe and speak to her of the approaching solemnity.

³ What better feast to put life into our zeal when we see what the saints have done! They were men and women like ourselves. They inhabited the same earth as we, were exposed to the same temptations, pinned their hopes on the same heaven, and feared the same hell as we.

⁴ Let us have the courage to follow such beautiful models. Like them, let us practice salutary self-discipline. Let us remember that everything in this world will pass, and only that which serves to gain heaven deserves our attention and concern. This was the unique preoccupation of the saints, and all they did had that purpose. We must do the same, if we want to attain the same objective.

⁵ If we imitate them, this solemnity will one day also be our feastday. Oh, when will that happy moment come when we shall enter heaven? What can we regret on this earth that is in any way proportionate to the glory awaiting us in the eternal dwelling?

⁶ But this dwelling must be bought by violence, crosses, humiliations. Is such a happiness too costly? Come, now is the time to get down to business. Eternity is approaching, and time is flying rapidly; we are perhaps very near the end.

⁷ Farewell, very dear friend. I leave you contemplating in spirit the blessedness of the saints, and especially what they did to merit that state, and what we ourselves must do.

Adèle

+ + +

201. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 4, 1813

The saints are waiting for us;
let us hurry!

² Let us be stimulated, my dear friend, by the example of that multitude of saints of all ages and classes. They became saints in the midst of the same circumstances that are a stumbling block for us. Let us reanimate our faith, our zeal, and our love.

³ Let us become saints at any price, whatever it may cost us, not weighing the effort but casting our eyes on the reward that is waiting for us if we are faithful.

⁴ The crown is suspended over our heads. Let us not have the misfortune of that apostate who left the company of the forty martyrs to return to the poisoned bath of the world.

⁵ O my good Master, after all the graces you have granted me, how guilty I should be if I were to abandon you! You want me all to yourself. Can I fail to give myself to the one to whom I belong on so many counts? Oh, no, let me not be that ungrateful! I have firmly resolved: no more sin, no more world, no more worldly vanities for me. My whole ambition, my whole delight will be in the titles of spouse and servant of Jesus Christ; my only pursuit is to serve God and to save myself.

⁶ The more I see of the world, my dear friend, the more I see how difficult it is to find salvation in it. All its customs and maxims are entirely opposed to religion. It is impossible to be of the world and to belong to Jesus Christ. Let us once and for all break with this abominable master, who can only make slaves of us. Rather, let us enter into the holy liberty of the children of God, there to enjoy the sweetness of his adorable service.

⁷ Farewell, dear Agathe, how I long to see you to tell you face to face my love for you in our Lord.
Adèle

+ + +

202. To Agathe Diché, Agen

For some time, Adèle had worn a visible crucifix around her neck as a sign of renunciation of the world. To those of her companions who shared her views, she suggests that they imitate her practice.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 10, 1813

Deliver me, O Lord,
from all the passions that tyrannize me!

² I congratulate you, my dear Agathe, for wearing the cross of our divine Savior as a glorious symbol, proclaiming to the world that you wish to belong to him forever.

³ I have the same happiness. But, dear friend, what a scandal if we wear this glorious sign on our breast but fail to conform our lives to it; if we wear the image of Jesus crucified, and we ourselves do not become a living image of Jesus on the cross by authentic renunciation of ourselves, of the world, and of all its vanities!

⁴ Let us have the courage to be true spouses of Jesus crucified. Let us not run from the cross, but rather embrace it at least with resignation. Let us follow in the footsteps of our divine Master.

⁵ Our religion is founded on suffering. Can we, as Christians, expect anything else?

⁶ Let us reflect, dear friend, that we have been created in the image of God, and that our belonging

to him is a kind of tribute. We must render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what is God's. We should ask ourselves sometimes, "Whose image am I? God's?" So let us render to God what is God's.

⁷ I thank you, dear friend, for the cinctures you were so kind as to embroider. I thoroughly appreciate your generosity. At your leisure, I wish you would copy Father Laumont's first Rule, for I do not have a copy.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; pray for my troubled person at the throne of Mercy, where you have the happiness of kneeling so often.

⁹ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

203. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 15, 1813

O Lord, how true it is
that sanctity is the only thing necessary!

² Next Sunday, dearest friend, we shall celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple when she was three years old. Let us present ourselves also on that day to the Lord. Let us consecrate our whole persons to him. There must be nothing in us which does not belong to the divine Master, to whom we belong on so many counts. When we give ourselves to him, we are merely rendering him his due.

³ The Lord has given us many graces, my dear friend. I have the happiness of receiving Communion almost every Sunday. What fidelity is required by such a privilege! A person has to distinguish between frequent Communion and occasional Communion. A person who receives often, but whose life does not become more edifying, is a true scandal.

⁴ Come, my dear friend, let us assimilate the qualities of the food with which we are nourished. It is not we who change it into ourselves, but rather it should change us into itself.

⁵ Our life must be one of fervor, humility, and concealment, seen by God alone. How delightful it is to serve our most lovable Master! The thorns we encounter in his service are richly compensated for by the tenderness that he manifests.

⁶ After all, do we not have a great deal to expiate? And shall we ever be able to do penance enough for the many infidelities of which we are guilty?

⁷ God has great plans for our salvation. If we spoil them, we can only become great reprobates. This thought should be recalled often to keep alive in us a certain salutary fear—although one full of confidence—and to encourage us to work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

⁸ Farewell, my good and dear friend; my heart insists that it will always be united to yours in the holy Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

+ + +

204. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 23, 1813

What consolation you reserve, O my God,
for those who fear you!

² It is a fact, dear friend, that this most lovable Savior lavishes great consolations on those who serve him with fidelity and love. He rewards the slightest gesture made for him. Nothing is lost, and nothing is forgotten. He takes into account a simple desire; he listens to the stratagems we form in our heart; he does not forget a tear, a sigh. O my God, how good it is to serve you!

³ What a difference with the world! We work ourselves to the bone, sacrifice our health, our rest, and often our very soul for it, and what do we get in return? Only remorse, sorrow, and disgust!

⁴ Dear friend, we are blessed indeed, because God has revealed to us the nothingness of this world. But how guilty we would be if, despite this knowledge, we did not abandon worldly maxims.

⁵ We shall be judged much more strictly than many other persons. My very dear friend, let us courageously put an end to this ingratitude toward that infinite goodness which, ever since our childhood, has always led us by the hand. Once and for all, let us give ourselves to the Lord forever.

⁶ Let us no longer drag through the mud that beautiful robe of innocence with which he endowed us at baptism. Unfortunately, we have sullied it so often; yet it has been washed, again and again, in the adorable Blood of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of Penance.

⁷ Let us never again allow that precious torch to be extinguished, that symbol of love which was placed in our hands. We have allowed it to go out often enough; yet the goodness of our God has rekindled it.

⁸ Henceforth and forever, let us be faithful to the most faithful of spouses.

⁹ I thank you for the trouble you are so willing to take, to copy the Rule for me.

¹⁰ Farewell, very dear friend; you can count on my strong friendship in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

205. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Since the affiliation of the Association to the Sodality of Bordeaux, the feast of December 8 has taken on a more solemn character.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 30, 1813

Come, Lord,
show us the effects of your mercy.

² Let us prepare ourselves, my good friend, to renew with great fervor our consecration to the most holy Mother of God on the great day of her Conception. It is our own very special feast.

³ May we prepare for it by great purity of heart, for it is the day on which the Blessed Virgin was conceived without sin. Can she recognize us as her children if our hearts are tainted with the leprosy of sin, and we make no effort to seek a cure? She is in truth the Mother of Mercy, the Refuge of sinners, but of sinners of good will who would like to convert and who try seriously to do so.

⁴ It is for these above all that she is pleased to display her great mercy and her extraordinary kindness.

⁵ On this feast, dear friend, let us take a firm resolution to banish anything that could stain the delicate virtue of purity which we carry about in frail vessels. Let us avoid all occasions, even the slightest, even those that would be harmless for others. Remember that we are weakness itself, and that mere trifles have made us fall.

⁶ Let us pray for the strength to renounce all that could tarnish this virtue, symbolized by the cincture we wear. It is a virtue that should characterize the children of the most pure Mary.

⁷ I hope you will hear from dear Elisa soon.

⁸ O my dear sister, if we all could form only one heart and one mind, and have it constantly occupied in blessing and loving our heavenly Spouse, in detesting sin and all that inclines us to it!

⁹ Farewell, my dear Agathe; I assure you again of my tender friendship in our Lord.
Adèle

+ + +

206. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 7, 1813

O Jesus, come to be born in my heart!

² My dear friend, how good is our divine Savior to come to be born in our hearts and to take up his residence there! Why are we not overcome with gratitude at the sight of such a great mystery?

³ Yes, Jesus wants to come tomorrow to be born in my miserable heart, in this heart which has so many earthly ties and disordered affections, which has offended him so often!

⁴ If I took into account only my numberless iniquities, how would I dare to approach the holy Table? But I shall fix my eyes only on his goodness, on the mercy of my God. He invites me with paternal tenderness and, like the father of the prodigal son, wants to have a joyous feast to celebrate my return.

⁵ Let us admit, dear Agathe, that both you and I would be most guilty if we did not love our God with a most fervent love. He has been more than kind to us, even though we have never corresponded to his love and have repaid him only with ingratitude.

⁶ He has great plans for our salvation; let us not frustrate them.

⁷ Remember, dear friend, the salutary advice we were given on the little trip which we made so happily together and the resolutions we took then? Frankly, I have not been faithful to these. Let us recall them and prepare to renew them with all sincerity at the beginning of this new year.

⁸ Now that you have finished the task given you, dear friend, I think you should bring some consolation to our worthy Ananie by writing to him. As an excuse you could say that you want to wish him a happy new year. You would ask and be given some good advice for the new year. Also have him suggest a patron saint to be your protector for the year, just as I intend to do for myself.

⁹ My dear friend, let us prepare ourselves for the great Feast of the Birth of our Savior.

¹⁰ It is in the womb of Mary, the present home of our divine Jesus, that I embrace you with all my heart.

Adèle

+ + +

207. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 14, 1813

Poverty of my Jesus, free my heart!

² Our divine Liberator is approaching, my dear friend. Let us prepare the pathways of our hearts for him. May the hills of our pride be leveled by sincere humility; the valleys, that is, the emptiness of our heart, be filled with virtues; the heart's twisted paths made straight; and our consciences become honest and sincere.

³ May all our enemies take flight at the arrival of this great King. May this great feast be the occasion of a complete renewal, of a spiritual rebirth. May our youth be renewed like that of the eagle. Let us prepare ourselves to renew wholeheartedly, on New Year's Day, our good resolutions according to the advice given us.

⁴ Dear friend, we must hurry to accumulate our provisions for the next life. We are still very

young. But experience proves every day how little we can count on the most flourishing youthfulness; the example of your dear cousin is a striking case in point!

⁵ The good Lord allows these painful blows to free us completely from this miserable world, to which our hearts are constantly inclined. I have no doubt that he has, in particular, some great designs on your dear family. Ordinarily it is by ruthless, unsparing pruning that he leads the souls he calls to high perfection.

⁶ Be faithful, dear friend, and you shall experience the goodness of the Lord. The way of the cross may be rough on our nature, but we see that it is very necessary for us if we wish to attain heaven.

⁷ Farewell, dear friend, I must stop to write to Mme Lagneaux [Mlle Monnet], to whom I have not written since her marriage.

⁸ I close with the renewed assurance of my eternal attachment.

Adèle

+ + +

208. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 21, 1813

O divine infant Jesus,
come to save us!

² Our divine Liberator is coming, my dear friend. But will he find all the paths to our hearts neatly smoothed? Have the hills of our pride been leveled by a sincere humility? Have the valleys and hollows of our heart been filled with virtues and good deeds?

³ This divine Savior is coming to bring peace to people of good will. Are we really possessed of the will to do better, to serve the Lord with all our strength?

⁴ God sees and rewards even good will. Let us develop it very sincerely in ourselves, and God will grant us the graces which his divine birth brings to the world.

⁵ As we go to him, dear friend, profoundly convinced of our wretchedness and nothingness, let us weep before the Lord for the number of our sins; let us sprinkle the crib, if possible, with the tears of our repentance.

⁶ How dry my heart is, dear friend, after having deserved hell so often and having been preserved by a merciful hand. How I should detest sin!

⁷ Dear friend, pray for me, that I may be given that contrition which erases sin and which alone can cause Jesus to be born in a heart where sin has reigned for so long.

⁸ The path to the stable, just like the road to Calvary, must bear traces of our tears, if not of our blood. Pardon, O my God, for so many sins. If I am not sufficiently contrite for my sins, I at least desire to experience true contrition. I firmly resolve to avoid sin in the future with all the strength at my command.

⁹ Farewell, my dear Agathe. During this holy season, let us stay close to our little King. In spirit, let us say all our prayers in the stable. It is in that holy abode that we must renew our good resolutions.

¹⁰ I embrace you with all my heart, in that of the newborn Jesus.

Adèle

+ + +

209. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 29, 1813

I shall recall my years in bitterness of heart,

when I see how I have misused them.

² A happy new year, dear friend. May it be a good year in every respect. Let us try to pass it more profitably than previous ones; let us finally begin to do something for God, to correct everything in us that displeases him.

³ We could begin with our dominant fault, doing our utmost to eradicate it, thinking about it every morning, foreseeing occasions, forming generous resolutions, recalling several times a day that we have this defect to overcome, and, finally, performing actions directly contrary to it.

⁴ In the evening we could check the number of times we have failed during the day and ask pardon a thousand times of Jesus, of Mary, of our good guardian angel, and of the saints.

⁵ Following this practice, my good friend, was strongly recommended by St. Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales, and by all those who follow their teachings. Everything will become easy if we have a sincere desire to please God and to better ourselves.

⁶ Ask the good Lord that I might overcome my spiritual lethargy, which often prevents me from using these means.

⁷ I learned with pleasure that your dear cousin had the happiness of receiving her God. I know that this heavenly viaticum will fortify her at the moment which is so hazardous for one's salvation, for it is then that the devil uses all his stratagems.

⁸ Dear friend, God certainly does show us that youth and health are no guarantees against death.

⁹ I received the letter you sent for our worthy Ananie. I have not heard from him in centuries. I am waiting for an occasion to send him a large package I have for him.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear Agathe, I am very attached to you in our Lord Jesus Christ, and I embrace you in spirit in the crib of Bethlehem.

Adèle

¹¹ I congratulate you on the happy arrival of your uncle; please greet your dear aunt and cousins for me.

+ + +

210. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 3, 1814

O my God, I consecrate this year to you
in reparation for the faults
committed during the preceding ones.

² My very dear Agathe, you will receive this letter through M. Dangeros, instead of by the usual Saturday delivery.

³ I am returning the shawl; it belongs to no one here. The only one we sent was of wool. Someone must be very worried. I am sending you another one, belonging to my aunt from Gajeau; please have it dyed the same color as the one I am returning, if that is possible.

⁴ I am touched by the illusion under which your cousin is laboring concerning her state of health. It seems to me, unless wiser advice prevails, that in conscience someone is obliged to inform her of her condition. Besides, it is a disservice to defer the final Anointing until the patient has lost consciousness and cannot benefit by all the graces which this sacrament can give. It can restore to health, should that be more expedient for salvation. To wait till the very end is to expect a kind of miracle.

⁵ This sacrament strengthens against the temptations at the hour of death, so why put it off once there is imminent danger of death? Think of the remorse, were she to die before having received the sacrament. It is a most salutary one; it remits many venial sins, exempts from some of the punishment

due to sin, and therefore shortens the stay in purgatory. Think of the affliction of a soul detained for a lengthy period in purgatory for not having received this sacrament!

⁶ Dear friend, let us constantly be prepared for death so as not to be taken by surprise. If we keep our death continually before our eyes, it could be, as it were, the touchstone of all our actions, the monitor of all our counsels. Let us avoid anything we would not do were we to die within the hour.

⁷ Let us return to the crib, dear friend, on this solemnity of Epiphany. In the company of the Kings, let us bring our hearts to Jesus, hearts that are fervent, pure, and mortified, as symbolized by the gold, the myrrh, and the frankincense.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; accept the solemn assurance of my most tender and sincere attachment.

Adèle

⁹ I have finally sent your letter to our Father through a sure messenger.

¹⁰ Some time ago someone saw Mlle Lacombe and reported that she was at death's door. But what a departure from this earth! Let us pray for her.

¹¹ Say a *We fly to thy patronage* . . . for our dear Descomps, who is pregnant. There is some concern for her health. I am told that she is more fervent than ever.

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211. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 11, 1814

You are the God of my heart, and
you will be my eternal treasure and heritage.

² I am very unhappy with myself, dear friend. I had the happiness of receiving Communion on Sunday, but ever since, I have lapsed into failings that trouble me. I know that a great deal of pride has crept into my uneasiness, and I want to accept it in a spirit of penance for my sin.

³ Oh, what weak, miserable sinners we are! How can we, who are but ashes and dust, have such a high opinion of ourselves? We have left far behind us that lovable innocence of our youth which was so pleasing to the Lord; now we are only malice and sin.

⁴ Let us pray for one another, my dear Agathe, for we have some things in common. Let us see which one of us will be the first to overcome that vivacity which is the cause of so many faults, which pardons nothing in others but is ever ready to pardon itself.

⁵ I thank you for your good wishes concerning the results of my feeble efforts. The Lord has designs upon me, miserable creature that I am. How guilty would I be if, after preaching to others, I myself should become a castaway! O my God, preserve me from such a calamity; I would rather die on the spot!

⁶ What you tell me of your cousin is most consoling. May she, on leaving this land of exile where our salvation is always at risk, enter into possession of an eternity of bliss.

⁷ Have you had an answer from our worthy Ananie? I also expect a good long letter from him.

⁸ Farewell, most dear friend; do not doubt my sincere and tender sentiments. I embrace you in spirit in the crib of Bethlehem.

Adèle

+ + +

212. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

Amélie de Rissan was born around 1788 at Saint-Cyr (Lot-et-Garonne). She was one of the early members of the Association.

+ J.M.J.T.

January 12, 1814

You are the God of my heart, and
you will be my eternal treasure and heritage.

² The new year is already twelve days old, my very dear friend, and the rest will pass just as rapidly, almost without our noticing it. Let us therefore hasten to draw profit from every moment. Let us do all for God, even our most ordinary actions, for the Lord is so good that he takes note of the slightest thing we do for him.

³ Oh, how good is this God whom we serve! How comforting to belong to him! What a difference with the world; it is so demanding, yet grants so little.

⁴ No more world for us; away with the old man; let everything be renewed. The countless graces we receive from the good Lord deserve some kind of return. Our love should increase in proportion as the love of God is shown forth in his multiple blessings.

⁵ If the Lord asked us as he did of Peter, “Do you love me?” and “Do you love me more than those whom I do not allow to approach me so often?” what would be our answer?

⁶ My dear friend, what transports of love should be ours at the sight of the extravagant love of our good and adorable Master! He is truly the love and spouse of our souls. O dear friend, let us be truly loving and faithful spouses of our sweet Jesus. Come, to prove our love for him, let us sacrifice generously our evil inclinations, our unfortunate tendencies.

⁷ We must not be discouraged if the Lord weans us from the milk of sensible consolations to feed us on more solid food. This is a sign that he is no longer treating us as children, but as adults.

⁸ Pray for me, dearest Amélie, for my wretchedness is very great, and I am most unworthy of the confidence you place in me.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

213. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 18, 1814

How good you are, O my God,
toward all your servants!

² I trust, my dearest friend, that you do not doubt my deep concern about your distress; you are too much aware of my tender friendship for that.

³ I am somewhat like you, dear friend, for I also believe that we are on the eve of some great catastrophe.⁶² No, there is no longer any hope of happiness for this world, so let us raise all our hopes and desires toward the blessed eternity.

⁴ That is where pure blessedness is waiting for us, one that is unmixed, one that no worry or event can trouble.

⁵ How blind we are, when we seek here below in vain that happiness which cannot be our lot in this vale of tears, this land of exile.

⁶ Come, dear friend, let us more than ever be united in heart and mind so as to accomplish in us the

⁶²Toward the end of 1813, the armies of the anti-Napoleonic coalition had penetrated into France. The first months of 1814 were rife with confusion, alarms, and rumors.

work which God asks of us, to toil constantly at the destruction of our evil inclinations, to make them veer from their natural bent, and to form ourselves into entirely new creatures modeled on our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Our esteemed leaders are incessantly exhorting us by their words, and still more by their example. What sanctity is theirs, dear friend, and how full are their days! How sweet it is to die when one's hands are filled with good works!

⁸ Dear Agathe, day is declining and the night of the tomb is approaching. Come, let us step up our pace and perform some good works while we still have time. Let us increase our treasure for eternity, send our passports on ahead. Let us fill our lamps with oil so as not to be caught wanting; then we can follow the Spouse with eagerness and promptness the moment he appears.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; rest assured that nothing will diminish the sincere affection I have vowed to you for life in our divine Spouse.

Adèle

+ + +

214. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 25, 1814

From this moment on, O my God,
I wish to be all yours!

² Yes, dearest friend, let us affirm from the depths of our heart and in all sincerity that our only desire is to begin at last to belong only to God. Alas, have we really begun up until now? Is not the cowardice we have displayed in the service of this good Master a proof that we have not?

³ It is high time we did something, dear friend. Let us hurry, or we shall be found wanting like the foolish virgins. Let us prepare our lamps early, so that we may run after the Spouse when he passes.

⁴ No truth is more frequently illustrated in the Gospels than the importance of vigilance and preparation for death. It may be near; it always catches even the most just by surprise.

⁵ My dear, my very dear friend, do not give way to despondency or sadness. I agree with what our esteemed Ananie said. I, too, fear that you have succumbed unduly to that state. There is a sadness which leads to death, says St. Paul, whose conversion we celebrate today. O my dear Agathe, let us cry out as he did, "Lord, what would you have me do?" Here I am, ready for anything; speak and your servant will obey. Deal with me and with everything that belongs to me according to your holy will. It is at this moment, when we are perhaps on the eve of great misfortunes, that we have greater need to make this act of submission.

⁶ The letter you sent me is very fine; I am returning it to you. Let us try to put into practice the saintly advice it contains.

⁷ Let us every morning, at the foot of our crucifix, make our resolutions and present our petitions for the day. Let us do so fervently, humbly, and assiduously, turning a deaf ear to our laziness.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend; believe, never doubt, the sincerity of my sentiments for you in our heavenly Spouse.

Adèle

⁹ Let us evoke the same resolutions when kissing our crucifix at noon and at night. Our sisters in Bordeaux have the same custom.

¹⁰ In your leisure time, I wish you would copy the letters that Fathers Laumont and Larribeau sent for the New Year. Do this for Clotilde, so that she can pass them on. They are so beautiful!

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215. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 3, 1814

O my God, may I be ever mindful
of the shortness of my life,
and of the uncertainty of my death.

² My very dear friend, may this thought of the shortness of our life, which everything about us tends to recall, detach us ever more from a world that is so false, that has deceived us so often, and that unfortunately still continues to deceive us.

³ My dear Agathe, I hope we offered ourselves generously yesterday through the hands of our august Mother, in union with the divine Infant she was offering.

⁴ Do we truly want to belong to God, and forever? And can we sing, “Now, Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace, etc.?”

⁵ Alas, my dear friend, when shall we be free of the shackles of this body of sin, the cause of so many faults? When shall we enjoy the blessed liberty of the children of God, in that heavenly city where we shall forever be sheltered from the possible loss of the object of our love?

⁶ But we would like to attain that objective without any trouble, without a struggle; but that is impossible. There can be no crown without a victory, and there can be victory only after combat.

⁷ I must leave you now, dear friend, for today I have a number of letters to write.

⁸ Farewell; I am all yours in the divine Lover of our hearts.
Adèle

+ + +

216. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 3, 1814

O my God, may I be ever mindful
of the shortness of my life,
and of the uncertainty of my death.

² My letter to you will necessarily be brief, my very dear friend, for today I have a number of letters to write.

³ What can I tell you in a few words? May Jesus live forever in our hearts!

⁴ May he reign there, my dear friend, as a Sovereign. May he subject all our feelings, all our affections, and all our desires to his most adorable and lovable will.

⁵ Let us no longer live our own life; Jesus Christ must live in us. Let us live of his life, since he gives himself so often as our food. What an anomaly, if we were to partake of divine food and yet live a wholly animal existence!

⁶ Come, my very dear friend, let us respond most carefully to the countless graces the Lord lavishes upon us. How dangerous it would be to abuse them, and then to have to answer for them on the day of judgment!

⁷ Let us hope that we offered ourselves yesterday with our whole heart, with the Blessed Virgin and her divine Son. May our oblation have been total, sincere, and without recall.

⁸ Julie⁶³ sends her regards. A sore finger prevents her from writing to you and from doing her

⁶³ A young girl who was employed at Trenquelléon on the recommendation of Mlle de Rissan, and who was to be received into the Association by Laumont at Port-Sainte-Marie.

chores these past days.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; may God be always the link and the purpose of a friendship of which he is the origin.

Adèle

+ + +

217. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 16, 1814

O world, I renounce you,
so as to love Jesus alone!

² Let us say an eternal farewell, my very dear friend, to this unhappy world which unfortunately has so often seduced us by its false charms and still causes us so often to fall.

³ Yesterday I had the sad experience of this very fact. We had visitors. Well, my good friend, I committed a thousand faults. The results? Only an awful void and remorse.

⁴ What a difference between the holy joy we experience in the service of the Well-Beloved of our heart, of the blessed gratification which he allows us to taste at his Table.

⁵ We, who so frequently have the happiness of approaching his holy Table, could we still love the crumbs of sinners? Remember what St. Paul said: we cannot take food from both tables, that of the Lord and that of the devil. Such a monstrous alliance is out of the question. It is impossible to serve two masters, God and the world.

⁶ We belong to Jesus Christ, dear friend, on so many counts; he has purchased us in so many ways. He wants us to be his in so special a manner that it would be very ungrateful of us not to be his property to the extent he demands, and which he has a right to demand. Let us no longer live for ourselves, but let Jesus Christ live in us.

⁷ What a consolation for me to know that my Amélie is receiving Communion so frequently. Ah, pray to God that I become worthy of such a grace!

⁸ Julie wants me to include her greetings, and to wish you a holy Lent. You know how distressed we were to hear that, in spite of the bad weather, Father Laumont went to Port [-Sainte-Marie], only to be disappointed at not finding Julie. That was his main reason for making the trip; the very thought of it upsets me. I dare not ask him again. When you write to him, ask him again and promise that we shall be there even if it rains pitchforks. God just wanted to test and punish us.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear Amélie; my friendship for you is increasing always in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

218. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 3, 1814

Save me, Lord; without you I perish!

² Since my last letter, dear friend, I have been to the country. I spent two days with our precious friends, the de Pomier sisters. However, alas, solitude is certainly much more profitable to our souls.

³ I have been guilty of many failings during this trip. How quickly I could take on the spirit of the world! How useful to our weak nature is the example our Lord gives us, to prepare ourselves for temptation by the solitude of the desert.

⁴ My dear friend, how grateful we should be to our Lord for having sheltered us from occasions where we would have succumbed, as so many others have. Let us avoid all those that we can; for us salvation is to be found in flight.

⁵ How different is the service of the world from that of the heavenly Spouse. Let us pity those unhappy worldlings who know only the false delights of the world and ignore the chaste delights of virtue.

⁶ Let us spend Lent in the company of the divine Master in the desert. May our minds be more recollected, and our hearts raised more often to God.

⁷ When next you write to dear Julie, my friend, please speak to her of the reserve which a young girl, especially a child of Mary, should exercise toward men. Tell her that all holding of hands must be forbidden, and necessity alone allows one to touch another's hand.

⁸ Such actions are often found among servants, with harmless intentions at first; but evil consequences may develop. Who can be responsible for a thought? Bring up the topic casually, and not as an open reprimand.

⁹ Farewell, dear friend, my heart is growing ever fonder of you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

219. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 9, 1814

O my God, when shall I possess you
so as never to lose you?

² We have been very seriously distressed, dear friend, since my last letter by the rumors that have been circulating and constantly contradicting themselves. At one moment, the enemy is at the gate; at another, they are far away . . . everybody was confused.

³ Alas! Dear Amélie, I fear that our unhappy country will pay dearly for all its crimes. The presence of war is one of the greatest plagues of this world. May this punishment from heaven bring people somewhat to their senses and encourage them to soothe the wrath of God by works of penance. Niniveh obtained its pardon through penance; why could we not do the same?

⁴ Oh, how I wish, dear friend, that Lent were for us a true period of salvation and that we might have something to give to our dear Jesus at Easter.

⁵ In particular, how I wish I were less vivacious, for that is one of my dominant faults and the cause of many failings. But a great deal of work is required to uproot an old habit, and my laziness finds that quite burdensome.

⁶ If we cast our eyes toward that reward which is promised us, we shall find that the work we must do to obtain it is light indeed. Because of the good things of which I am in expectation, the work to acquire them will be a recreation.

⁷ Truly, dear friend, what comparison is there between such short hardships and an eternity of glory? Oh, how wonderful is the Lord in his rewards! Oh, how good he is; his mercy is without end.

⁸ Let us attach ourselves ever more closely to this adorable Spouse; let us live only for him. How lowly the earth should seem to a soul created for heaven. O beautiful heaven! O dwelling of the glory of my God. When shall I possess you and enjoy you, never to lose you?

⁹ Your letter made quite an impression on Julie. She is very displeased with herself because of her foolishness, and I hope that it will be the last. The good Lord sometimes permits noticeable lapses to reveal to us the extent of our wretchedness and the little trust we can have in our own strength. What are we without the help of grace? Nothing at all.

¹⁰ Farewell, my good Amélie; let us often meet in spirit in the desert, where our divine Master is

preparing for his mission. Let us also prepare ourselves to lead as many souls as possible to the knowledge and love of God.

¹¹ I embrace you in our sweet Savior and in his holy Mother.
Adèle

+ + +

220. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 26, 1814

Prepare my heart, O my God, to receive you!

² The moment is approaching, my very dear friend, when we shall celebrate the Passover with our divine Savior. Let us imagine that he addresses to us the very same words he addressed to his Apostles, when he said, "Prepare a room for me, so that I and my disciples might go there and eat the paschal lamb." We must therefore prepare for this paschal Communion with increased fervor. Let us look upon it, according to the etymology of the word "Pasch," as a veritable passage from sin to grace.

³ Let us leave all our wicked affections in Egypt and not regret the vain satisfactions that we shall have left behind. The manna of the desert is preferable to the fleshpots and onions of Egypt.

⁴ With Jesus Christ, let us truly die to sin and rise to an entirely new life. May everything be renewed in us: our heart, our language, and our works. That is how to profit by the graces communicated to us through the remembrance of the mysteries we are about to celebrate.

⁵ Let us spend this Holy Week in a truly holy manner. If it were possible, I should like to pass it without offending our gentle Master, who is so good and merciful to us.

⁶ O my Jesus, no, I do not intend to renew by my sins the cruel sufferings which they caused you. I will strive to avoid them, to correct myself at any cost. Will that not be reward enough?

⁷ I suffered a privation, dear friend, on the great day of the Annunciation, when I had hoped to receive Holy Communion. I had prepared myself as best I could; but the good Lord, who thought me unworthy, allowed certain circumstances to deprive me of that happiness. I postponed it until the Feast of the Compassion of our saintly Mother. I believe we shall be united around the holy Table on that day. It happens to be the first Friday of the month. Let us receive the sacrament in the spirit of a viaticum, as if it were to be for the last time in our lives.

⁸ I am afraid that current events may eventually oblige us to interrupt our correspondence. The fear is that very soon it will be impossible to cross the river. May the will of God be done in and for everything—but that would really upset me!

⁹ Farewell, my gentle friend. When shall we never again be parted? How I long for that day!

¹⁰ I embrace you in the wounds of our adorable Jesus.
Adèle

+ + +

221. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 5, 1814

O Jesus, engrave most deeply in my heart
the memory of your sufferings.

² My letter must be very brief, my dear friend, but it will be to wish you a holy resurrection in our Lord Jesus Christ. How I wish we could find ourselves on Easter Sunday completely transformed into new creatures, from now on living only of the life of God. After all the graces God has lavished upon us,

what does he not have the right to demand of us?

³ You will admit, dear Amélie, that we are privileged children of grace. Every day the Lord showers more graces upon us. Should there not be a corresponding increase in our love, our zeal, and our devotion?

⁴ Could we, spouses of the God of love, be unfaithful to him? He chose us so specially at the very moment we were offending him so much!

⁵ Dear friend, the list of God's graces to us is infinite. It should call forth from us a total response of gratitude. Yet, our only response to such love is to offend him again.

⁶ Farewell, very dear Amélie; my heart loves to repeat that you are a cherished friend in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

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222. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

On April 11 Napoleon signed his abdication at Fontainebleau, and on April 20 he left for the island of Elba. Louis XVIII returned to France, thereby initiating the so-called "Restoration."

+ J.M.J.T.

April 20, 1814

O my God, give me that peace
which the world cannot give!

² My very dear friend, we must recognize it as a fact that this peace which has been granted us, this almost miraculous peace, is from God alone.

³ Let us be filled with gratitude toward that adorable Benefactor, who so masterfully disposes of scepters and empires.

⁴ All these events, my dear friend, should make us ponder deeply and recognize the finger of God. Woe to those who will not recognize it, and who will not profit by the occasion to serve God with a renewed zeal and a fresh enthusiasm.

⁵ I am suggesting a novena to dear Mme Belloc; she will inform you of the details.

⁶ Poor Julie is better, but she has suffered exceedingly from a type of catarrh, or pneumonia, or erysipelas of the head which caused her terrific suffering. This will delay her trip to Agen, since she must now take a purgative.

⁷ Have you met our friend Henriette de Sainte-Croix, a new resident of Agen?

⁸ O my dear friend, now we can hold our heads high.⁶⁴ I believe Father Laumont will not delay his trip to Agen much longer. Julie greatly wants to see him and, so she says, needs to.

⁹ Farewell, my dear Amélie; let us not fail in gratitude toward our good Master. Let us serve him better than ever and devote ourselves entirely to his love.

Adèle

¹⁰ Julie sends her regards.

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⁶⁴ With the fall of Napoleon and the end of his anti-Church policies, the Association is more free to develop; so, too, is the *cher projet* so dear to Adèle's heart.

223. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 26, 1814

Lead me into your heavenly pastures,
O my divine shepherd!

² Dear friend, I have just been meditating on time. How carefully we must treasure it, for its only use is to gain eternity. It slips away moment by moment, and it is most difficult to compensate for its loss.

³ If not a single moment of our time is to be lost, we must perform our most indifferent actions with great purity of intention.

⁴ If everything we do is done for God, everything will be taken into account. We are dealing with a Master so noble, so holy, and so prodigal toward us. Come, dear friend, let us get serious, for until now we have lost a great amount of time. We have performed all our actions, even the most holy, by habit, and so poorly that they have become sinful instead of earning us merits.

⁵ We must do well what we do. Let us not yield to a futile haste to get many things done, but rather apply ourselves to doing them well. To moderate our eagerness to get things done, that would not be an insignificant victory over ourselves—especially in my case, for I admit that this is often the cause of my failings.

⁶ Farewell, my dear Agathe, a thousand assurances of my most tender attachment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

224. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

The Duke of Angoulême⁶⁵ had to pass through Port-Sainte-Marie on his way from Bordeaux to Toulouse. On hearing of it, the Baron de Trenquelléon, a devoted royalist, sent his wife and the rest of the family to greet him.

+ J.M.J.T.

April 26, 1814

Lead me into heavenly pastures,
O my divine Shepherd!

² Yesterday, my dear friend, I experienced a human satisfaction that was very much to my liking. It was the sight of His Highness, the Duke of Angoulême. He passed an hour's distance from here, and we all went to see him. I had a good view of the man. O dear friend, how wonderful it is of God in his mercy to have restored such princes to us!

³ As I watched the meticulous preparations for the reception of this prince of the earth, I reflected how little we do to receive the King of kings!

⁴ We admire the affability of this descendant of St. Louis. What ought we say about the gentleness, the familiarity of our God, who gives himself to us with such prevenient goodness?

⁵ I had another thought. I reflected on the pleasure I had at the sight of the prince. But this pleasure was most transient, just like all human satisfactions; whereas the pleasures, the chaste delights we taste in the service of God, are permanent.

⁶ O my God, how little you are known! What little esteem we have of the joy of serving you, of

⁶⁵The Duke was the nephew of King Louis XVIII and the son of the future Charles X. He and his wife, the daughter of executed Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, had close ties with Chaminade. See Chaminade's letters, nos. 55, 59, 236.

pleasing you. Oh, I would rather die on the spot than ever abandon your lovable service.

⁷ I believe you also shall have the pleasure of seeing His Highness; he will pass through Agen.

⁸ I received a letter from Father Laumont, who is delighted at the miraculous turn of events; he expects these to have most beneficent effects on our holy religion.

⁹ Farewell, my very good friend; I embrace you as tenderly as I love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

¹⁰ Poor Julie is still suffering from pneumonia; it continues unabated.

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225. To Agathe Diché, Agen

The visit by the Duke of Angoulême attracted many people to Agen; among them were a number of associates.

+ J.M.J.T.

May 3, 1814

O my God, fill my heart with holy joy!

² I congratulate you, my dear Agathe, on the consolations which the good Lord grants you through your recent acquaintance of our dear friends. Bear witness to them of my affection; how my heart would have rejoiced had I been able to embrace them!

³ I hope they will all receive the precious livery of Mary and, clothed in that holy habit, return home burning with holy zeal.

⁴ I am sure that the Lord has allowed this visit to revive the fervor of this region; it had become somewhat lukewarm for the common cause.

⁵ Tell Mme Belloc, for I have no time to write to her, that I trust her fully to whet the eagerness of the associates, to promote the meetings, the catechism lessons, etc., etc. She could show them the *cahiers* of Father Laumont. My greatest joy would be to have this holy man visit them this week.

⁶ Although I am deprived of these satisfactions, my heart is with you, and I sincerely share your joy.

⁷ Several cinctures have arrived from Bordeaux; I am sending the extra one to you. Let it be a gift from me to the young lady from Bayonne.⁶⁶

⁸ I think Mme Belloc has sought contributions for our seminarian from other fractions of the Association. I don't think they have given anything yet; in fact, I am sure they have not.

⁹ Come, dear friend, no more hesitation between God and creatures. No more straddling the fence. Let us belong entirely to a God who is lavish in his goodness to us; the more perfectly we correspond to his graces, the more ready he is to give us many more.

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear friend, I love and embrace you with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

¹¹ I shall see about making the floss-silk stockings, but I am willing to bet that at Aiguillon they could take care of one pair. You can send one pair here.

¹² Charles has no old trousers, so you will have to buy a pair.

¹³ I shall try to have the wine transported to Agen; that would be preferable.

¹⁴ The cincture has been blessed by Father Chaminade.

+ + +

⁶⁶Mlle Florentine Abeilhé. She had been exercising a fruitful apostolate in her milieu even before joining the Association.

226. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 3, 1814

O my God, fill my heart with holy joy!

² Well, my dear friend, now Julie is going to see you. How I hope that Father Laumont can be there, too! I have that hope, because God is so good. I believe he will want to give her that grace, if it will contribute to her advancement.

³ You will have seen many friends. I congratulate you. From the depths of my solitude I see you; I hear you speak of our divine Master and of the happiness of serving him.

⁴ Dear Amélie, what return can we make to the Lord, who has called us in such a special manner to his adorable service?

⁵ Let us humble ourselves at the sight of what we should be, and of what in fact we are. We must beware, for if we continue to abuse God's graces he will withhold them and give them to others who will give a better account of them than we. After all that God has done for us, we should be great saints; yet, what are we?

⁶ Pray to God for our young girls. The countryside is overrun with young officers. They often come here to see their captain, who lodges here. You realize that these are occasions for such young hearts. Alas! Even we ourselves, who are already of a mature age, must needs close all the avenues leading to our senses, recalling that the Blessed Virgin was troubled at the sight of an angel in human form.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear friend; I am yours most devotedly in Jesus Christ.
Adèle

+ + +

227. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 9, 1814

Too late have I loved you,
O Beauty ever ancient and ever new.

² Oh, yes, my dear friend, too late have we loved this divine Goodness, this admirable Beauty, who has been so generous and so merciful in our regard.

³ Those last graces which you have just received show us clearly that the Lord has cast his merciful eyes on our dear Society, and that he has great designs for it. Let us make ourselves worthy to accomplish them through an exact fidelity to grace and a persevering flight from sin. Let us detest and abhor this cursed sin which could make us lose all the benefits of the graces which the Lord wishes to lavish upon us.

⁴ My dear Agathe, shall we again be guilty of the same infidelities? Has the good Lord not done enough to induce us to make a commitment to fidelity?

⁵ I read in the letter from our fervent Amélie that she has decided to give up all worldly pretensions, to pledge herself entirely to the divine Spouse of her soul. Dear Agathe, let us sound out our heart: does it also want to belong entirely to Jesus Christ?

⁶ If we are so happy at becoming his Spouses, let us deck out our souls with all the virtues. This is the hope chest we must prepare, if we wish to contract a holy union with our divine Savior.

⁷ Are we ready to follow him in spirit into heaven, where he will ascend on Ascension Day? Beg him to take along all our affections, our will, and our very selves.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe; believe that my friendship for you is founded on eternal bases.

Adèle

⁹ Dear friend, try to keep Mlle Elisa abreast of everything that has transpired. I am truly vexed that she was not there. And what of the Dumas sisters? Could we not contact them? We must not be indifferent to any name that is found on our list.

+ + +

228. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 10, 1814

O Beauty, ever ancient yet ever new,
very late have I begun to love you.

² How pleased I was, my very beloved friend, to hear the pious details of the graces which the Lord showered upon you last week.

³ Oh, may that week be numbered among those that the Lord has made! May it ever be consecrated by your gratitude toward the Author of all good.

⁴ Though distanced by my isolation here, yet I nonetheless felt the joy. Are we not all “ONE”? Would what interests one of us not be of interest to all?

⁵ Julie told me a great deal about Mme Belloc; what a gift she has in dealing with youth. Dear friend, she is certainly our Chantal.⁶⁷ Let us try to be her worthy imitators.

⁶ But let us turn to something more particular. I confess to a burst of joy on reading in your letter that your last resolution was to belong to God. Oh, yes, the heart of my Amélie was to belong only to God; this divine Spouse was eager for it. What goodness [on his part]!

⁷ Now, dear friend, this beautiful name of spouse of Jesus Christ requires great correspondence and fidelity to grace. How reserved we must appear to the world. What alarm in the face of occasions: David was lost by a single glance. If the least wind can break the cedar, what consternation should this strike in the simple reed?

⁸ Let us humble ourselves under the all-powerful hand of the Lord. Let us distrust our weakness and not expose it, but hope for everything from his goodness and his grace.

⁹ So this week you are out in the country. I hope this will be of benefit to your health. I truly mean it. After all, one must take care of this poor body so that it might be good for something when we shall be, as you say, “in the earthly paradise!”

¹⁰ While waiting for that happy day, you can be sure, my dear and beloved friend, of my eternal affection in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

229. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 25, 1814

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflame and consume our hearts!

² Let us not leave the Cenacle, my very dear friend, before we have received that Holy and

⁶⁷St. Jane Frances de Chantal, founder of the Order of the Visitation of Holy Mary, was canonized in 1767. She was a popular saint in southwestern France.

Sanctifying Spirit which renews the face of the earth. May he renew our hearts and transform us into entirely new creatures. We have great need of this change! May the well of corruption disappear, and may a new person be grafted onto the old! May the tongues of fire make our tongues pure and avid to spread the praises of the Lord, to make him known and loved.

³ I want to tell you, my dear Agathe, the satisfaction I had on reading your letter, where you share with me your heartfelt desire to consecrate yourself totally to the divine Spouse. O my dear friend, what a holy and precious alliance that is, wherein we miserable creatures are raised to the dignity of spouses of Jesus Christ. But this quality requires great fidelity.

⁴ For every aspect of our new dignity, let us take as model the Most Blessed Virgin, our good Patroness. Notice how carefully she avoids even the suspicion of an occasion [of sin]. She is troubled at the sight of an angel in human form. A truly fine example for the Christian virgins, who must faithfully avoid every familiarity with the opposite sex.

⁵ Let us always distrust this sinful flesh, our most redoubtable enemy. Remember that we carry the precious virtue of chastity in fragile vases; the least stumble may result in a breakage. Entire distrust of self, entire confidence in God. Humility is the surest guardian of chastity.

⁶ Farewell, my very good friend, believe in the tender affection I shall have for you until my last breath. Your true friend.

Adèle

+ + +

230. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 1, 1814

Come, Holy Spirit,
fill my heart with your divine light.

² My very dear friend, I am going to borrow our Mother⁶⁸ for some days. Do not envy my happiness, for I so rarely have the satisfaction of seeing some of our sisters.

³ My dear Amélie, try to make some progress during her absence, and I shall try to make some during her stay here.

⁴ I must prepare myself for the anniversary of my baptism and of my birth, which is on June 10. I shall be twenty-five years old,⁶⁹ and that, my dear friend, signals the end of our early youth. See how rapidly the years went by!

⁵ What good would it have done us to have spent these years enjoying the pleasures of the world? What happiness, on the other hand, if we could affirm that we had spent our youth totally consecrated to God? But, O my Savior, how many days, weeks, months, and years were worthless and even criminal in your sight?

⁶ Dear friend, let us make better use of the years which the good Lord still grants us and consecrate to him our mature years, so that we no longer live but for this divine Savior.

⁷ So many of the feasts we celebrate are aids to revitalize our zeal, to purify it, and to enliven it, after the example of the apostles.

⁸ You know, dear friend, that we must be “little apostles,” grouped into “small swarms.” It is our obligation to become worthy of this glorious vocation to which the Lord calls us in spite of our unworthiness.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; do not doubt my love for you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁶⁸ Mme Belloc, officer at the head of the Fraction of Agen.

⁶⁹ The age of “majority” under the *ancien régime*, and still observed by many aristocratic families.

Adèle de Batz

+ + +

231. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 6, 1814

Come, Holy Spirit,
inflame and consume our hearts.

² Yes, my very dear Amélie, I am still enjoying the company of our dear Mother, and you can imagine what a great satisfaction this is for me. But in spite of that, I am not forgetting the other daughters of my heart, and Amélie is not the least of these.

³ It always gives me great consolation to hear that the Lord keeps blessing you with his grace. My dear friend, God has wonderful designs of salvation on you, and it would be very risky not to correspond with them with loving fidelity.

⁴ The world should mean nothing for us any more. We should already consider ourselves as dead to its maxims, to its pleasures and projects. Our aim should be to please God, to love God, and to serve this divine Master for the rest of our days. This we must do in the manner he chooses, in peace and in troubled times, in sorrow and in joy, in tribulations and in rejoicing. Everything comes from God, and we must belong to God at all times and in all the circumstances of our lives.

⁵ My dear friend, how I would need to have that maxim constantly before my eyes. How often do I forget it, and how poorly do I correspond to the graces of God, who is so generous toward this miserable creature!

⁶ It will be twenty-five years ago Friday that God regenerated me in holy Baptism. Should you have a meeting on that day, I ask that you and our dear friends say an *Our Father* and a *Hail Mary* for my intentions.

⁷ Julie is well. She is writing to you. She is a very good sister.

⁸ Give me some news of Mme Dupérié. Pay her my humble respects. I recommend myself and my poor father to her prayers.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; my feelings for you will never change.
Adèle

+ + +

232. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 7, 1814

Blessed Trinity, I adore you!

² You can imagine my joy, dear Agathe, at having our good Mother here, and listening to her as she expresses her feelings toward the divine object of her love.

³ To be just like her would be pure joy! We could be that, but at the cost of great effort. And that is what is repugnant to our miserable nature, which brooks no constraint.

⁴ We are coming to a most beautiful week, my dear friend. Everything will conspire to rouse our love at the sight of the infatuation of our God, who gives himself with holy prodigality. O infinite love, when will I correspond with a love approaching yours?

⁵ During this week, let us try to do penance for all the outrages our Lord receives in the Sacrament of his love, where he is ignored by so many of his creatures. They seem to care nothing for this hidden treasure of grace, which the Savior pours out on well-disposed souls.

⁶ Let us always approach the sacraments, dear friend, as if it were for the last time. We should bring to each one of our Communions, if possible, the faith, the love, and the desire that normally accompany a first Communion. After all, it is the same God who is giving himself to us, and with the same love.

⁷ What should we have become after so many Communions? Should not our tongue be holy after acting so often as the vehicle for this crucified Body? And what of our heart, which has become his temple, and our eyes, which have seen him under the sacred species? And yet, how often do we not make these sanctified members of our body into instruments of sin?

⁸ Dear friend, send me Dubrana's shirts as soon as possible, so that I may make the necessary adjustments. I am sending him three pairs of stockings in fairly good shape.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend. I embrace you and all our dear friends with all my heart in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹⁰ A thousand warm greetings to our friends from both of us, and our respects to your dear family. Mme Belloc wanted to write to you, but today she went to Meneaux to receive holy Communion because Father Dousset is absent. Now she is helping to plan the procession for next Sunday.

¹¹ She sends best regards to all. She would like you to send her a percale skirt, one that has not yet been fitted. She also wants you to buy 30 inches of polka-dotted muslin gauze, just like that on your aunt's bonnets. If you can't find this muslin gauze, then take some nice open work percale. Also buy 1/2 pound of black floss silk, 6 inches wide, at 15 francs.

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The two letters which follow inform us of the gradual evolution of the Little Society toward the religious life. Ever since November 20, 1808, when Adèle definitively refused a proposal in marriage, all her thoughts and desires were turned toward a total consecration to God.

What form would it take? As a child she had been drawn to the Carmelites. In the Little Society she acquired a taste for action. There evolved gradually in her mind the notion of a religious life that would allow her to continue the apostolate she had undertaken with her friends. Among these, several declared themselves ready to join her. Already in 1810 there is mention in her correspondence of her cher projet. While awaiting the restoration of religious life, however, she and her friends had to be satisfied with affective severance from the world.

Once peace was restored, it was possible to seek ways of implementing the idea. That was the purpose of the meeting of June 13, 1814, at Lompian.

After the meeting, Adèle wrote to Chaminade to inform him of her wish and that of several of her companions to consecrate themselves to the religious life. This letter, which has not been preserved, launched an important exchange of correspondence⁷⁰ which led to the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary.

Adèle organized other meetings, the one of October 23, 1814, at Sainte-Radegonde, near Aiguillon, being the most important.⁷¹ Laumont agreed to draw up a first draft of Constitutions, to be submitted to Chaminade.

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⁷⁰ See Chaminade's letters, nos. 51 ff.

⁷¹ See Adèle's letter, no. 151, of October 25, 1814, to Agathe Diché.

233. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

Adèle, Dicherette, and Julie travel to Lompian. They meet with many friends. The proposal, the cher projet, takes another step forward as the members choose their religious names.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 15, 1814

What return shall we make to the Lord
for all his priceless gifts?

² I want to tell you, my friend, about the happy and holy trip we have just made to Lompian. We wanted it so badly, but did not really expect to make it. Dear Julie asked Papa's permission, and she obtained it. Imagine our joy!

³ Monday we left at four o'clock in the morning, having slept hardly a wink. Our friends were taken by surprise.

⁴ We held a long meeting in the morning and another in the evening, with a final one the next morning.

⁵ My dear Amélie, may the renewal we have experienced establish us forever in the holy peace of the Lord.

⁶ Our great desire now is to make our Confessions on June 13 and 14 the high point of our conversion. Our worthy Superior is fired with zeal for the salvation and renewal of souls. His only desire is to gain hearts to Jesus Christ.

⁷ We spoke at length of our *cher projet*, which he has very much at heart. We had hoped to have our joy completed, as Father Laumont was to have come, too. But he was prevented by certain obstacles which the Good Lord put in his way.

⁸ We met a good number of our friends, each one more fervent than the other, and all burning with impatience to put our *projet* into execution.

⁹ I can tell you that we chose our names in religion. We gave you that of Sister Louise de Saint Joseph, which I think you will like.

¹⁰ O dear friend, let us no longer be our own; we must belong entirely to God. Let us correct our defects with greater determination and no longer act halfheartedly, for it is said, "Woe to the one who does the work of God negligently!"

¹¹ Farewell, my gentle friend, my heart cherishes you more than it can say, in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Adèle

¹² Your Mother embraces you with all her heart. My respects to Mme Dupérié; we are happy she can be with you.

+ + +

234. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 15, 1814

May the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar
be forever praised and thanked!

² Well, my dear friend, our most loving Spouse has granted us, almost miraculously, the joy of making our little pilgrimage. I consider this a great grace. You yourself well know that the very atmosphere is redolent with the scent of a great deal of virtue, so that one must of necessity be thoroughly renewed.

³ We arrived on Monday at 8:30 a.m. We had a very long conference in the morning, one in the evening, and one the next day.

⁴ You can imagine that the minutest details were gone into. We met several of our dear friends, all most fervent and longing for the happy moment that will see us united in our blessed retreat.

⁵ We spoke at length of our *cher projet* and went into the smallest details; we assumed names. Yours is Sister Marie du Sacré Cœur.

⁶ Ah! dear friend, how good it is to be with the saints. What peace and happiness in the service of God! What a difference from the unfortunate worldlings whose hearts, even in their greatest pleasures, are eaten away by bitterness.

⁷ I would very much wish to come to Agen, but I see some real difficulties. However, I am resigned and trust in God, who will arrange it if it is for his glory and our advancement. In any case, I count on having you here after our beloved Mme Belloc returns; your health needs the change.

⁸ Father Gardelle⁷² has given Fathers Laumont and Larribeau faculties to hear our Confessions and to give us Communion in our chapel. So I hope you will profit by it. Prepare yourself to give consolation rather than distress to our good Father.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; I embrace you with all my heart, in Jesus Christ.
Adèle

¹⁰ Send me that black floss silk as soon as you can, and write immediately to Mme Caillau to return the other or to send the money. Do you know the name of the merchant?

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235. To Joséphine Abeilhé, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 15, 1814

May the most blessed Sacrament of the Altar
be forever praised and thanked.

² My dear sister—allow me to use a title that is so dear to my heart—I wish to tell you how much I love you in our Lord Jesus Christ, and how I rejoice at being united to you by bonds at once so tender and so sacred.

³ My dear sister, we now form but one heart and one mind; may they both belong to God alone. Let us seek to please only this celestial Spouse of our souls. It must be no longer we who live, but Jesus Christ who lives in us.

⁴ With all our heart let us die to the world, to our evil inclinations, to whatever could displease a jealous Lover who wants to be the sole possessor of our heart. It is made for him alone and can find rest and happiness in him alone.

⁵ Our dear Mme Belloc and I have had the sweet joy of meeting several of our friends, each one more fervent than the other, and also our worthy Superior, full of zeal for our advancement. How guilty we would be if we did not profit by this abundance of graces the good God chooses to grant us. How many others would have made better use of them, had the good God so favored them!

⁶ Let us put to work this talent that the father of the family has confided to us. May it increase in us, and may we appear before his eyes with an accumulated treasure that will help us steal heaven.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear sister. I would like very much to get to know you, if God so wishes. How happy I would be!

Adèle

⁷² Pierre Gardelle was vicar-general of the Diocese of Agen.

+ + +

236. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

22 June 1814

O my God, it is your glory that I wish to seek.

² When you receive this letter, my dear Agathe, we shall be, according to our schedule, on our way to Condom. Friday night we shall sleep at Nérac, and Saturday we leave very early for Condom. What a joy if from there I could go to Agen! But I see great difficulties in such a plan.

³ Ah, well, let us always abandon ourselves to the will of our good Master, so that he might dispose of the events to his greater glory.

⁴ Dear friend, what happiness if we could acquire that conformity to the will of God in all things. How many sins would we avoid, and what peace would be ours!

⁵ In fact, O my God, what can trouble a soul who wants only what you want, because you want it and as you want it? Self-will is the cause of so many sins and procures for us so many deceptions!

⁶ Alas, dear friend, I have not yet made the first step toward that holy conformity, and that is what gives rise in me to thousands and thousands of faults.

⁷ Despite all our impatience and all our pouting, the will of God must be done, whether we like it or not. Let us then make virtue out of necessity and not lose the fruit of the obstacles which the good Lord allows to come our way.

⁸ Farewell, my very good and dear friend whom I would so like to assure in person of my most loving attachment in Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

237. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 6, 1814

O my God,
I wish to love you more than myself!

² We returned last night from Condom, my dear friend. I find I have a great deal of writing to do, so this will necessarily be short.

³ Our dear Mme Belloc will describe to you all the consolations that were ours during the journey and the precious conquests we have made.

⁴ But, dear Agathe, what of us? When shall we be like those holy souls who have given themselves completely to God? Our preoccupation should be to please him, to love him, and to serve him.

⁵ Oh, how humiliating it is to find oneself so backward in spite of the fact that the good Lord has given us so many privileges. He treats us with such gentleness and mercy, while we have not ceased to offend and outrage him with the most contemptible disrespect.

⁶ I am enchanted by everything you tell me about the dear young woman from Bayonne. If only she would still be there when I come to Agen. That should be at the end of August, unless poor Papa's condition worsens. How sad is his state! Pray for him that the Lord will allow him to draw great profit from his sufferings.

⁷ Farewell, my dear friend. My heart tells you a thousand times how much I love you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

238. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 6, 1814

O my God,
I wish to love you more than myself!

² I shall be very brief today, dear Amélie. Please excuse me. I am far behind in my correspondence, since I was not able to write from Condom. Our Mother will tell you how busy we were.

³ Oh, yes, dear Amélie, we have seen angels on earth. We have made some precious conquests. We have been overwhelmed with graces. Yet here I am back again, just as wretched as before. What poverty, what misery, what ingratitude!

⁴ But, dear friend, let us not give in to discouragement. Let us reanimate our good will and our desire to belong totally to our good God. Let us continue striving to tame our nature, to beat it into submission.

⁵ Let us seek only the glory of God and have no other desire but to please God and to save our souls. Let us see to it that the divine Spouse, from one Communion to the next, finds that we have made some progress. Does he not deserve that?

⁶ So your health still leaves a great deal to be desired? Dear friend, you can accumulate treasures for heaven, and I am sure you are doing just that.

⁷ Farewell, and rest assured that you have all my love in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

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From this point on, Adèle signs most of her letters as Sister Marie de la Conception.

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239. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 11, 1814

O Jesus, you alone can fill my heart.

² Now you have the company of our dear Mme Belloc, my dear friend, and I am deprived of her. You must have an idea of the great void she has left behind. But God alone can fill my heart. We must learn, dear friend, to prefer the Beloved to all creatures and to love creatures only in and for him.

³ Our heart has been made for God alone. We feel instinctively that God alone can satisfy and fill it. Is there any joy comparable to the happiness we experience when our soul is at peace and we have just united ourselves to our God? What a delicious moment; would that it could last forever!

⁴ But we must know how to follow our divine Master to Calvary, as well as to Tabor. Let us say to him here, "My God, you know that I love you, and that neither death nor torments can stifle that love which will be all my life!"

⁵ What a good and gentle Master we are serving! But what deplorable and bad servants he has! Dear Agathe, we really must be more faithful and engage in a salutary struggle with ourselves. Our good Master will take everything into account, for nothing done for him is lost. He accepts everything, even a sigh; even what we devise only in our hearts is not lost on him.

⁶ May we no longer live for ourselves, dear friend. Jesus Christ must live forever and ever in us.

⁷ I hope that nothing will prevent your trip and that I in turn shall not be prevented afterward from accompanying you home. What a feast that will be! I sincerely hope that these two plans will meet with no obstacle.

⁸ I embrace you with all the affection of my heart, in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

240. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 13, 1814

O Jesus, you alone can fill my heart!

² By his tardiness in answering you, dear friend, Father Laumont wants to teach you to mortify your will. This worthy priest does nothing without good reason. He knows that you will profit more by waiting than by reading. I think it would be a temptation to want to abandon his guidance, which has helped you so much. Let us learn, dear friend, to renounce our wills and to submit them entirely to that of God. True devotion consists in just that; all else is liable to illusion. It is the touchstone whereby the true servants of Jesus Christ are recognized.

³ What we need, dear Amélie, is more courage in our consecration to God's good pleasure. Let God turn and mold us as he will; he knows better than we what we need. His will is always lovable, always adorable.

⁴ Alas! I am preaching you a doctrine I am far from practicing myself. The least opposition demoralizes and discourages me, and I become impatient with anyone who disagrees with me. I shall be punished more severely for having known my duty and doing it so poorly.

⁵ I hope, dear friend, that next month we shall have the joy of coming to Agen. What a feast to be with you again! Yet, let us already make the sacrifice, should God require it. Thy will be done!

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Amélie; I assure you my friendship for you will end only with my life—in fact, by its nature it should last for all eternity.

Sister Marie de la Conception

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241. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 20, 1814

Lord, I sacrifice to you all that I am.

² Oh, dear Agathe, what blessings we have just received! The Lord has really indulged us!

³ On Monday, Father Laumont went to Lompian to fetch Father Larribeau. Both arrived here in the evening. You can imagine our surprise, and a very happy one, except for my very real regret that you were not here. Our good Superior [Larribeau] also expressed his disappointment. He said he had wanted to come only when you were here, but that Father Laumont had dragged him away. He referred to this several times, and once he said, "Tell Mlle Agathe to write me a detailed letter of her problems and I shall try to answer." Oh, he was truly disappointed not to find you here.

⁴ Dear friend, the visit of the good priests was heartwarming indeed. I am sending an account to Mme Belloc, and she will pass it on to you. I shall say no more about it, to avoid needless repetition.

⁵ I will only tell you that both Julie and I had the happiness at five o'clock this morning to feed on the Bread of Angels. We were given this heavenly manna in private, which made it more precious and more exquisite.

⁶ My Spouse is mine, my very dear friend. Oh, how sweet it is to live only for him; it is my dearest wish. Let us make our novitiate, dear Agathe, so that as polished stones we can be set in place when the edifice is started.

⁷ We shall observe all the practices we can of our holy vocation here in the world. Let us give our parents punctual obedience, be most circumspect about holy chastity, and practice as well as we can the poverty of St. Francis of Assisi. He called poverty his “lady.” All this will be in anticipation of our future vows.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear and good friend. You can well believe that my joy was tempered by the disappointment of not having you share the consolation which was mine. I embrace you a thousand times in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ Our poor Father Larribeau is not well; he has not been able to say Mass these last two days.

+ + +

242. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 20, 1814

“A day to be remembered.”
Lord, I sacrifice all that I am to you!

² My dear friend, I find that this *acte* applies to me very especially today, when the Lord has given me many graces and consolations.

³ Last Monday, our esteemed Fathers Larribeau and Laumont arrived together. Imagine my surprise and joy. They left today, Wednesday, after giving Julie and me the Bread of Angels at five o’clock this morning. You can imagine at what an early hour we were awake. Julie received the holy scapular, accompanied by a fine homily. She had two sessions with Father Laumont, and I three with Father Larribeau. For the rest, I am sending an account to Mme Belloc, and she will pass it on to you.

⁴ Dear friend, with a full heart and with a lively sentiment of gratitude, let us shout, “What return shall we make to the Lord for all the graces with which he has overwhelmed us? What return can we make after he has called us to himself in so particular a manner, and by means of such special graces? What return can we make for his having fed us so often on his adorable Flesh and Blood? What return can we make to him for having made us members of this Sodality of elite persons, for having placed us in this holy ark where we have so many saintly examples, such salutary advice, so much help, and so many means of salvation? What return can we make?” He gives us everything; let us give everything in return. He gives himself totally to us; let us sacrifice to him all that we are, all that we have. Let us live henceforth only to love him, to serve, to please him.

⁵ Farewell, my very dear Amélie. You know that I am dearly attached to you in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

243. To Amélie de Rissan, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 26, 1814

Be the sole Ruler of my heart,
O my divine King!

² My dear friend, may this divine King be the sole Ruler of our heart. May he establish in it his empire; may he control all its affections and tendencies. Everything belongs to him, for he created us. Let us give back to him what is his.

³ Let us love him at all times and in every situation, whether in comfort or grief, in sickness or in health, in abundance or in poverty, in solitude or in society. We are always his children. He is constantly showering his favors upon us; we must constantly be his, undividedly and without reserve.

⁴ How true it is, as you say, my dear friend, that many things have transpired since we last saw each other. Above all, we have received many graces. The good Lord has multiplied his favors; but have we redoubled our gratitude, our love for this adorable Spouse? Do we truly serve him better, and with greater fidelity? This calls for a serious examination.

⁵ We should tremble on reading this word in the Gospels: "A great deal will be asked of the one to whom a great deal has been given, and a greater account will be exacted from the one to whom more has been entrusted." What will be found to be quite satisfactory in some will be judged imperfect in us, who have been given so many insights and so many graces.

⁶ I am saddened by what you tell me about your health. I like to believe that this warm, depressing weather is responsible. Yet, everything is in God's hands. O my God, into those paternal hands I place my parents, my friends, all those who are dear to me, myself. Lord, do with us and in us what you will, for your greater glory and our salvation.

⁷ Farewell, dear friend, never doubt my love in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁸ Julie sends her greetings; she simply doesn't have time to write.

+ + +

244. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 27, 1814

Be the sole Ruler of my heart,
O my divine King!

² My dear Agathe, I hope that this is my last letter before I have the great pleasure of seeing you. What joy to be able to speak to you about the divine object of our love, about our friends, our *cher projet*, etc.

³ How sweet it is to be united in the Lord. What a difference with the miserable liaisons of the world, which spawn only bitterness, sorrow, and a guilty conscience. Let us tighten more and more the bonds that unite us, but do so in and for the Lord. May our friendship promote our mutual advancement.

⁴ Oh, dear Agathe, we must draw profit from the time we shall spend together. We must be able to acquire merits and practice virtue more easily. Especially must we resolve to pray better, for on our manner of praying many things depend. We can do nothing without the grace of God, and it is in prayer that we obtain this grace. How can we possibly obtain it, if we pray poorly? Let us study how not to waste the time allotted to prayer. Let us use it to expose to our heavenly Doctor the ills of our soul, to our divine King our extreme weakness, to our divine Spouse our sufferings and sorrows. For our all-lovable God is all things to us, and all these titles are his.

⁵ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you most heartily in spirit until I can do so in person.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁶ I have just received your letter. The idea came to me to consult our Father. If he is able to come, then you will have to delay your trip; if not, come. I shall write to him immediately.

+ + +

245. To Mme Diché Belloc, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 31, 1814

O my God, be my sole desire!

² Our good Jesus is harassing me, dear friend, but after all, must we not accept from his paternal hands both the good and the bad? My dear Aunt Saint-Julien is ill of jaundice. You know how that troubles me; it may block my plan to come to Agen next month. May the will of God be done. Pray for her.

³ I am sending you a letter from our worthy Superior [Larribeau]. I don't recall whether I informed you of the novena we are to make for the restoration of his precious health. Everybody is to begin it on the day of the Assumption, with a *We fly to your patronage* and an appeal to St. Joseph. Let us add a *Come, Holy Spirit* to obtain a clearer knowledge of the will of God. Please ask Henriette to alert the associates of Valeilles, and you [do the same] for the group at Villeneuve.

⁴ On Wednesday, send me without fail the name of the little Barade girl and that of the young Bois girl and their ages. Be exact; they want the names in Bordeaux. Father Laumont is asking for them, and I would like to send them to him on Thursday. Will you have Father Malroux⁷³ receive them? Give me some news of Dubrana.

⁵ Here is some wonderful news, just between us. Papa told me yesterday that he was making a vow: if God allowed him to walk a little and move around, he would make a donation of 24,000 francs to the parish for the care of the sick and the instruction of little girls. He would have a suitable building erected and confide it to three Sisters of Charity. Of course, you know that I thought of us; in that case, the will of God would be clear enough.

⁶ We must turn a deaf ear to nature and run to wherever God is calling us. Let our only objective, our unique desire, be to pluck souls from the devil's hands and to win them for Jesus Christ.

⁷ Even if we could send only one soul to heaven after a lifetime of labor, would not that be sufficient reward? Long live Jesus and Mary!

⁸ Lolotte is at Luchon. Perhaps she will find us some good candidates; I surely hope so.

⁹ I am certain that God is blessing us. Let us purify our intentions ever more and more.

¹⁰ Mme Pachan sends a thousand greetings.

¹¹ Farewell, dear friend. My heart loves you ever more in our heavenly and adorable Spouse.

Sister Marie de la Conception

¹² P.S. Mlle Compagno's letter is truly admirable.

¹³ There was a 15 sol piece [75 centimes] in the money I sent you.

¹⁴ I am worried at not having received news from Amélie. She was ill the last time [she wrote].

+ + +

246. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 3, 1814

O Jesus, be my only desire!

² Dear Agathe, I am anxiously awaiting our good Father [Larribeau]'s answer, so as to know just

⁷³ Assistant pastor at an Agen parish.

when we shall have the pleasure of a general meeting and of speaking freely of our Well-Beloved, of the means of serving him properly, of our *cher projet*, and of our wonderful sisters.

³ We must draw something profitable from our trip, so that it will not be wasted for heaven. The good Lord will ask an accounting of it. Like good and faithful servants, let us present him with the profits from our investment. The Lord gives more favors when he notices the good use we have made of his first ones.

⁴ Let us get down to work with courage and not let ourselves be frightened by the grandeur of the enterprise. Let us concentrate on what we are doing at the present moment, but let us do it well.

⁵ The progress that we can make in virtue depends on the fidelity and perfection with which we perform our ordinary actions. God does not demand extraordinary things of us; God wants us to sanctify ourselves by means of our daily actions. We were reading something very pertinent to this topic just the other day.

⁶ Come, my dear Agathe, let us look toward heaven and spurn the earth. We have been created for God alone, so let us not become attached to creatures, let us not be false to the nobility of our origins. We are the offspring of the saints; let us follow in the footsteps of our ancestors.

⁷ Farewell, dear Agathe; accept a thousand assurances of my fond friendship in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

⁸ Father [Larribeau]'s condition has worsened, and we may have to give up any thought of seeing him. I am greatly distressed at his condition. This should not surprise you, for you know how much confidence I have in him.

+ + +

247. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 9, 1814

O Jesus, be my refuge and my hope.

² I have already written a great deal today, my dear friend, so I shall be a bit brief. You are well aware of the distress I experience over the illness of our respected Father [Larribeau], and I admit that I am not greatly reassured. However, may the will of the Lord be done.

³ You saw in his short letter what he says concerning you. This worthy Father drops no hint as to how seriously ill he was.

⁴ The great feast of our Lady is almost here, very dear friend. The sight of the Blessed Virgin's great love, so strong that it consumed her, should awaken ours.

⁵ Dear friend, we cannot hope for such a great happiness, but we can and we must live in that holy love. As in the interesting little story of Eucharistie and his wife Marie, we should perform all our actions, even the most inconsequential, for the love of God. In this way everything becomes worthwhile and profitable.

⁶ Let us be like misers, dear friend, and lose no opportunity to enrich ourselves for eternity. Let us gather treasures that neither worms nor rust can harm.

⁷ Let us make our provisions early so as not to be surprised, like the foolish virgins, by the arrival of the Spouse. Let us fill our lamps with the oil of charity and never let them be extinguished. But we must be careful to replenish the oil often, for fear they might go out.

⁸ I sent a letter to Joséphine with the last messenger.

⁹ It has been decided: we shall bring you back with us, dear friend. What a treat that will be for me!

¹⁰ Farewell, my dear friend; my heart repeats that it will always be yours in our gentle Jesus.

Adèle

Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

248. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

August 17, 1814

O my God, redouble my love!

² Today, my friend, we are expecting my dear aunts. A decision will soon be taken about my trip. If it does take place, what joy at seeing you all, to press you all to my heart where your names are inscribed indelibly. However, I am afraid it may not be possible. Papa is leaving on the twenty-ninth for the baths, and my aunt will want to be with him all the time that he is here. I think that is as it should be.

³ So, my dear friend, what shall we do? Submit to the will of God in all things; submit to him our designs, our desires, our projects, and leave everything in God's hands.

⁴ And you, dear friend, when will you come? You remember that last year you came when I was "mother of the household." You helped me with my responsibilities. What joy if you could come! I am still hoping that Father [Larribeau] will be able to come. However, everything is in the hands of God.

⁵ We are in a delightful octave. Our love, our zeal, and our enthusiasm must increase for a God who bestows so many graces upon us and who wants us to be totally his.

⁶ Oh, let us turn down the tender requests of his heart. Let us generously sacrifice to him our dearest inclinations. All for God, all in view of God, nothing for the world, nothing for ourselves. O my God, sustain me in my great weakness.

⁷ Sunday will be a year since we made our great trip. I suggest that we meditate a little on the advice that was given to us and on the examples we had before our eyes. After which we can repeat our resolutions and examine what little profit we have derived from that grace.

⁸ Farewell, my dear Agathe, let us remain united in the sweet Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ I will find some way of getting your letter to Father.

+ + +

249. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 29, 1814

I will take glory only in your Cross,
O Jesus Christ!

² My dear Agathe, may this be true in practice: let us take glory only in the Cross of our divine Master, of our most lovable Savior. We should not hesitate to wear this cross on our breast; but let us wear it especially in our heart. Our love for this cross has to be supernatural; it is not possible to have a natural love for it.

³ We must love it because it conforms us to our Lord Jesus Christ; we must love it because it expiates our sins; we must love it, finally, because it opens heaven for us and closes hell.

⁴ Alas! We have so many sins to expiate. We have deserved hell a thousand times, and we complain because of a few light crosses! Had the good Lord treated us according to his justice, we should have been burning in hell years ago. How good is this Father, who is willing to wait for us!

⁵ Let us do everything in our power to manifest our gratitude to the Lord for his goodness in waiting for us to do penance. He did not act like this toward all the nations, toward all souls. Let us thank him eternally.

⁶ I am enclosing the letter received from our worthy Father [Larribeau]. In my letter accompanying the capons I sent him, I had included a word about Joséphine; he mentions her in his answer.

⁷ Father Laumont has sent me a copy of our project with some modifications to the timetable. He adds at the end that the superior should sign, "Sister so-and-so, handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ" and the others, "Sister so-and-so, lover of the poor of Jesus Christ."

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe; you know the strong friendship which binds us in the gentle Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

Adèle

⁹ I am enclosing a letter from Tonneins; be sure to return it to me.

+ + +

250. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle makes reference to a letter from Father Chaminade⁷⁴ in which he develops his plans and closes with, "Write to me if your desire to be a religious embodies the thoughts and sentiments of a little missionary."

+ J.M.J.T.

October 13, 1814

O my God,
give me renewed courage to follow your path.

² Dear friend, how good and how merciful is our gentle Jesus. You are already aware of all the graces he has given us.

³ Our worthy visitor [Laumont] arrived Monday morning, taking us completely by surprise. Dear Amélie, who had not been able to receive Communion on Sunday, was ready in case the pastor came to say an early Mass. Not he, but Father Laumont showed up. Imagine our joy! So Amélie received on Monday, and again with dear Julie and myself on Tuesday. Ah! My dear friend, how can we not sacrifice everything for a God who does so much for us, for a God who wants to be totally ours, for a God who wants us all for himself?

⁴ I trust Father Laumont has shown you a fine letter which I received from Father Chaminade, wherein he points out the purpose of our order. We are to be little missionaries, each one in her own state. I confess that the word thrills me. So now, my dear friend, let us consider ourselves destined to procure, by all possible means, the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor. With that thought in mind, let us make our novitiate for the blessed state we wish to embrace.

⁵ Father Laumont advises me to write to Father Chaminade, to ask him what practices are special to the religious sodalists, to tell him of our wish to begin the novitiate on the Feast of Mary's Conception, and to ask what religious observances will be ours during this time. Dear friend, let us arouse our courage and ask it of God, who alone can give it to us.

⁶ Here is a name for dear Delphine, unless the Fathers have already assigned her one: Sister Jeanne de la Miséricorde. And what is the name of dear Joséphine? If she has not one as yet, she might take this one: Sister Joséphine de Jésus.

⁷ I am returning a spool of black thread which belongs to you.

⁸ Julie must have brought you one of Elisa's dresses to give to the little Montesquieu girl. We have sent her a sack of potatoes.

⁹ Farewell. I am all yours in Jesus Christ.

⁷⁴ See Chaminade's letter, no. 52, October 8, 1814.

Adèle

¹⁰ I sent you, via Julie, ten francs for Dubrana's monthly room and board at the hospital. I received the letter you wrote on Saturday.

¹¹ Clémentine is better. Let us include her in our intentions during the novena which Mlle Momus asked for.

+ + +

251. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle is spending some days at Saint-Avit, with Mme Belloc.

+ J.M.J.T.

October 25, 1814
Saint-Avit

What return shall I make to you,
O Lord, for all your goodness?

² Today, dear Agathe, someone is supposed to come to get me. However, the weather being what it is, I don't think they will make it.

³ What shall I tell you of the favors received? God has been most prodigal. But he added a cross or two, a reminder that everything comes from his hand.

⁴ On Tuesday, Father Laumont spent the night here. I had the happiness of receiving Holy Communion on Wednesday, and he gave me permission to do the same on Friday and Sunday. I went to Father Dupuy⁷⁵ for Confession.

⁵ Sunday evening we went to vespers at Lagarrigue. There was a great gathering of the fervent friends from Aiguillon. We planned to go Monday to visit Father Laumont, where Father Larribeau was also supposed to be. So we spent Sunday night at Lagarrigue. But during the night our dear Mme Belloc broke out into a sweat and developed a very swollen cheek. She could not go to Sainte-Radegonde. Imagine her disappointment and mine. But we offered this sacrifice to the good Lord, and Aimée and I went to see the Visitor [Laumont], where we also met the Superior [Larribeau].

⁶ More graces! I discussed my affairs with the Superior, with whom I had a rather lengthy interview in the confessional. This good man is racing along the path of sanctity. How sincerely interested he is in our souls.

⁷ I fielded many questions about you, Joséphine's letter was circulated, and we rejoiced at the decision of the Visitor. He will answer you soon.

⁸ Dear friend, I am stunned by the graces of my God. In spite of my constant infidelities, the divine Spouse redoubles his favors; he absolutely wants to conquer my heart.

⁹ Dear friend, I took a firm resolution to abandon everything, and especially that "self" that is in me. We strongly agree on the need for a novitiate. We will submit to the practices that the General [Chaminade] will indicate.

¹⁰ The Reverend Superior suggests a general novena to obtain the reestablishment of religious orders and, in particular, to obtain insights from the Holy Spirit concerning our own project. Beginning on All Saints, a *Come, Holy Spirit*, a *Hail, Holy Queen*, and an invocation to all the saints; a fast, a Communion, and a small alms. This, to prepare for the novitiate. While awaiting the moment to form the community, Bordeaux approves vows, but only after the novitiate.

¹¹ Dear friend, what holy men! How fortunate to have them. Eugène had a good trip, as did Father

⁷⁵ Priest from the nearby area, perhaps at Aiguillon. See also Adèle's letters, nos. 506, 519.

[Fonsagnan].

¹² Farewell to all.

Sister Marie

¹³ Mme Belloc is very well now and has returned to Saint-Avit. Father Larribeau wanted to see her and came Wednesday evening in the company of Father Laumont. Again I took advantage of their presence, and we had long conversations. Father Laumont received Father Fonsagnan⁷⁶ [into the Association].

¹⁴ I have just returned to Trenquelléon. Please return Amélie's letters to Mme Dupérié's house.

+ + +

252. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 2, 1814

Eternal rest give unto them, O Lord!

² I spent a very sad All Saints day, my dear friend, because I did not have the joy of uniting myself to my God. Because our pastor does not want others to know that I have permission to receive, he excludes me from Communion on feastdays. This privilege was postponed to Friday; it is the first of the month, and that pleases me.

³ Today we commemorate the departed. This morning, dear friend, I read a wonderful meditation on this feast. Oh, with what eagerness we ought to devote ourselves to penance and mortification in this life, to expiate our faults. Our negligence on this point will be punished so rigorously: a terrible fire and a separation from God which, although temporary, will be more painful than the longest martyrdom. Whereas, if we did penance in this life we would avoid these cruel torments. Let us courageously adopt a penitential lifestyle. Let us not listen to our frailty, which would cost us dearly. Let us not spare ourselves in this world, so that the good Lord may spare us in the next.

⁴ Let us also have great horror for sin, which must be so rigorously punished. Otherwise we shall not be able to see God. Let us avoid sin more assiduously than death. A distraction in prayer, a flash of ill humor, these things are so displeasing to the infinitely pure eyes of the Lord that we cannot present ourselves before him in that state.

⁵ Let us not forget to pray fervently for the poor souls in purgatory, to give them the benefit of indulgences, etc. Oh, how they will plead for us when they reach heaven, if we have helped them to gain entrance there.

⁶ A thousand respects to your dear family.

⁷ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; I embrace you a thousand times in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁸ I am sending you one franc fifty, which I believe we owed you for the binding of the *Heures* by Noailles. Please purchase for me *La vraie et solide piété* of St. Francis de Sales.

+ + +

253. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 8, 1814

⁷⁶ A zealous priest from Agen. See also Adèle's letters, nos. 262, 281

O how true it is, Lord, that
sanctity is the only thing necessary.

² I keep forgetting, my dear friend, to talk to you about our interesting Désirée d'Artigues, who left here yesterday. I have seen her several times and have been very impressed. You would not believe the raptures of this lovable young person when we found ourselves alone in our chapel.

³ What proofs of friendship she has given me! How simply she revealed the purity of her soul! She asked to be remembered to you. She begged me, as a favor, to write to her. I shall not fail to do so, by means of inserts to her cousins or at other odd times. I think she feels she is under some restriction.

⁴ My dear friend, what return shall we make to our good Jesus, who spoils us so much? He has granted us so much freedom to serve him! How guilty of us if we did not profit by this. We would be punished more severely, for a great deal will be required of her to whom so much has been given.

⁵ Sunday is the Feast of the Dedication, a wonderful feast. On that day, let us dedicate our entire person to our divine Spouse: our hearts, our bodies, our minds. May everything that is in us be consecrated to him forever. We must look upon ourselves as a temple in which the Holy Spirit resides by his grace. We have been consecrated to him in Holy Baptism. Almost all our senses have been dedicated to him by the sacred rites of this sacrament. And does our Jesus not take possession of this temple every time we have the joy of receiving him? Let us therefore take every precaution not to profane this temple, which must be his alone.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear friend; believe me when I say that I love you more every day in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁷ My respects to your family, and greetings to our dear sisters. In a few days I am going to send a sack of wheat for Dubrana, directly to the hospital. Please alert the sister.

⁸ Mother sends you 16 francs to balance her account; see if it does in fact balance. I am sending you 15 francs for Dubrana—that is, 10 francs for the hospital, 4 francs 50 centimes for M. Réglat, and 50 centimes for Dubrana.

⁹ I am also sending you 2 francs for the book. My father wrote an important letter to yours and entrusted it to Mme Sevin; did he get it?

+ + +

254. To Seurette Poitevin, Tonneins

+ J.M.J.T.

November 12, 1814

May I be all yours, O divine Savior!

² What pleasure your letter gave me, my very dear friend. Everything you tell me about our dear sisters is infinitely consoling. May they make daily progress in holy love and despise ever more a world that is so unworthy of the affection of a heart created to love the sovereign Good.

³ I exhort dear Mesplet to show more courage, to raise her eyes to heaven, and to see there the place that is already reserved for her if she is faithful; the crown is suspended over her head. For goodness' sake, she must not lose her crown because of a little impatience or lack of resignation, as did that unfortunate man among the forty martyrs. I say this with her salvation at heart, and to help her practice the most sublime virtues. An infinity of saints have passed along a similar road; may their example encourage and elate her.

⁴ And what of our dear Rendote? Is she constantly growing more fervent? The good Lord has given her such precious grace in calling her from infancy to his service that she would be very guilty if

she did not recognize this favor and respond to it faithfully. I hope that is what she is doing.

⁵ And what of dear Renète? I would have loved to meet her. She must never again pass my house by, but remember that the person who lives here bears her and all the others in her heart. I wish her a heart that surrenders generously to self-control; may she live in this world but not be of it, performing even the most insignificant of her actions for God.

⁶ A good intention often makes the most common actions very meritorious. A glass of water given in the name of the Lord will not be without its reward. "Whether you eat or drink, do everything in the name of the Lord."

⁷ And what of your dear sisters? They certainly are not the least in my heart. Assure them of my love and of my desire to see them making steady progress. How pleased would I be to hear that one of them wished to join our *cher projet*.

⁸ And Mlle Bracquier? My heart forgets her not. What has become of her? You are silent in her regard. I hope that she is always a faithful servant of the good Jesus and of his holy Mother.

⁹ Our affiliates are very dear to me also. They belong to our family; that in itself is sufficient reason. But they are also servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. I recommend myself and all our young people to their prayers.

¹⁰ Now that we are free to do so, I wish that all our associates would be officially received and wear the livery of our august Mother. Let us look upon the cincture as the world does on military medals, etc. We should be anxious to have it.

¹¹ Mme Lafargue heard of our Society and pleaded with me to be received (into that of the Ladies, of course). I will not answer her until you have all been consulted. I am not acquainted with this lady and know nothing of any possible obstacles. This matter is confidential, of course, but you must tell me about her. If there are no objections, you could take it upon yourself to speak to her, to show her the Rule for the Ladies, etc.

¹² And your dear sister-in-law? Please convey to her my fondest sentiments. Yes, I go along with her desire; let us vie with one another in our efforts to progress in the love of God. I am writing to dear Descomps.

¹³ Farewell, my dear Seurette. May your heart be inclined to follow with courage the path God will trace for you. Before deciding, just think of the state you would like to have chosen at the hour of your death. We can work out our salvation wherever God calls us.

¹⁴ I embrace you a thousand times in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

255. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 17, 1814

What consolations you dispense, O my God,
to those who fear you!

² I am most edified, my dear Agathe, by what you tell me of our dear Joséphine. I am very drawn to her, and I wish we could meet and have a friendly chat.

³ What you tell me also about our little Adèle is a joy to hear. May the good Jesus take pleasure in these young hearts and continue to sanctify them every day.

⁴ What will become of you and me, my dear friend, faced with so many magnificent examples? Shall we remain forever drowned in our mediocrity? Let us rise and extricate ourselves as quickly as possible. Let us imitate such beautiful models and try at least to rival our juniors, if we cannot surpass them. We must not put our trust in our own strength, but in the powerful grace of the divine Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ. He earned it for us at the price of his blood and his death, and of a most cruel

death.

⁵ Yesterday, Wednesday, I had the happiness of uniting myself with my Savior. It was to make up for Sunday when I was not able to receive, yet still within the octave of the Dedication. I hope to have this princely favor again on Monday, the Feast of the Presentation of our Lady.

⁶ Dear friend, we should make progress with every Communion, and between Communions we should have merited something before God. But after so many Communions, we are always the same. However, no Communion is useless, for it is a cause either of advancement or regression. What is it in our case?

⁷ May I ask you, dear friend, in your leisure time, to see if you can find at Mlle Portière's something inexpensive to decorate two altar cloths? A thousand pardons for the constant demands I am making on you.

⁸ A thousand greetings to our friends. Say many nice things from us to your family. I am very glad for you that your brother has arrived. I shall write to you every Saturday, and to Mme Belloc every Wednesday.

⁹ Yours truly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

¹⁰ Mother agrees that Mme de M. should keep the cloth she took. Now, as to the rest of the money you might have to complete the wardrobe for the eldest boy, she says to hold on to it. Have a pair of shoes made for him when his present ones wear out. Besides, he will also need a shirt and stockings and other items. Let me know how much is left. Your father tells me that he and Mme Belloc will not return to Agen before Saturday.

+ + +

256. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle is anxious at not having heard from Chaminade. At the moment, he was absorbed by the many retreats he was preaching to his sodalists. Only on December 1 did he answer her.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 23, 1814

O my God,
may I break all the chains of human respect.

² My dear friend, on the day of her Presentation I asked our heavenly Mother to offer to her divine Son all her little family along with herself. Could she have been refused? I think not. Now that we have been offered by such hands, we are entitled to consider ourselves, my dear friend, as entirely consecrated to the Lord. Let us belong totally to him, let us act only for him, just to please him even in our most indifferent actions. This is how to make them all meritorious.

³ As we are about to enter the season of Advent, let us redouble our zeal and our courage in the service of our divine Spouse. Let us prepare our hearts to receive this divine Savior, whom the most beautiful of mothers is going to give us.

⁴ The spirit of penance should be ours during this holy season so that we might atone by great interior mortification for our lack of exterior practices of penance. Let us mortify our tongue, our eyes, and especially our self-will. Let us submit our judgment with great simplicity to that of others, in a spirit of humility and submission. This humility should shine forth in us as the distinguishing mark of the true daughters of Mary. It should manifest itself even in the tone of voice, which should always be deferential toward others. My dear friend, do we, who are but bundles of incompetence, have any reason to be

proud?

⁵ I have sent you two beautiful letters which I have received from the Superior [Larribeau] and the Visitor [Laumont], but as yet I have received none from the General [Chaminade]. He may be ill. Or is he perhaps putting us to the test? In any case, let us prepare our hearts to accomplish the designs of God.

⁶ Farewell, my dear friend; the affection I have for you in Jesus Christ will last till death.

Sister Marie de la Conception

handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁷ A thousand friendly greetings to our friends, especially to our dear Mother [Mme Belloc]. I shall write to her on Wednesday.

+ + +

257. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 28, 1814

Come, Lord,
and show us the effects of your mercy!

² This is the time, dear friend, to wake from our lethargy and to promote the work of our salvation with renewed courage. Alas! How poorly have I started this Advent! I allowed myself to commit a thousand offenses against a God who is so generous toward me and whose favors are at least as numerous as my days. However, I will not be discouraged; on the contrary, with redoubled zeal I shall work at self-control and make up for lost time.

³ When a soldier notices that he has strayed from his company, he quickens his step to rejoin it; with the grace of God, that is what I shall do. The more time I have wasted, the more I shall strive to make up by my enthusiasm. Pray for me, dear friend, and let us both try to compensate during this last month of the year for the cowardice and the failings of the eleven that preceded it.

⁴ I still have no answer from Bordeaux, and it does worry me somewhat. My constant fear is that some letters have gone astray. However, we must practice patience and, in the meantime, prepare our hearts.

⁵ Tell dear Adèle Canuet that I am giving her the name of Sister Cathérine de Saint Ignace. And if her friend, dear Vigué, is one of ours, that of Saint François de Sales.

⁶ I embrace all our dear friends. I am sending you 6 francs 15, also 7 francs 65 which Mother owes you for the garments. I am keeping the 1 franc 50 which Mme Belloc owes me, for a Mass offering.

⁷ Farewell, gentle friend. I am truly yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

handmaid of the handmaids of J. C.

⁸ I am also sending you 7 francs 50 for the cheese—6 pounds at 1.25 per pound. I am sending you a total of 7 francs 65 centimes.

⁹ Mme Lascourt has just sent me, through the kind offices of my Aunt Saint-Julien, 36 francs to be forwarded to you. You can discuss with her and Mme Belloc the best use to be made of the sum. Use the extra 35 centimes for postage.

+ + +

258. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Chaminade's long-awaited answer finally reached Adèle.⁷⁷ To Adèle's request for the Rule of the State, Father Chaminade replied that it was in too succinct a form for the Agen group and had to be edited. He concludes, "I want you and your dear companions to limit yourselves to the vow of chastity, to be emitted for a period of six months on the Feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin or during its octave. During this interval, or even from now until the Purification, I hope to prepare you sufficiently to be able to begin a regular novitiate. Patience and courage."

+ J.M.J.T.

December 8, 1814

O Mary, Mother of fair love,
be my Mother always!

² My dear friend, what better way to spend this beautiful day of the Immaculate Conception of our good Mother than by corresponding with you, one of her dear daughters?

³ On this great day, the gentle Jesus has honored me with a visit. O dear friend, I possess this sweet Savior. Who could rob me of this precious deposit? Away with you, deceitful goods, for I have dismissed you forever. I belong only to Jesus and Mary, and they alone captivate my heart.

⁴ Here we are, dear friend, on the eve, so to speak, of our total consecration to this divine Spouse. Oh, what a privilege! O goodness of my Savior! Lord, that you should raise to the quality of your spouse a creature who is so vile and unworthy, who has always been so ungrateful, so unfaithful, and who every day offends you with so much malice. O goodness! O mercy, of which only a God is capable!

⁵ Well, now, what do you think of our Father General's letter? He wants to do everything after mature deliberation and to give us a complete Rule that will have foreseen every problem. Let us prepare ourselves for so much grace by being more faithful than ever.

⁶ Our Mother's⁷⁸ letter is very touching and should make us blush. Alas! How far are we from the good opinion she has of us!

⁷ At your next visit to the market, dear Elisa would like you to buy her 12 spools of rather thick thread for embroidery. Désirée would like you to be good enough to purchase some English dimity, good and stout material, for petticoats and some colored cotton for two sweaters with long sleeves. These will be gifts for Julie and Nanette. See how much is needed. We would like it in the 2 franc 75 range. I know there are some at this price; otherwise, use your own judgment.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; I am all yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of J. Ch.

⁹ I am enclosing a beautiful letter from Father Laumont, and a fine hymn. Has the Superior answered you yet?

¹⁰ The petticoats will be about the length of yours. Mother is writing you a note explaining the kind of dimity she desires.

+ + +

259. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Larribeau advised Agathe to take the vow of chastity only one month at a time. Adèle, who apparently had not yet received permission to take the vow, offers encouragement.

⁷⁷ See Chaminade's letter, no. 53, December 1, 1814.

⁷⁸ Mlle Chagne, sodalist of Bordeaux, who replaced the deceased Mlle Lacombe as contact person for the Association.

+ J.M.J.T.

December 21, 1814

Divine Infant Jesus,
come and save me.

² Courage, O new spouse of Jesus Christ; you will see that this adorable Spouse to whom you have consecrated yourself will himself bind your every wound and will help you in your difficulties. Just be sure that the heart you have for your Spouse is full of love and trust.

³ When shall I have the happiness of bearing that sweet title? Alas! My infidelities make me unworthy of it. I find the advice of our spiritual guide very wise: to commit yourself for one month at a time, after which I think you will renew your commitment.

⁴ It seems to me, dear friend, that we should be wearing a ring with *Jesus, Mary, Joseph* engraved inside. I shall speak of it to our Fathers. If all agree, we should have to have them made in Bordeaux, so as to keep it a secret. The ring could be of silver and therefore not so expensive.

⁵ Our weaknesses must not discourage us, dear friend. Let us cast ourselves with confidence into the Heart of our heavenly Spouse. He will always be ready to receive us. Let us draw from the divine Heart that humility, that gentleness which should characterize us and which flows naturally from this adorable Heart. I have been very unfaithful these past days, and that is how I have prepared myself for the great feast. O my Savior, have pity on my abjection.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; I give you rendezvous in spirit in the crib of Bethlehem, at midnight. United in spirit, let us all go to adore our little Savior and King and to receive his blessing.

Adèle

⁷ P.S. When you have time, please send us another dozen spools of thick cotton for embroidering, like those you have just sent and that we found in the package containing the dimity. Could you please also buy me a half-yard of doubled cotton to repair some stockings?

⁸ I am sending you a kerchief which Mme Belloc had loaned me at Saint-Avit, and also a towel to be returned to Mme Galibert, which she had allowed me to use. Kindly take care of that.

⁹ I am sending you 40 francs for the two sacks of wheat for Mme Montesquieu. Give me some news concerning Mme Belloc. I hope she will have recovered her health in time for the festive season.

+ + +

260. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 28, 1814

O my God, I shall review my past years
with bitterness of heart
at the sight of my misuse of them.

² My friend, were I to wish a happy new year to a person of the world, I would wish that person every kind of prosperity. But I am addressing a Christian friend, a spouse of Jesus crucified. So what can I wish you, dear friend? A generous heart, a submissive heart, a heart that is resigned so as to profit by the crosses which the good Lord sends us.

³ He singles out his favorites for the harshest trials: witness his Holy Mother and St. John, the disciple whom he loved and whose feast we celebrated yesterday. Yes, my dear friend, it is by means of the cross that he makes them more conformable to himself, that he stamps them as his own. Can we lay claim to another distinction, we who are the children of a Mother whose heart was pierced with a sword of sorrow?

⁴ Courage, my dear friend. Eternity will provide us with plenty of time for our reward and our rest.

That is why we must always suffer. If we do not drink the wine of the chalice with the favorites of the Savior, we shall have to drink its dregs with the sinners and the damned. No one here below is exempt from suffering. Let us bear all things in the company of Jesus Christ, and let us avoid the misfortune of the wicked thief, who went from the cross into the flames of hell.

⁵ Our worthy Superior has written me a short note for the New Year. He did not reply to your letter, he says, because it did not require an answer, and also because he finds writing very painful. Let us pray that God will keep him for us, if such is his will.

⁶ Farewell, gentle friend, I love you well in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁷ I am waiting patiently for news about our poor Mme Belloc.

⁸ I embrace her and the whole group with all my heart.

⁹ How much do I owe you?

+ + +

261. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 10, 1815

You are the King of my heart and will be
eternally my treasure and my inheritance.

² Yesterday, dear friend, I was reading about the religious state. I learned that the true spirit of that holy state is one of renunciation and death. So let us work to acquire this renunciation, this death to self, which we are far from possessing. We should be dead to the things of this world, and yet we cling so tightly to them. After all, in the religious life we are not looking for peace and quiet, but rather for the cross and mortifications. A religious soul must keep its sights on its own salvation, be unconcerned about the days of the pilgrimage, and look forward eagerly and constantly for its happy ending, for the heavenly fatherland to which we aspire.

³ What a tragedy for us, dear Agathe if, after having heard the voice of Jesus Christ calling us as he did the young man in the Gospel, we had not the courage to follow the path of perfection to which he called us. From a counsel, it becomes a precept for us the moment God calls us by a special choice and a very special love.

⁴ Courage, therefore, dear friend. Instead of withdrawing sadly as did the young man in the Gospel when asked to leave his riches, let us leave everything like the apostles to follow the Spouse wherever he leads us.

⁵ I am sending you a very fine letter from our dear Eugénie Chaillau. I think you will want to pass it around.

⁶ Thank you for the very nice cuttings; Mme Dartigues is not leaving yet, so if you have any others, please send them to me.

⁷ Farewell, I am all yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

Sister Marie de la Conception

handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁸ Please ask Mlle de Sainte-Croix to pass this letter on to Father Grenier, pastor of Valeilles.

⁹ I have just received a few lines from Father Larribeau, who tells me that his health has been deteriorating these past few days and will probably continue to do so. Imagine my worry. He asks for my fervent prayers.

+ + +

262. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 14, 1815

Save me, Lord,
for without you I shall perish.

² We should cry out with confidence, dear friend, "Save me Lord, for without you I shall perish." The Lord will not be deaf to our cry; he will hear us, and with his help we can accomplish everything.

³ How many things impossible to human nature did not the saints carry out with the help of this same God who offers it to us? They were seen to confront with joy the most horrible torments, brave all dangers, hate their very lives; and this often was true of the weaker sex and of the most tender youths. Witness those who were like Agatha, Agnes, Eulalie. . . . They were made of bone and flesh as we are. Let us try to have the same will, and we shall accomplish similar feats.

⁴ Dear Agathe, with us the Lord is not quite so demanding. He asks only that we should suppress our perverse inclinations and sacrifice to him our own wills, by submitting them to his and to that of the superiors. He wants us to despise this world and its false goods; and in exchange, how many solid and lasting ones does he not promise us?

⁵ Let us take courage, then; let us fly vigorously toward the Lord, who is calling us to his service; let all our zeal burst forth.

⁶ Long live Jesus and his Cross, for the two may not be separated. If we love Jesus, we must love his Cross; that is how he recognizes true love.

⁷ Our friends in Puch tell me that they hesitate to go to Lompian now that their worthy Father is ill, and that the doctors do not hold much hope. May the holy will of God be done, but I am very sorrowful indeed.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe. Your dearest friend in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁹ Please tell Father Fonsagnan that Father Larribeau has received his letter, but that he cannot reply at the moment. He will, however, accede to his wishes.

¹⁰ Do you remember whether I paid you the 12 francs for the vigil lamps?

+ + +

263. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 2, 1815

Free my heart and loosen my tongue,
O my God, so that
I might love and bless you eternally.

² The news I have to give you about our admirable Superior is not good, my dear friend. He is still very sick. The pastor of Damazan told his parishioners that if they wanted to see him before Easter, they had better hurry; what a blow! I ask you to receive Communion on Sunday for his intention; ask those of your friends who will receive to have the same intention. However, Clémentine was telling me that the doctor has some hope, perhaps even of a perfect recovery.

³ My dear friend, let us recall to mind his saintly advice so as to profit by it. This is what God asks

of us.

⁴ Here we are already at mid-Lent, and how have we profited by this time of grace and penance? Our debts keep accumulating, and it is time to try to pay them. My dear friend, our aim should be perfect self-forgetfulness, to renounce ourselves in small matters as well as in important ones, to become supremely indifferent to everything. This is what the life of the spouse of Christ should be: crucified to the world and the world crucified to her.

⁵ I myself cannot make the greatly-desired trip to Bordeaux; but I certainly would like to have Mme Belloc go. If Mme Laborie could give her a seat in her coach at no charge, I would contribute 50 francs for meals. The trip should not cost more than that, and I believe that all our projects would advance more rapidly.

⁶ Charles is leaving for Bordeaux, and I am giving him a letter for the worthy Father which brings up topics suggested by Mme Belloc. Again, I say, this is our one and only chance for a trip to Bordeaux. In any case, I hope that Mme Laborie and her dear children will see the Father.

⁷ Mother will take the mattress.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; let us be but one heart in that of our Spouse.

Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

+ + +

Napoleon, having escaped from Elba, landed in the Gulf of Juan. He entered Paris on March 20. The "One Hundred Days" adventure was to suspend all plans. We can guess Adèle's sentiments as she comments on the Peace be with you. + + +

264. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 6, 1815

O my God, give us that peace
which the world cannot give.

² Yes, dear friend, may God give us that peace which is so greatly desired, that peace which depends not on events nor on anything in this world, that interior peace which comes from a soul perfectly submissive to the will of God and which accepts everything from God's hand.

³ God knows how to draw good from evil. Not a hair falls from our head without his permission. God knows better than we what we need. He does not think in terms of time, but rather of eternity, whereas we blind people think only of the present.

⁴ I have to make reflections like this, dear friend, because my heart is plunged in bitterness for various reasons. I recommend them all to you, but one of them most particularly. Let us be courageous.

⁵ Poor Papa's condition continues to deteriorate. He has had very high fevers which make him suffer martyrdom night and day. Add to this his almost total inability to speak. Pray for him, I beg you.

⁶ This world is but a valley of tears. When shall we be in our heavenly fatherland, where we shall enjoy permanent happiness and peace?

⁷ Farewell, farewell, my dear friend; let us kiss the hand that strikes us, and appease it by our penance.

Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

265. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 13, 1815

Lead me into your heavenly pasture,
O my divine shepherd.

² I am very concerned about all of you, my very dear Agathe. It will be two weeks on Sunday since I have heard from any of you. However, I dare hope that today's delivery will bring me some letters from you. You know well enough how I feel about you to understand my sentiments.

³ Dear friend, I am sending you a copy of a wonderful prayer to the Blessed Virgin, and I wish you would recite it at all our meetings on Friday. It is certainly most timely.

⁴ We must never lose confidence, dear friend; with a single word, Jesus Christ can restore our calm. What consolation to think that nothing happens except with his permission. Let us trust in this good Father; when he chastises us, it is as a father and for our welfare.

⁵ Let us work harder than ever at our progress and turn a deaf ear to our spiritual lethargy. We must not omit any of our private devotions, our precautionary examens and others, our courageous penance for our failings. Finally, let us recall that we are in this world to work out our salvation; that is our only occupation and our main concern.

⁶ I have just received a letter from Mme Belloc and learned of the death of Father Rouche. Can we be saddened, especially at the present time, by the loss of those who die in the Lord?

⁷ Pray, let us pray especially for our religion. It is facing a crisis at this time, but Jesus Christ will be faithful to the promise made to his Church.

⁸ Farewell, my gentle friend; I love you well in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie

⁹ Mme Pachan sends her greetings.

+ + +

266. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 20, 1815

O my God, fill my heart with holy joy!

² My heart tells me, dear friend, that today, the Feast of St. Joseph, you have had the happiness of receiving the gentle Jesus. What an inestimable favor to be able to receive him frequently. A thousand times blessed they who receive this invaluable grace, whose delight is to approach this divine Sacrament which ought to be their consolation during their exile in this vale of tears. Let us take the advice of a great saint who said, "Live each day in such a way as to deserve to receive Communion each day." Let us avoid the least willful sin; to do this we must maintain great purity of conscience and keep ourselves as much as possible in the presence of God. It will help to think often of death, and of the dread judgment we shall have to undergo for all our actions. "Remember your last end," said the wise man, "and you will never sin."

³ My aunts are here, and you can imagine my joy. However, their stay will be short. I wish Father Laumont could come while they are here, because I think that my Aunt Saint-Julien might join our Society. I desire that very much. Pray to the good Lord that this happens, if it be his will. I have written to Father Laumont about this and am awaiting an answer.

⁴ A thousand greetings to our gentle sisters. I love them all, you in particular, more than I can say, in Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁵ I have just received all your letters, and my heart bounds for joy.
⁶ You would do well to buy some shirts for Dubrana; I have enough money in reserve. Also, his cassock needs lengthening; make arrangements with the tailor.

+ + +

267. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

April 27, 1815

O Beauty ever ancient, ever new,
too late have I begun to love you.

² Dear friend, let us try to follow in spirit our divine Master as he ascends to heaven on the day of the Ascension. We shall have to free our hearts from this valley of tears, which is so unworthy to keep their attention. May our projects, our desires, and our concerns all tend toward that blessed eternity where our divine Savior is going to prepare a place for us.

³ It is indeed reserved for us, if we are faithful. What a motive for encouragement amid the heartbreaks of this life: to think that all these afflictions will pass, and that they will be followed and rewarded by a blessedness which will be endless.

⁴ Therefore, dear friend, let us suffer in all patience and resignation, so as to carry off that immortal crown, the reward of our efforts. Christ himself could not enter into glory except through the path of humiliations and sufferings. Do we expect that what was so costly for Jesus Christ and the saints will cost us nothing?

⁵ I give you a rendezvous in spirit at noon on Ascension day on the Mount of Olives, there to receive the blessing which Jesus Christ will give to his apostles. Beg him, as did the prophet Elisha, to leave his Spirit with us. Then we can prepare, along with all the disciples, to receive him in a well-conditioned heart; never have we had greater need of him.

⁶ Farewell, very dear Agathe; I must stop now, to write to Mlle Momus; I have someone to deliver the letter.

⁷ I embrace you a thousand times in Jesus Christ.

Adèle, Sister Marie de la Conception
handmaid of the handmaids of Jesus Christ

⁸ I am sending you the 18 francs for the sack of wheat. There will be 10 centimes left.

+ + +

268. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

May 18, 1815

O my God,
may your holy will be done!

² My dear friend, there has been a very slight improvement in Papa's condition. He seems to be consumed by an interior fire. He does not sleep at all; yet he is very patient, especially since he received the good Lord.

³ I am very busy and cannot write at length. Let us always love the holy and lovable will of God; may it be our guide and our consolation.

⁴ It is good to want what God wants and to want that alone. What happiness at last to take one's rest in heaven from all life's tribulations and sorrows. We should hasten there, driven by our hope, and

despise all that is so transitory. Nothing mortal for an immortal heart!

⁵ Farewell, my very dear friend. I am all yours in our gentle Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁶ Tell Father Ducourneau⁷⁹ that, should his health oblige him to suspend his activities, our family would be only too happy to have him stay at the château.

⁷ I am sending you 3 francs 30 to settle our accounts.

⁸ I shall send you a skirt from Mlle Le Clais for the poor invalid Mme Belloc told me about.

⁹ I am sending an extra 20 centimes for later use.

+ + +

269. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 1, 1815

Praised and forever adored
be the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

² How have we spent this octave, my very dear Agathe, during which our God has given us so many proofs of love? How have we shown our gratitude for so many favors? Were we more careful in avoiding sin? More fervent in God's holy service? More loving toward him? More loving toward our neighbor?

³ How shameful that we should do nothing for him, who does so much for us! O my God, when shall we cease being so thankless toward such unbounded goodness? Is it not to be feared that our continued resistance will finally weary your Mercy, which will then give way to your Justice?

⁴ No, my dear friend, no more aloofness toward a God who continues to spoil us. Let us sacrifice all that we are to him, live for him alone, contemplate only him, and be entirely his!

⁵ I am well pleased with the associates you have chosen for me.

⁶ I shall try to find a copy for Mme Lassegrive.

⁷ Papa's condition is still most painful; he can neither speak nor eat, and gets very little sleep. Continue to pray to God for him, that he be given the strength he needs and also some relief if such be God's will. When our God chastises, it is as a father; he must have some wonderful designs of salvation for Papa.

⁸ Farewell, my very dear friend; I am all yours in our heavenly Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ Please ask Mme Belloc to pass this letter on to Aimée. I congratulate this dear friend on her happy trip.

¹⁰ The pastors in our region refuse to thank God for the trials our religion is undergoing; that, I believe, is their stance. Everybody is happy; no one is complaining about it. I do believe that our Leader and his subjects all mean well, but they see things in a different light; that is no concern of ours.⁸⁰

+ + +

270. To Agathe Diché, Agen

⁷⁹ The former tutor, now assistant in the Agen parish of Notre Dame.

⁸⁰ Adèle is aware of the problems which a change of government imposes on the heads of the dioceses who prescribe prayers for the Emperor, and on the parish clergy. The majority refuse to carry out the orders. She withholds her judgment.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 8, 1815

O my God, your glory
is the only thing I wish to seek!

² On the day you receive this letter, dear friend, I shall have been a Christian for twenty-six years.
Pray for me on this great day.

³ Baptism is such a great grace! Shall we ever realize that sufficiently? We, who were children of anger, become children of God and of the Church, heirs of paradise and sisters of Jesus Christ.

⁴ Just think! What if God had allowed us to die at birth, as happens so often. What if God had allowed us to be born in a pagan country, as so many thousands of others! But we have been chosen among thousands. How much must God expect of us, and how guilty we would be not to recognize such a grace and to misuse it, or not to keep its sacred and very solemn commitments! By our baptism we have divorced ourselves eternally from the world, renounced its vanities, pride, sensuality, avarice, etc.; yet we almost always act as do the pagans. Let us correct this abuse and consecrate to the Lord whatever is left of our life.

⁵ Papa is still seriously ill. His fever persists, and he has not recovered his speech. It is truly atrocious. O my God, shed abundant graces on your servant to help him support so much suffering.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Agathe. You are very busy now; offer all this to the Lord and amass a treasure of merits.

⁷ I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie

⁸ Please pray for the conversion of a person whom we have approached.

⁹ I am enclosing a letter from our Superior.

+ + +

271. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

June 14, 1815

O my God,
I abandon myself entirely to your holy will.

² Dear friend, poor Papa is going from bad to worse. He can swallow only one or two spoonfuls, and even that with difficulty. He is rapidly wasting away.

³ I beg you to pray for him and for us. What a sad situation to see ourselves about to be separated from persons whom we love so dearly. But, we are not of this world. A little earlier, a little later, we must all make that journey.

⁴ Dear friend, let us fix our eyes upon heaven and consider this life as a passage, as a vale of tears. May all our desires, all our plans, have heaven as their object. Once there, reunited for all eternity, we shall enjoy a happiness that is secure, permanent, and eternal.

⁵ O happy day, when the light of a blessed eternity will burst upon us. But we must work, and work diligently, to gain this heavenly reward. Let us hurriedly put our hand to the task and make every effort, at whatever cost, for we must attain it.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear Agathe; all yours on Calvary.
Adèle

⁷ Since writing this letter, dear friend, we noticed a marked swelling in poor Papa's arm and hand. He received the final Anointing with the greatest possible edification.

+ + +

272. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Baron de Trenquelléon, sixty years of age, died at two o'clock in the afternoon of June 18. The burial was carried out with great simplicity, in the intimacy of the family and of the village of Feugarolles. It seems that neither Mme Belloc nor Agathe Diché was able to be present. [On the same day, Napoleon suffered the defeat at Waterloo.]

+ J.M.J.T.

June 22, 1815

O my God,
I wish to love you more than myself!

² Our dear Mme Belloc has come, dear friend, to bring me the consolations of friendship. You know what that means to me. She is staying on until Monday; that is a short time, but we must be ready for any sacrifice.

³ I want to give you a few details about poor Papa. Two days before he lost his power of speech, he asked to go to Confession and to receive Viaticum. After that, hardly a single sign of impatience. When he could not make himself understood, he simply raised his eyes to heaven.

⁴ Four days before his death, he received the final Anointing with the utmost devotion. On Friday, he asked that his usual prayers be recited. On Sunday, he was very unwell and asked by a sign that the pastor be sent for. Just before drawing his last breath, as the priest was encouraging him to raise his heart, he raised his eyes to heaven. He died as the final words of the prayers for the dying were being recited.

⁵ O dear friend, this death was most consoling because of his extraordinary resignation in a state so revolting to nature. However, this was doubtless necessary for his salvation.

⁶ Farewell, dear friend; yours truly in Jesus Christ.

⁷ I have so much to do!

Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

273. To Agathe Diché, Agen

With the death of her father and the defeat of Napoleon, Adèle can now concentrate her attention on the day when, with her friends, she will found the religious community they have been planning for several years. Receiving no news from Father Chaminade, she goes ahead on her own, with the approval and encouragement of Fathers Larribeau and Laumont and of Bishop Jacoupy.

+ J.M.J.T.

June 28, 1815

O my God, you alone can fill my heart.

² Just a word in passing, dear friend, for I am rushed.

³ I had a lengthy discussion about our *cher projet* with your dear sister. Now that I am free, this can be realized shortly if everything can be arranged. Pray fervently for enlightenment by the Holy Spirit, so that we act only according to the designs of God and according to his will, should we even have to give up our own preferences. It is God whom we must seek and whom we must please.

⁴ Let us repeat with St. Paul, "Lord, what would you have me do?" or with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, your servant is listening." He will surely allow his quiet voice to be heard.

⁵ Courage, for we shall not be working alone. The Lord will be working with us; and with him, what can we not do?

⁶ Dear friend, please provide me with two yards of imitation gold lamé braid, two fingers wide. A thousand pardons for your trouble.

⁷ Charles is getting over his cold.

⁸ Farewell. All yours in Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie

⁹ Greetings to our friends. Please buy me also a sheet of gold spangles.

+ + +

274. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 5, 1815

O Lord, to you I sacrifice all that I am.

² My dear friend, would that we could say this from the bottom of our heart and effectively sacrifice to the Lord all that we have and are, so that there will be nothing in us that is not entirely his.

³ It is he who has made us and given us everything, and he is entitled to it all. Would we be foolhardy enough to contest this right and his sovereignty? So let us sacrifice to the Lord our desires, our projects, our inclinations, our moods, our memory, our tongue, our senses, our mind, our heart, and our body. Let us do nothing except to please him and to do his adorable will. He is the sovereign Lord, on whom we depend for everything.

⁴ Dear friend, may his spirit prevail in our actions, that spirit of gentleness, of patience, and love. Would it befit a spouse of Jesus Christ to display a harsh, haughty, and impatient character, so little in conformity with that of her divine Spouse?

⁵ Pray to God that I may correct myself, for I am very different from my Jesus.

⁶ I hope, my friend, that after the return of dear Mme Belloc, you will come to relax a while at Trenquelléon; she promised, and I care too much not to hold her to that promise. I shall see if we cannot make that holy pilgrimage [to Lompian] together; I do not foresee any obstacles.

⁷ Farewell, gentle friend; truly yours in Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁸ P.S. I am sending you 6 francs for the fringe, 1 franc 70 for the braid, 60 centimes for the vigil lights, 45 centimes for Dubrana's laundry, 5 centimes for postage which I may not have paid, and 70 centimes extra to be used later.

+ + +

275. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

July 13, 1815

Be the sole ruler of my heart,
O my divine King!

² Yes, may this divine King be the sole ruler of our poor heart, and may vanity, love of the world, anger, and sloth be forever banished from it. Let us be faithful to our divine Master in life and in death.

³ Who could separate us from our divine King? Persecutions perhaps? Death? Suffering? Temptations? Alas! Sometimes a trifle suffices to separate us, for sin is the cause of this separation, and

the simplest thing can make us fall into sin. Let us be more careful in avoiding the least sin, especially all clearly deliberate sin, which is the most serious infidelity toward God.

⁴ Alas, how great is our need to beg for God's mercy! May we do so with a pure heart, a heart that is friendly to God, a heart free of any sin which would place enmity between us.

⁵ Tuesday, dear friend, will be a month since poor Papa died. I beg you to pray fervently for him in case he still has some remnant of expiation to make. I hope that, if things remain peaceful,⁸¹ Father Laumont will come accompanied by the pastor of La Garrigue; that would be most consoling indeed.

⁶ Farewell, my very dear friend. Do not forget to greet all our sisters for me, especially dear Alexandrine Duffau. I recommend that she follow the promptings of her heart.

⁷ I embrace you a thousand times in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁸ I would ask all my friends to remember poor Papa on Tuesday. All his clothing he left to Brivel [his personal valet], which means that I have nothing to give away. With the 13 francs that were given to Mme Belloc to purchase cloth, buy some linen so that I can make him⁸² a few handkerchiefs. I will also make him some woolen stockings; for daily wear, I am sending him some of mine.

+ + +

Adèle had hoped that after Mme Belloc's departure from Trenquelléon, Agathe would come to keep her company for a few days. She had even anticipated they might visit Lompian together. However, Agathe was not able to leave Agen. So in mid-August it was Adèle who went to spend two weeks with her friend, wonderful days, days of rest and distraction, which she so needed after the painful ordeal of June. But also days of spiritual profit for the two friends who pray together, meditate together, and discuss the ascetical practices of the cher projet.

+ + +

276. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 6, 1815

O my God, I put all my trust in you!

² How I do regret our separation, my very dear friend! We got along so well together. However, we live in the hope of some day being united forever.

³ Dear friend, we must concentrate on preparing our hearts for the great happiness which will be ours in the state we intend to adopt. We have plenty of defects, at least I do; we must try to overcome these at whatever cost.

⁴ The saints who reached consummate sanctity were usually those with the strongest passions. They acquired more merit by their very efforts to overcome themselves.

⁵ Courage, therefore, my dear sister; for as we go about our work we are sustained by a great deal of good advice and fine examples. Let us cut and sever. Let us give little attention to the passing days of this mortal life, but work to acquire that lasting peace, that eternal rest, which will fully compensate us for all our troubles and all our efforts.

⁶ These words should be uppermost in our minds: "Learn of me who am meek and humble of

⁸¹ A reference to the unsettled conditions in a great deal of France immediately after the final downfall of Napoleon.

⁸² It is not clear whether these items are for Brivel or, very possibly, for Dubrana.

heart." Let us put them into practice.

⁷ The task ahead of me is immense. I am so impatient, so proud, so liable to fall at each step. But the power of the Lord will burst forth and prevail over my weakness, and his mercy over my wretchedness.

⁸ I believe I forgot my scissors at your house; see, dear friend, whether you can find them in your room. I am enclosing the two letters from Mme Causse that you wanted.

⁹ Farewell, my dear Agathe; let us be reborn with our good Mother during the solemnity of her Nativity and acquire her virtues.

¹⁰ I embrace you in the holy Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.
Sister Marie de la Conception

¹¹ Mme Pachan and my whole family greet you affectionately.

¹² My greetings to our friends.

¹³ The *doume* [a variety of cloth] is gray and is sold at Paillassis' shop, under the Cornières. I believe it sells for 3 francs 15 or 4 francs 50 per *canne*.⁸³ I am not sure. But I only need 50 inches of the material.

¹⁴ Please cut Dubrana's shirts according to the pattern and send them on to me.

¹⁵ But I need Jean Sen's immediately.

+ + +

At this time, Agathe, twenty-six years of age, was still unable to obtain her mother's consent to follow Adèle into the religious life. There was, apparently, some concern for her health.

+ + +

277. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 16, 1815

Lord, what would you have me do?

² I was pleased to note, my very dear friend, that you were told to reduce the number of your devotions. That will help safeguard your health, so you can later do more useful work for the glory of our good God to whom we have consecrated every instant of our lives. You will see in the letter from Father [Larribeau] which I enclose that I also had said something to him concerning you. So you see that everyone is of the same opinion.

³ You can make up for this decrease in the number of your prayers, my dear Agathe, by improving the quality of those that are permitted. You can be sure that one *Our Father* well said is worth more than thirty said in haste.

⁴ For a Christian, everything can and should become a prayer. If we do everything for God, dear friend, then everything becomes prayer. Let us eat, speak, work, and suffer for God, and never perform an action that we would not dare offer him. Only the sinful ones fall into this category, for all the others are acceptable and agreeable. What a good and gentle Master! How good it is to serve him! How he differs from the masters of this world!

⁵ I am enclosing a letter from our dear Clémentine, who is always so loving. She has been ill.

⁶ Father wants a letter from the bishop authorizing public meetings, but I think he himself should ask for it. I fear we would be bothering His Excellency, who is so busy, were we to importune him.

⁷ I am returning two towels, yours, I believe, and a chemise of Mme Belloc. I am sending our dear

⁸³ An ancient unit of length varying locally from 1.71 m to 1.98 m (67 inches to 117 inches).

Falagret sisters material for a shirt for Dubrana. Since they were not able to make one for Jean Sen, I do not want to deprive them of the merit of working for our protégés.

⁸ Farewell, my dear child; I love you more than I can say.
Adèle

⁹ A thousand greetings to our friends.

¹⁰ A thousand respects to your dear family.

¹¹ Mother can send the bouquet on Wednesday at the earliest.

+ + +

278. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

September 20, 1815

I am yours, O my divine Savior;
do not allow me to be lost!

² How beautiful and touching is this aspiration, my very dear friend. Our gentle Savior will not allow us to be lost if we remain true to him in both consolation and tribulation. Both come from his paternal hand. Let us accept everything, submit to everything, whether it concerns the body or the soul. Our whole being belongs to him; let him dispose of it as he wishes.

³ Let us be patient with ourselves. To put up with one's weakness is often a greater mark of humility than to have the uneasy yearning to be freed from it. Oh, yes, let us humble ourselves at the sight of our frailty, of our inclination to evil because of our wicked nature. But let us not lose confidence. The Lord's mercy will overwhelm our infirmities, and his omnipotence will support our weakness and incapacity.

⁴ I have an idea, dear friend. Today I reread the indulgences indicated in our *Manual*. Many are not available to us because our group has no oratory of its own, as is prescribed in the Bull. If, however, His Excellency agreed and if the Dames du Paravis were willing, we could use their chapel for our meetings and so gain the indulgences, etc. Have Mme Belloc ponder this suggestion in her wisdom.

⁵ I am sure you enjoyed the short pilgrimage to Bon Rencontre, my dear friend. How the goodness of the Lord helps our frailty. Should we not be full of joy and gratitude for that goodness and full of confidence and peace?

⁶ Farewell, dear Agathe. Your true friend in our heavenly Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁷ I suggest that the list of indulgences be read at the next meeting.

⁸ Please return the towels; I believe they belong to Janou. I am returning the cambric; try to have it changed. It is a pronounced reddish-brown and would always seem to be soiled.

+ + +

279. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Adèle is visiting her aunts. She will remain in Condom until mid-October.

+ J.M.J.T.

September 27, 1815
Condom

O my God, give me renewed courage
to follow your voice.

² My very dear friend, I am stealing an instant from the company of my aunts, my associates, and my friends to pen you a few words. I have visited with almost all of them, at least those who live in town.

³ Our virtuous Adélaïde is still very ill. This most pure soul trembles at the thought of the approaching judgment. God is testing her by means of this cruel trial of fear. She is in great pain; pray for her.

⁴ Octavie Duffau has become most devout. Our friends, and her mother, would like her to become an associate. I intend to speak to her about that.

⁵ We also hope to make another conquest, a young woman of twenty-one years who stays at the convent and whose fervor is angelic. The reverend Sisters⁸⁴ assure me that her piety is solid.

⁶ O dear friend, how good it is to be with saints; but how humiliating to see oneself so frightfully weak. How pronounced is my infirmity, dear friend, in spite of so many graces from the Lord. He is constantly looking upon the lowliness of his handmaid but, alas! Absent are Mary's virtues. And I do not recall the Lord's benefits often enough to profit by them.

⁷ I hope dear Mme Belloc will yield to our ardent wishes and grace us with her presence.

⁸ Farewell, very dear Agathe; count on my constant friendship in Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ Friendly greetings to our friends and sisters.

¹⁰ If the towels I am returning are not yours, Janou de Saint Genès claims she is missing two, one with a braided ring; these may be the ones.

+ + +

280. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Shortly after her return from Condom, Adèle and some companions go to Lompian for a retreat.

+ J.M.J.T.

October 24, 1815

What return shall I make to you,
O my God, for all your goodness?

² My dear friend, how the good Lord has blessed us during our lovely trip. Father Laumont gave us two or three instructions per day. The first evening he talked on retreat. He concluded his talk with an "honorable reparation" to the Lord. It consisted of holding arms outstretched in the form of a cross for a good ten minutes.

³ The next day, before Mass, we sang the *Come, Creator Spirit*. After the Gospel he preached from the pulpit on the importance of salvation, and this was followed by prayers, canticles, etc. Another instruction in the afternoon on renunciation and the love of God. In the evening, the worthy Superior [Larribeau] gave us a meditation on spiritual renewal and on the resolutions we should take.

⁴ Friday morning, Father Laumont spoke on the war which the devil, the world, and our passions are waging against us. At eleven o'clock, another talk on the judgment of God; and in the evening before leaving, on the baptismal vows.

⁵ There, dear friend, are the details on the public exhortations. But you know the value of our Father's private instructions. I had three sessions with him, and twice the great joy of receiving the Source of life.

⁶ We met the whole colony of our dear friends, who always seem more fervent, more mortified,

⁸⁴ Probably the Ursuline nuns, who had a convent and school in Condom.

and more filled with love than ever. Our *cher projet* was discussed with enthusiasm, and we rejoiced at the prospect of an early realization. Dear Amélie will fill you in on all the little details of that blessed time. But pray, dear friend, that I might profit by this precious seed cast onto the soil of my soul, that it may bear fruit and multiply a hundredfold, and that it will not be choked by thorns.

⁷ I made another conquest at Condom, a young and very fervent working girl, Marie Agathe Despréaux by name. She is enthusiastic about the prospect.

⁸ Please, my dear friend, buy something with which I can make Dubrana a frock coat. Those stockings that Alexandrine made, did you have them dyed? Has Mme Falagret made the shirt?

⁹ I am enclosing a beautiful letter Father Laumont sent me at Condom. Some of the things he suggests will be more practical at Agen than at Condom.

¹⁰ Amélie has no time to write, but she is very devoted to you.

¹¹ A thousand greetings to our dear friends. Farewell, gentle friend. I am truly yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

Sister Marie de la Conception

¹² I can sympathize with the troubles of our dear Adèle Canuet. But if God so wills, he can remove all difficulties. Tell her to have confidence and to pray earnestly to the Master of hearts to change her mother's, so that she might, as another Abraham, make the sacrifice of her dear Adèle.

¹³ At Lompian they wanted to know all about you. Father [Larribeau] is better.

¹⁴ You did not send Mlle Courtade's letter which Mme La Grâce had forwarded; try to find it.

+ + +

281. To Agathe Diché, Agen

Seconde Diché, first cousin of Mme Belloc and Agathe, died at Agen on November 1 after a long illness. She was twenty-four years old.

+ J.M.J.T.

November 8, 1815

It is from this moment, O my God,
that I wish to be yours alone.

² How consoling, dear friend, are the details you give me about the last moments of our dear Seconde. Yes, I also hope that she will have celebrated the great feast with all the saints. My good friend, in her present state she would not want to have suffered less; her sufferings seem light to her, now that she is crowned with their reward.

³ That is how everything passes in this life, the good and the bad. Everything exists for a time only. So, dear friend, let us think only of working for eternity and of amassing those treasures which neither worms nor rust can spoil. An ever greater disgust for the vain joys of the world should be evident in us. After expressing sorrow for the time we have lost, we can try to make up for it by doubling our pace to get back into the race. We must not stop for obstacles, but set our sights on heaven, our objective, the end of our journey. Our only preoccupation should be to reach it. It is a reward that is not given to the sluggards but to the courageous. Courage, therefore, dear Agathe; with all sails deployed, we shall finally cast anchor at the desired haven of salvation.

⁴ Dear friend, I gave one franc fifty for a Mass for Mme Belloc's intentions; deduct it from what I owe you. Have you, meanwhile, gathered all the shirts belonging to Dubrana? Adèle Canuet, Jeannonette, and the Abeilhé sisters had some of them.

⁵ Farewell, dear Agathe; I am impatient for us to be installed in our dear house. I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ, forever blessed.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁶ Do not forget, dear friend, to tell all your dear family how sincerely we share in their bereavement. We are making a novena *Out of the depths* [Psalm 51] and of Communions; suggest that to your friends in Agen.

⁷ What is the name of the new associate received by Father Malroux?

⁸ If you plan to answer Father Fonsagnan, tell him please not to receive candidates indiscriminately; I fear that he is overzealous. Recruiting must not be simply a matter of stringing numbers together.

⁹ You can buy the frock coat for our seminarian for 30 francs.

¹⁰ I need some cloth at 2 francs, or 2 francs 50 a *canne*. For the smaller boy, a *canne* and a half would suffice.

+ + +

282. To Agathe Diché, Agen

In this letter we find the only reference to Adèle's refusal of a marriage offer in 1808. Her "no" was unconditional: not only a refusal of a specific offer, but a positive consecration such as she recommends to her friend.

+J.M.J.T.

November 19, 1815

O my God, make me conscious
of the shortness of life and the uncertainty
of the hour of my death.

² My dear friend, if our minds were constantly haunted by the notions of the shortness of life and the uncertainty of the hour of our death, how much more detached we would be from the things of the present life. How courageous would be our support of such brief trials, at the sight of the eternal reward which will come after them and which may be ours before long. We do not reflect enough on this important article, the only stimulus that can set us seriously about the important work of our salvation.

³ Tuesday, my dear friend, we shall celebrate the Feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the temple at the early age of three. It is a great day for youth. Together with Mary, let us consecrate ourselves anew to the heavenly Spouse. May this consecration be integral, without reserve, and without recall. It was precisely on the eve of this holy day, seven years ago, that I said positively "no" to a proposal of marriage.

⁴ I had asked our good Father [Larribeau] to come on this day, health and weather permitting, so that I could receive Communion and still receive again on Sunday. But the weather is so inclement that I have little hope. Recommend that to God, if it might redound to his glory.

⁵ I am enchanted at the possibility of obtaining the consent of the Dames du Paravis. The Lord is blessing and protecting our plans in a visible manner. We can correspond to so many graces only by our renewed fidelity.

⁶ Farewell, my dear friend; truly yours in Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁷ The death's head I am sending is for dear Adèle Canuet. I embrace her and all our friends with all my heart.

⁸ Dear friend, Father Laumont is taking the little Tricoulet boy; imagine my joy!

⁹ On Saturday without fail, you must send me as much of the same cloth as you have already, that is, one *canne* and a half. It is urgent; it is for this dear little boy.

¹⁰ Because of the inclement weather, your dear papa is not going to Saint-Avit.

+ + +

Adèle learned, probably from Mme Belloc, that a section of the Convent of the Refuge at Agen would shortly be available. She wrote to Chaminade that the premises would be suitable for their community project. He approved,⁸⁵ and the project of a lease took definite shape. Agathe, meanwhile, had not yet received her mother's consent to join the new community.

+ + +

283. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 22, 1815

Lord, I suffer violence;
be my advocate.

² This, dear friend, should be our cry in the midst of the combats which the world, the devil, and flesh and blood are waging against us. If God is for us, who can be against us? If God is the author of our plans, who will dare oppose them?

³ Sometimes I do get a little discouraged, but our dear Mother Jeanne de Jésus [Mme Belloc] comforts me by her courage. She is not surprised at the stubbornness of your dear mother, but she hopes to reason successfully with her.

⁴ She and I will meet at the Port, dear friend, and I shall spend a few days at Agen to negotiate the lease. How enjoyable it will be to see each other and chat of what interests us most.

⁵ Courage, dear friend, do not let yourself be dismayed. God, who has already done so much for us, will do the rest. Let us be calm and we shall see the effects of his protection. Our only action should be to elicit God's help by a strict avoidance of sin and a great fidelity to grace.

⁶ How much I would like to profit by the time I shall spend in Agen to be on my best behavior, so as to make an ample provision of good works, Communions, etc.

⁷ My dear friend, let us pray for sinners. Our neighborhood has witnessed, in rapid succession, two marriages of Catholics with Protestants. They were married in the Protestant church; consequently they are apostates and may not receive the sacraments. The bishop decided that, even if the Catholic party repented but could not persuade the other to be married in the Church, this party could be absolved only on the deathbed. O my God, enlighten these unhappy couples. There is also another young man who may fall into the same misfortune.

⁸ Farewell, dear friend; truly yours in our heavenly Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ We are sending you some of the turkeys that were brought in from one of our farms; they seem to be in prime condition.

+ + +

284. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

November 30, 1815

⁸⁵ See Chaminade's letters, nos. 56 (September 11, 1815) and 57 (October 3, 1815).

O my God, may I break all the chains
of human respect.

² Our great feast is approaching, my very dear friend. I hope we shall spend it together, and that it will be so from now on.

³ What return shall we make to the Lord, my dear friend, for the priceless gift of our vocation, where the means of salvation will abound? The good Lord, who knows our weakness, has foreseen that we would have perished in the world, and he plucked us out of it. Now let us correspond with this gift and not be so reckless as to perish in the safe port to which his goodness will lead us. Our self will be present wherever we are, and with that self will be our most dangerous enemy. Let us therefore keep watch over ourselves, mistrust ourselves, renounce this self in us, and conceive for ourselves that holy hatred recommended by the divine Master. It is, in fact, a genuine attachment and concern for our soul. Come, my dear friend, let us rouse our faint courage. We are not lone combatants. God is our ally, and we are fighting under the aegis and the standard of the Cross and of the august Mary.

⁴ I was most pleased with the details you gave me about the young girl. When you see Mme Belloc, recommend the girl to her; tell her that the girl is in need of instruction.

⁵ My little Protestant, the brother of the little girl who is at Lompian, has found shelter with Father Laumont. The other, as you know, is with Father Larribeau; I am happy over the outcome. Pray that the good Lord might enlighten their parents and bring them back to the right path.

⁶ Totally yours in our heavenly Spouse.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁷ Greetings to our friends, and to your family.

⁸ Please give the enclosed 5-franc piece to M. Raymond Sevin's servant for the truffles he bought for us.

+ + +

On December 6 Chaminade wrote to Adèle that he had finished the Constitutions, and that he planned to be at Agen in January. The candidates to the religious life seem to have been taken by surprise: there was not enough time to prepare, the building was not ready, the formalities surrounding the lease were not complete. More importantly, the future religious had not seen the Constitutions. Could they commit themselves blindly?

+ + +

285. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 17, 1815

Come, divine Infant Jesus, come!

² Dear Agathe, our divine Savior is coming. Let us open wide our hearts to receive him and empty them of every earthly vestige, especially of our self-will, which is such an obstacle to the designs of our lovable Savior.

³ The angels promise peace to those of good will. Our will cannot be good, unless it is submerged in the will of God and complies with the will of others. This very morning, I was guilty of a serious failing due to my obstinacy. We must destroy that will, for it is diametrically opposed to the spirit of the holy state to which we aspire. Come, dear friend, let us immolate that will, this fetter to our senses, before the crib of our gentle Savior. As we contemplate this Child, let us make the strongest resolutions and ask him to bless them.

⁴ In a letter to Father Chaminade I shall tell him our joy at his coming, but that we fear for his well-being in this inclement weather; and although we strongly desire to see him, it might be better to postpone his journey for the sake of his health. But I can hardly give him a definite date, since he is so busy. He alone knows when he can be free. I cannot tell him that he will see fewer of the associates, for in spring or summer many are in the country. I think I shall simply say that M. Dampierre⁸⁶ is not in the area; that it is questionable whether the Sodality of young men can be a success in Agen; but that His Excellency wants him to preach a retreat at the seminary.

⁵ Mother does not want the percale; I am sorry that I forgot to mention this last Saturday.

⁶ Farewell, my very good friend; I embrace you with all my heart in our heavenly Spouse.
Adèle

⁷ I am sending you 40 francs for the cask of wine from Lami, and 12 francs for the four *Manuals* at 3 francs each. Give the money to Mme Belloc. You have exactly three francs for the poor person in Bordeaux, and the extra 20 centimes will be for mailing expenses.

⁸ I went to see poor Mme Pachan; her condition is most pitiful. Because she has no control over her bowel functions, she is constantly lying in filth. But she is of sound mind, displays perfect resignation, and is a glorious example to everyone. She wanted to be informed about the whole group. Pray to God for her. Please inform Mme Boucher of her condition; tell her to send me the wool when it has been spun. Sell the stockings for what you can get. Her sister tells me that she has no cotton stockings.

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Chaminade had not given up on his projected trip. His letter of December 16 closed with, "Continue to prepare yourself, and see to it that all your dear missionaries are well prepared; the time is approaching."

+ + +

286. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

December 28, 1815

I shall recall my years in the bitterness of my heart
as I see, O my God, how I have misused them.

² I suspect, dear friend, that my New Year's wishes will find you at Condom. Although I make these same wishes for you every day, I am happy to offer them again for the New Year.

³ This year, dear friend, really augurs well for us; it is the one during which several of our group will bid an eternal "*adieu*" to this perverse world, to consecrate ourselves entirely to our heavenly and divine Spouse.

⁴ How sweet it is, dear Lolotte, and how consoling, to serve him and to win hearts over to him. You have had this experience with your little school at Aurens. Please tell me about your little flock, for I am most interested. How I wish I could inspire such dedication in all our sisters.

⁵ I do not remember whether I told you that I have lodged one of the little Protestants with Father Laumont; imagine how happy that made me!

⁶ But we must not forget the new year. How I wish that it could be for each one of us a year of salvation, a year worthy to be inscribed in the Book of Life, a perfect year in the sight of God with its

⁸⁶ The Marquis de Dampierre had just been received into the Bordeaux Sodality and was planning to initiate a unit of the Sodality of Young Men at Agen.

every instant consecrated to him.

⁷ I suggest, above all to our dear friends, that we perform our ordinary actions well, with purity of intention, concentrating on doing them as perfectly as possible. Everything, even the most common actions like eating and drinking, can become meritorious, provided we perform them for God and according to his designs. What treasures are constantly slipping from our hands, and we remain poor in the midst of an abundance of riches that are there for the taking.

⁸ To all my friends, and to each in particular, I wish to convey my very best wishes. To our dear young Saint Péan girls, ever greater zeal and ardor in their service of our divine Master; to our dear Fany; more resignation and abandonment to the will of God; to our dear Victorine, to be more convinced of the nothingness of this passing world; to our dear Despréaux, to grow in humility; to our esteemed Compagno sisters, an increase in their love for the Cross; to our worthy religious,⁸⁷ an ever-growing desire to win the hearts of their pupils to God; finally, to our admirable Ladies of the Retreat, to make progress in virtue and to blaze the trail for us.

⁹ If you write to Delphine and Philippine, I wish you would remind them how often God protected them with his grace during their youth; he will ask them for an accounting. And to our dear Lamarque, a constant increase in love for her holy vocation.

¹⁰ And now, what shall I wish for my gentle Lolotte? A large and generous heart which soars about this earth and is always responsive to whatever God asks of her.

¹¹ Farewell, farewell, my very dear friend; I hope to see you, along with Father Chaminade. I shall surely come to Condom; perhaps Mme Belloc will, too.

Adèle

¹² I propose that we all make a novena, of the *Come, Holy Spirit* and the *We fly to thy patronage*, asking that the will of God be revealed to each one of us. It should begin on New Year's Day.

+ + +

287. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

December 28, 1815

I shall recall my years in the bitterness of my heart
as I see how I have misused them.

² Here we are at the year's end, my dear Agathe. This is how the end of our life will come one day, and perhaps very soon. Let us make of these fleeting years something worthwhile for the next life.

³ In the coming year, may all your desires be fulfilled, for I know they are all according to the will of God. May 1816 be a blessed year for us. The Lord is preparing great graces for us this year; his treasure house is open, and we must not force him to close it because of our infidelities.

⁴ I hope that this year we shall consecrate ourselves to his service in a more special way. To what a holy state God is calling us, in spite of our unworthiness! Instead of harboring feelings of pride, we should be ashamed of our sinful nature and exclaim with the Virgin, "The Lord has cast his eyes on the lowliness of his handmaid and he has done great things in me; may his name be praised forever!"

⁵ In spite of our fears, and although he was in great pain, poor Father Dousset managed to preside at the Christmas day services. Pray for him. I fear that he will soon be incapacitated. I hear that the pastor of Aiguillon suffered a stroke but is on the mend. Father Bareau is his daily replacement.

⁶ Dear friend, let us pray for this very abundant harvest which will soon find itself without harvesters. We must increase in fervor if we are to appease God's anger.

⁷ Please extend my New Year's wishes to your dear family and to our dear friends. As for you, be

⁸⁷ Perhaps a reference to Adèle's three aunts; more probably, to the Ursulines.

assured of my loving attachment in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁸ P.S. Julie sends her greetings and asks that you deliver this basket to her mother.

⁹ I propose that the Society begin a novena on New Year's Day, asking that all might know the will of God. We shall pray the *Come, Holy Spirit* and the *We fly to thy patronage*.

¹⁰ Please send me by return of the courier the two pounds of white cotton which I had requested; the cost should be about 8 francs. This is for seasonal gifts.

¹¹ I agree that Mme Belloc should prepare the Ladies for their reception into the Sodality, but they should be sensible people and know what they are about; this applies also to the young man she mentions. Our motto: "All for the glory of God."

+ + +

Chaminade had asked both Laumont and Adèle to give their opinion on each of the sodalists who aspired to the religious life. He also asked that each candidate give a brief written summary of her vocation. Adèle lost no time in alerting the interested persons. On January 3, she wrote to Agathe, and on January 5, to Mlle de Lachapelle. Each of the aspirants must have received a letter similar to the following.

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288. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 3, 1816

O my God, I consecrate this year to you
in reparation for the failings of the past ones.

² Let us continue to prepare ourselves, dear Agathe, for the holy state which we shall soon embrace. It seems that Father [Chaminade] intends to establish us sooner than we expected. If only this could be right after Easter! Ask Mme Belloc to hurry with the leasing of the house, and see to it especially that the house will be empty of occupants by Easter week. I think the arrangements should be complete before Father arrives, for he intends to bless the house.

³ He wants each one to give him in writing the reasons for opting for the religious state, etc. He wants to know whether all are properly motivated. I had asked Mme Belloc to write on your behalf, but I think it is better you do that yourself. Send me all the letters when they are ready.

⁴ Ask Mme Belloc to send me both the baptismal name and the family name of Aimée, for I do not know them. Should you have any details about the young lady from Golfech, please let me have them. Encourage Henriette de Sainte-Croix to write to Father.

⁵ Farewell. I am in a hurry. I embrace you in spirit in the stable of Bethlehem. Let us join the holy Magi who are going there to adore the Savior. Let us imitate their courage and their unselfish faith.

Adèle

⁶ Désirée asks you kindly to buy her a small white shawl, of brocaded silk and cotton, about three feet long. It is for a second cousin of hers.

⁷ I have received the cotton. After you buy the shawl, I will repay whatever I owe you.

⁸ I am sending Mme Belloc money for two *Manuals*; that leaves 50 centimes for the poor woman of Bordeaux. Those were the last two that she sent me from Saint-Avit.

+ + +

289. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

January 5, 1816

O my God, I consecrate this year to you
in reparation for the failings of the past years.

² Dear friend, I have just received the following request from Father Chaminade. He wants each aspirant to the religious life to write him a short, personal letter giving her decision with respect to her vocation and also the reasons that motivated that decision. Those who want Father to be aware of special circumstances concerning themselves, their sisters, or their family, or of certain difficulties to be resolved, may do so in this letter. These are his words. So, dear friend, compose your letter and send it to me immediately, so that I might send them all to this good Father.

³ I have a great deal of writing to do. I am enclosing a copy of a circular which Father Laumont wants each one to read. Please return it to me after you have read it.

⁴ Let us return to the crib, dear Lolotte, to adore the Infant Jesus with the Magi. If we imitate their faith and their courage, nothing should keep us from seeking and following our divine Master.

⁵ Farewell; I am entirely devoted to you and to our friends in Jesus Christ.

Adèle

+ + +

*The letters sent to the sodalists who had chosen the religious state created a certain amount of anxiety. Were things moving too quickly? The Constitutions had not yet been seen; the obligations they were to assume had not been clearly defined. This uneasiness and other more personal difficulties seem to have found an echo in Agathe. When Adèle sent Chaminade the letters he had asked for, she did not dissimulate the situation. She suggested he come in person, or send them the Constitutions.*⁸⁸

+ + +

290. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 11, 1816

You are the King of my heart, and you will
be eternally my treasure and my inheritance.

² Dear friend, the good Lord wants to test each one of us; and the devil, I think, would like to try to make us lose heart. I am enclosing a letter from our dear Clémentine Yannasch; you will see that they also are experiencing difficulties.

³ After all, dear friend, let us put everything into the hands of God. If it is God's work, he will see to it that it succeeds in spite of all our troubles. Should it not be his will or for his glory, God will not allow it to succeed in spite of our efforts. Let us therefore abandon everything to the most lovable will of God and remain at peace. But the main thing is to prepare our hearts and to train them in the virtues of the holy state to which we aspire. First among these is holy renunciation, which already obliges us to practice so many virtues and which is the foundation of both Christian and religious perfection. But how

⁸⁸ See Chaminade's letter, no. 61, January 11, 1816.

difficult this is for our nature! We must do violence to ourselves, and that is what we cannot stand. However, an oracle of Truth itself says, "Whoever does not renounce self cannot be my disciple." Now, he does not say this only to religious, but to all. To religious he says, "If you would be perfect, sell your goods and give them to the poor." Then he adds, "If you would be my disciple, renounce yourself." That is for all Christians. So, my dear friend, let us spur our courage and die to ourselves to live the life of God, in God, and for God.

⁴ Farewell, my dear Agathe, I am, for life, your true friend and sister in Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁵ I have asked Mme Belloc for one *Manual*, now I want her to get me another. Both will be covered by the 5 francs which I sent for the others; there will even be 20 centimes left over.

⁶ I received the selva and the shawl; Wednesday you will get the money.

⁷ I have just written to Father Chaminade, asking him either to come or to send the Constitutions. But please ask Mme Belloc to write to him on Sunday, at Rue Leland. She can send the letter from Agen.

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291. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 18, 1816

By means of our sorrow,
let us make reparation for so many
crimes and so much bloodshed.

² Let us pray, lament, and mortify ourselves, dear friend, in order to draw God's mercy on our unhappy country, stained with the innocent blood of its king, the anointed of the Lord, and of so many victims who cry out for vengeance and who have been granted such a terrible one. But, what am I saying? This blood cries out for mercy, and I believe we owe the relative calm and the dawning happiness which is ours to the intercession of these holy souls and martyrs.

³ Every citizen of France must lament on this day⁸⁹ of general mourning, proclaimed to reconcile France with heaven. I suggest, for all those who are able, an expiatory fast.

⁴ I cannot continue longer, my dear friend. I was a little late in rising, and so am behind in the schedule of my chores.

⁵ May the sweet Jesus live long in our hearts along with Mary, our good Mother.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁶ Have you written to Father Larribeau?

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292. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 25, 1816

It is from this moment on, O my God,
that I consecrate myself entirely to you.

⁸⁹ Anniversary of the execution of King Louis XVI, January 23, 1793.

² My dear Agathe, you are aware of the trifling trials we are undergoing. We can hope to come out victorious, provided we are doing the work of God.

³ I hope this will not have prevented Mme Belloc from sending the letters on to Bordeaux, for I want this good Father to receive some as soon as possible; otherwise, he may think that we lack confidence in him.

⁴ I shall write to Clémentine again, to tell her that whatever difficulties they may have had must not prevent them from writing. On the contrary, they should talk about them.

⁵ I hope Mme Belloc has posted the letter for Father Larribeau. Even though His Excellency might not have given permission, he must have it, if he is to give any answer.

⁶ Next Monday, we shall celebrate our St. Francis de Sales. Let us beg of this great saint, who faced so many hardships for his order, to intercede for us and to obtain for us all the necessary graces, but above all, his own virtues: that gentleness, that good nature which stamped his character and his whole conduct. His heart had made a pact with his tongue: the latter would remain silent as long as the former was agitated. How many faults and sins would we avoid were we faithful to that practice! I suggest, dear friend, that we recall as often as possible, but at least three times in the course of the day, this word of Jesus Christ: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." I would wish we could recall it whenever the clock strikes, at which moment we could ask for these two virtues, convinced that we truly need them. But I am so absent-minded that I can promise to recall them at most three times a day.

⁷ Farewell, dear friend; I love you with all my heart in our Lord.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁸ I can tell you that I have found a home for my little Pesaquete girl with Julie's mother. When you or Mme Belloc meet her, teach her some moral principles. I recommended her to Father Ducourneau; I wish he would hear her Confession.

⁹ I have the power of attorney,⁹⁰ but we sent it to Nérac to have it notarized. You should receive it by the next messenger.

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293. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

January 30, 1816

O my God, make me conscious of the shortness
of my life and of the uncertainty of my death.

² My dear Agathe, may the Feast of the Purification of our august Mother give a needed stimulus to our ardor. Let us accompany her to the temple, there to sacrifice the firstborn of our heart, meaning that self-love which is the driving force of almost all our actions or which infects them with its deadly virus.

³ Let us present ourselves with our divine Savior, uniting our total offering to his. He could not refuse us. And once offered, my dear friend, we must not retract. Let us give ourselves, without reserve and without recall, to him whose property we are on so many counts and from whom we have so often kept aloof. We can repair this larceny by an unconditional offering.

⁴ Dear Agathe, I must deplore numerous daily faults; yet I believe they are becoming more numerous every day! Is this how I am preparing myself for the holy state I have chosen, and for the great

⁹⁰ The power of attorney was granted on January 24, 1816, to M. Diché so that he could sign the lease on the Refuge in Agen.

graces which the good Lord wants to confer on me? Pray to the Lord, dear friend, that I might cease these infidelities, this lack of gratitude toward so much goodness.

⁵ Do you see Elisa de Saint-Beauzeil sometimes? We must not neglect our dear sisters; let us be all to all, so as to win them all.

⁶ Please pray to the Lord, dear friend, for one of my older pupils who has not yet made her first Communion, who deserted me some months ago, and who, I now hear, is going to contract a civil marriage. You can imagine how much I fear she will forget all about her first Communion. I want to invite her over, or I shall go and speak with her.

⁷ Farewell, my good and dear friend; truly yours in our heavenly Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

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In a letter dated January 23, 1816, Chaminade informed Adèle of his tentative plan to visit her shortly. He wanted to visit various parishes in the Diocese of Agen where he might organize the Sodality, or set it up on a proper basis under the direction of the pastor. But Agen would be the most important stop on his missionary circuit. In a postscript, he gave his point of view on the foundation of the convent.

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294. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

February 2, 1816

O holy Virgin, present all your children
along with your Firstborn.

² Yes, my very dear friend, I have the comforting assurance that the gentle Jesus will have accepted the offering we have made of ourselves by the hands of our august Mother, provided that, on our part, the offering was entire and sincere. Provided, that is, we have sacrificed our heart (that firstborn that he wants and that belongs to him on so many counts), our self-will, our pride, our temperament. He demands the complete sacrifice of all this.

³ Dear friend, it seems to us in theory that we are ready to sacrifice to God our life, our fortune, our health, etc., whereas often we cannot sacrifice to him a word, a humiliation, a contradiction! Oh, how often do we delude ourselves! Dear friend, there is but one road to heaven; the saints have chosen it and have arrived. A spurt of courage is all we need; do we want to lose eternity for the short time we have to spend on earth?

⁴ Dear friend, I am enclosing a letter from one of our friends in Tonneins, married for about three years, and who was received at the same time as Father Castex. She had belonged to the Society before but had not been officially received. You will find that our affairs are doing well in Tonneins.

⁵ I have just received another letter from Father in Bordeaux announcing that he will arrive shortly. He asks me to trace the route he should travel, for he wants to stop everywhere he can be useful. I shall ask him to write to Father Destrac to get his permission to come to Condom to visit and organize the Sodality. Father [Chaminade] already has the bishop's authorization to function throughout the diocese. But see whether the elder Mlle Compagno can lodge him; I think he will stay a week at most. She had promised me this service, but if she has changed her mind, ask Father Castex if he could receive him. We must make sure of this to avoid any serious complication. At Agen, he will stay at the seminary.

⁶ He has written to Father Larribeau, asking that the exercises of the Sodality be made publicly in

his church.⁹¹ He points out to him how the meetings are to be held. Here it is in summary form.

—The meeting opens with the prayers indicated in the new *Manual of Mary*; a hymn is sung according to the season and the circumstance; a patron saint is chosen for the week; the saint's life is read, or someone relates it.

—The announcement is made of the indulgences that may be gained during the week, or of the Feasts of the Blessed Virgin.

—There is a homily on the Gospel of the preceding Sunday.

—Communication is made of any directives or notices. If any member has to be taken to task, this is done in private, never in public.

⁷ This is the essence of what is done at the meeting.

⁸ At this time, Father Chaminade asks us to recite daily the *Come, Creator Spirit* and the *Hail Bright Star*, that God might enlighten him in his work with us. He really needs this light, so let us say these prayers in all earnestness!

⁹ Tell me something about Mme Lamy. I am sending you a letter for dear Fany.

¹⁰ Ask dear Victoire to beg her uncle to be good enough to translate the acts of the theological virtues into Portuguese. A person of that nationality is working for us, and I would like to teach him these acts. The uncle will be doing a good deed, for the young man is a very decent fellow.

¹¹ Farewell, dear friend. Yours truly in Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹² A thousand greetings to our friends, and my respects to your mother.

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295. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 8, 1816

Everything to please you, O my God!

² My dear friend, we are entering a season of penance. What a contrast between our religion and the world! The Church decks itself out in mourning, puts a halt to joyful canticles, while the world gives vent to its foolish gaiety. Oh, how true it is that it is impossible to serve the Lord and the world. And yet, dear friend, that is what we have tried to do at times. We should weep and bitterly lament our sins.

³ Alas! A single mortal sin should suffice to make us shed tears for the rest of our lives. How distressing it is to think that there was a time when we were the object of God's wrath. Had we died then, we would have been cast into the depths of hell. But the merciful hand of the Lord has preserved us. We certainly have cause for gratitude! What an incentive never to refuse anything to a God who is so benevolent, and to spend our entire lives doing penance.

⁴ I must tell you, dear friend, of the great calamity that has struck our dear friends, the Compagnos: their sister-in-law has just died, leaving five young children who must now be under the care especially of the elder Mlle Compagno. I believe the will of God plainly entrusts these unfortunate children to her care, but what a loss for us!

⁵ Tell Mme Belloc to write to these dear friends to show that she shares in their affliction. God tries those whom he loves, but this year these dear friends have had their full share of the bitter chalice. They accept all this with perfect resignation.

⁹¹ Chaminade's request was reviewed by Bishop Jacoupy, who added his approval in a postscript. This may be the letter referred to in Adèle's letter, no. 292.

⁶ Farewell, my dear sister, my gentle friend; my heart greets you in that of our heavenly Spouse and of his saintly Mother.

Adèle, Sister Marie de la Conception

⁷ A thousand friendly greetings to our dear friends, and respects to your dear family. When you have time, buy me a *Following of Christ*; there is no hurry.

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296. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 15, 1816

O my sovereign Good,
I love you more than all goods!

² I am reading a very interesting book, my dear friend, which we bought at Noubel's. Its title is *Les trois heroïnes chrétiennes*. It is the biography of three young girls who led most edifying lives and who died in the prime of their youth. I wish dear Adèle Canuet would buy the book, so that all our dear friends might read it. You would be surprised how it inspires one to the loftiest sentiments. It costs 2 francs 25. I know that the reading of this book would be most beneficial to many young girls. How touching it is to find contemporary examples of such virtue in those who were little more than children.

³ Also, I have just finished reading the beautiful life of Stanislaus Kostka, who died at eighteen years of age. My dear friend, what feats have the saints done to get to heaven! And we expect to get there by doing so little! This illusion will make us tremble at the hour of death, but then it will be too late. So let us imitate them today. With the help of God's grace, we can finally begin to work at the task of our transformation. Our good God gives us so many graces, helps, and means. If we are damned, we shall have only ourselves to blame, for the Lord has neglected nothing.

⁴ Dear friend, I am sending you 30 francs from Désirée for Mme de Montesquieu. Please buy her some firewood, unless you know that she is well stocked for this winter and that she needs something else more urgently. We prefer not to give her the money directly for, when a person is in great need, the money slips away very rapidly, and the same gesture cannot be repeated very often.

⁵ Farewell, my very dear Agathe, I love you with all my heart in that of our gentle Jesus.

Sister Marie de la Conception

⁶ P.S. Do you think you could sell my silk shawl?

⁷ Mlle Compagno asks me to have the Society make a novena, using psalm 130 [*Out of the depths*], and to offer a Communion for her sister-in-law.

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Contrary to what he had planned, Chaminade was obliged to put off his trip until after Easter. This time Adèle did not seem to be annoyed by the delay, as the repairs at the convent and other preparations were requiring more time than anticipated.

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297. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

February 16, 1816

O my sovereign Good,

I love you above all goods!

² My very dear friend, because a certain number of minor difficulties have cropped up, our Father is obliged to delay his trip till after Easter. He will send the rules immediately, so that they can be submitted to our Superior and Visitor; then, on his first visit, he can install us in our dear retreat. There are reasons why he wants to expedite matters. Besides, the first stage will be a trial one; if it proves to be successful we shall make the lifestyle permanent or change some aspects of it. The bishop is our enthusiastic supporter and is eagerly looking forward to the foundation of the convent. He has taken it upon himself to obtain the approbation from Rome and from the king, but he believes this will be easier to obtain after our installation. My dear friend, please share this information with no one save Father Castex and the elder Mlle Compagno. Indiscretion is often detrimental to the best of works. Simply tell the others that Father's trip is postponed till after Easter; tell my aunts the same thing.

³ It annoys me that I cannot show you all the letters from that holy man. I simply have not the time. Let me only copy some lines from a letter he wrote to Mme Belloc.

⁴ "You are going to leave the world, die to the world, while remaining nevertheless on earth to work at your own sanctification, for the glory of our good Master and that of our tender Mother, and that too during the Easter season. You have Lent as a period of preparation for it. Do you not find in it a great resemblance with the mysteries which took place at this time? It was then that Jesus Christ died, and then that he arose from the dead. After the resurrection, he spent forty days perfecting the great work of his divine mission."

⁵ "Buoy up and encourage all your children with the hope of soon seeing their wishes fulfilled. Communicate with them frequently, either orally or by writing. On a given occasion, you will fire them with the desire to consecrate virginal hearts and bodies to the divine Spouse; on another, you will depict to them the excellence of the state they are embracing; they will be associated to the work of the Redemption, participating in the apostolic spirit and burning with the zeal of the missionaries. On still another occasion, you may speak to them of the advantages of life in a religious community, of the happiness of living in seclusion. At all times, get them to esteem the incomparable grace of leaving Babylon and of renouncing the vanities of the world."⁹²

⁶ What you tell me of the zeal of Father Castex pleases me very much indeed. I believe he will do a great deal of good at the *collège*. Alas! Our youth is now our only source of hope, for the present generation is almost lost. We certainly must try to win the new generation for God. There is a visible blessing attached to the Sodality, but that is not surprising, for the Mother of God is so powerful. And how she must intercede for her dear children!

⁷ Father Laumont is working marvels at Aiguillon. Did you know that there is there a little convent of the Dames de la Croix, who are dedicated to the teaching of youth? They are not numerous as yet, so our dear associates of Aiguillon, who are almost all members of the [Ladies of the] Retreat, intend to launch an enterprise worthy of the Sodality. Every day, two of them will gather about one hundred little girls in a room of the convent and will instruct them, teach them catechism, etc. I believe there are about a dozen sodalists at Aiguillon, so that their turn comes once a week or so. I find this well-planned and most edifying.

⁸ One of our aspirants to the Sodality who was at Lompian on our last and precious voyage there is now at the Manufacture [the hospital at Condom]. She is a postulant of the Sisters of Charity and comes from Casteljaloux. Will you please go and greet her for me, and tell her that the holy state she is embracing should not prevent her from entering the Society. Tell her that the only obligation will be the short prayer of St. Bernard to the Blessed Virgin, that she can share in our prayers, works, etc., and that she will belong in a special manner to the Blessed Mother. Mention this also to Father Castex; she was

⁹² See Chaminade's letter, no. 63, February 1916.

also at Lompian with him.

⁹ A thousand greetings to our dear children. I love you as much as I love myself in God and for God.

Adèle

+ + +

298. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 22, 1816

O World! I renounce you
so as to love only Jesus!

² I am sending you, dear friend, the membership card of the *Month of the Angels*⁹³ of Mme Pachan, who had joined our little group; find a replacement for her so as to keep the number nine complete.

³ Here we are again, my dear friend, at those festive days when the good Lord is greatly offended. We, at least, should try carefully to avoid every sin, and by our fidelity to compensate for so many outrages which he receives and of which we have often been guilty.

⁴ We should weep for our sins, weep for those of our brothers and sisters, weep for so many souls who so gaily plunge into hell; but we should also thank the Author of all good for having shown us the vanity of this world. Just as they who knew the will of their Master but despised it will be punished more severely, we, too, can expect a severe judgment if we continue to waste so many means of salvation which his goodness offers.

⁵ In a short time now we are going to come together, to be almost constantly present to each other, and to be consecrated to Jesus Christ by the most wonderful of bonds. But will this be a merely exterior consecration? Will the habit be religious, but the heart still earthly, completely self-centered?

⁶ Dear friend, let us work at this holy renunciation which is the basis of the religious life, at the abnegation of self which ought to make of the religious soul a continuous holocaust. I personally am far from that goal; on the contrary, my infidelities multiply without ceasing.

⁷ Do you realize, dear friend, that the alb we made for Feugarolles is too short? I would like you to buy some batiste, or something else you would consider appropriate, to lengthen it by a good five inches. Do the best you can. You know that the bottom of the alb is of open-meshed fabric. I want everything to be satisfactory.

⁸ Farewell, dear Agathe; I embrace you in our heavenly Spouse.
Sister Marie de la Conception

⁹ Do you sometimes see Elisa de Saint-Beauzeil? Give her my regards.

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299. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

February 29, 1816

Remember, O creature, that you are dust
and unto dust you shall return.

⁹³ This devotion seems to have been taught and spread by a Jesuit, Verbose, who in 1815 published at Bordeaux *Le Mois Angélique*. The Association grouped nine persons in honor of the nine choirs of angels.

² Here we are, my dear Agathe, in the holy season of Lent; a penitential time, days of salvation. We can make this a holy season by combining a spiritual fast to the bodily one, by mortifying especially our self-will, our temperament, our pride. I challenge you piously not to disagree with anyone without necessity during this Lent; and, if you must, to do so with gentleness. How happy we shall be if we are faithful. This could earn us many blessings, for our God is so good that he rewards a hundredfold our least act of self-denial. Oh, how good is our gentle Master! How rewarding it is to serve him alone, for he is a jealous God; divided loyalties offend him. He wants all our heart. Would we hesitate to consecrate it to him entirely?

³ Let us imagine, dear friend, that we are postulants. Let us work seriously at acquiring the religious virtues, and above all that surrender of our self-will which is the core of the work. We must not count on our own strength to acquire and practice all this but on the powerful help of our divine Master, who will grant us everything we need if we ask him with all our heart.

⁴ I am sending our dear Mme Belloc a letter from Father Larribeau for the bishop, and another for herself. I think she will soon leave for Villeneuve. I hope her stay will be fruitful. Let her invoke the good Guardian Angels; that is an excellent practice.

⁵ Farewell, my dear sister; I embrace you in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

300. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

Note the first sentences of the following letter. They indicate how and why, a few weeks later when the first Daughters of Mary were already gathered at the Refuge, Chaminade and Bishop Jacoupy could not agree on the profession of vows. Both based themselves on pre-Revolution Church legislation. Chaminade envisaged an order with solemn vows and therefore also enclosure; the bishop had in mind a more secular congregation whose members could be dispersed into the needy rural areas of his diocese. At first Adèle shared the bishop's view, but she had not yet reflected on the problem and had not discussed it with Chaminade.

+ J.M.J.T.

February 29, 1816

O my God, pardon all my offenses!

² I believe, dear friend, that we can follow the advice of our bishop: to make the foundation first, and then he himself will solicit the approbation from the Holy Father. This we must have if we intend to make perpetual vows. But you can imagine that the Holy Father has too many important things to do to concern himself with our little problem. I think that the bishops in their dioceses have the power to set up little charitable or educational institutions such as ours. I am just telling you this to calm any scruples some might have.

³ If it is our Father's purpose to come and establish us after Easter, I shall have to bid my farewells to Condom during this Lent. Mme Belloc, who would not yet be cloistered, could accompany him to Condom. In any case, may everything contribute to the greater glory of God. We must seek to do God's holy will and be at peace whatever happens. Either God wants our plan to be realized, or it will not succeed. That should be all the same to us, as St. Francis de Sales says. Nature may rebel at this abnegation of the will, but that is the essence of the religious life. The habit does not make the monk. There would be no purpose in appearing exteriorly as the Spouses of Jesus Christ if we did not conform our lives to that principle.

⁴ It is time to prepare our hearts, dear Lolotte, for the great graces which God wishes to lavish

upon us. Let us spend the holy time of Lent in the desert with our divine Savior and be most careful to avoid every sin, to mortify our own wills, to be more humble, gentle, and obedient. This is what is meant by the spiritual fast, without which the bodily one would be of little purpose. Self-will nullifies all the merit of fasting, so let us strive to tame it, to beat it to the ground, to trample it underfoot. Long live Jesus and Mary!

⁵ Thank you for copying for me the *Rule of the Dames de Quimperlé*. There are many similarities with our Institute. May the Lord be glorified in all our works, and may the glory of his Name spread and his lovable dominion reign over all hearts.

⁶ Please give the enclosed letter to Dugrenon. If she has left, please return it to me.

⁷ I shall stop here, for I must write to Bordeaux. Pray to the good Lord for two of our sisters who are very ill.

⁸ Our friends in Figeac have made two conquests: two very pious religious from Nevers, Sister Angélique Foch and Sister Scholastique Pracot. I hope that Mlle Calas will make up her mind, and that her mother will allow her to become an associate. Give her and all our sisters my fondest greetings.

⁹ Farewell, my very dear friend; yours truly in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Adèle

¹⁰ If Dugrenon is given an answer and she passes through here on her return from Bordeaux, she could give it to me here. That would be most satisfactory. Try to persuade her to do that.

+ + +

301. To Agathe Diché, Agen

+ J.M.J.T.

March 7, 1816

Save us, O Lord,
for without you we perish!

² I am sending you, dear friend, a short Rule which Lolotte obtained from the [female] cousin of Mme Laval, who is a member of a community in Brittany. It seems to have many features in common with ours.

³ Let us humble ourselves, dear Agathe, at the sight of our unworthiness for a state that is almost apostolic, and to which the good Lord calls us. Let us do what we can to correct those faults that would present an obstacle to our apostolate, such as impatience, pride, stubbornness, lack of kindness, etc. Let us reform ourselves at whatever cost, so as to display a gentle piety. Let us make the yoke of the Lord loved by showing how lovable and light it is. Let us be all things to all persons so as to win them all; the more repugnance we feel, the greater will be the merit for our self-control. Long live Jesus and Mary!

⁴ We should be encouraged by the example of St. Francis de Sales, a naturally brusque man who became serenity itself. We can imitate him by making a pact between our heart and our tongue, never to speak when the heart is unsettled. If we had the courage to do this, we would avoid many failings, would acquire many merits, and would draw down many graces from heaven.

⁵ I hope dear Mme Belloc will return soon after having done a great deal of good; that is our main objective. What did dear Lucille have?

⁶ My sister-in-law is four or five months pregnant. May the Lord increase the number of his true servants. She is making a general Confession, and goes once or twice a week. I tell you this because I know that it will make you happy.

⁷ Elisa took two weeks to make her handbag, for it required a lot of work. You may price it at 3 francs unless you think it is worth more; make some inquiries.

⁸ My cousin asks that you send the enclosed note to M. Tournon. He would like to have his suit by the return of the courier.

⁹ Greetings to all our friends, especially to dear Octavie. Oh, how pleased is the good Lord with the sacrifices offered him by a young heart! He appreciates them and knows how to reward them. I am worried about dear Alexandrine. My heart feels for her.

¹⁰ I am sending Dubrana's money.

¹¹ Truly yours in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Sister Marie de la Conception

+ + +

302. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

April 25, 1816

O my God, give us that peace
which the world cannot give!

² How short-lived, my dear friend, and how evanescent are the joys and consolations of this world! We were so happy together, and yet it has all passed like a dream. How foolish it is to be concerned with our own satisfactions in this world, and never think of meriting an eternal and permanent satisfaction in the next.

³ My dear friend, it is high time we begin to think and act in a more rational and Christian manner. We know that the road to heaven is one of renunciation, that the goal is obtained only by violence; and yet we shirk the least predicament; the flimsiest trial finds us weak and downhearted. Let us raise our eyes to heaven and despise this earth. Let us pay no attention to what passes so quickly; our soul is made for greater things. Nothing mortal for an immortal heart.

⁴ Our expectation, dear friend, is to become the spouses of Jesus Christ; but do we ignore the fact that our Spouse wants a relationship signed in blood? That the cross is the nuptial bed where he wishes to be united to his spouses? That the crown of thorns is the diadem he wishes to share with them? That the reed, the cloak of derision, the spittle that defiles him—that these are the jewels with which he intends to bedeck them? There is only one way to heaven, dear friend; the saints have taken it and they have arrived. Let us see whether we are following the same path, for two opposite roads cannot lead to the same end.

⁵ Tell me something about our dear companions, about the new postulants, Mlle Cointot and our dear Laure. I suppose she came to the meetings. Tell them how dear they are to me.

⁶ Mme Belloc is up to her chin in temporal matters. I still don't know when Mlle de Lamourous will arrive.⁹⁴ I am sending you the letter she wrote to me, and the short note our Father wrote for Mme Belloc. You will see that we still are not sure of the date of arrival of either our Father or our Mother.

⁷ Dear Amélie has just lost her mother; in only a few short days, she died of dropsy of the lungs. Imagine her sorrow . . . and her father so ill! Write to her, I beg you. The Lord tests his own and purifies them with afflictions, as gold in the crucible. But let us not be depressed by the misfortunes of this life.

⁸ Are you going soon to see your little pupils out in the country?⁹⁵ Bad weather and the seasonal work have reduced attendance at my school for the moment.

⁹ Farewell, my good friend; I embrace you and love you in our heavenly Spouse.

Adèle

⁹⁴ Chaminade, with Adèle's agreement, had asked Mlle de Lamourous, the founder of the Miséricorde in Bordeaux, to come to Agen to initiate the aspirants into religious community life. See Chaminade's letter, no. 64, February 19, 1816.

⁹⁵ Lolotte had set up a small school at Aurens, a hamlet about five miles from Condom. See also Adèle's letter, no. 304.

¹⁰ P.S. Please give the enclosed letter to the person concerned.
¹¹ Has Manette left for Paris?
¹² My respects to your mother, and to Father Castex. Respectful and friendly greetings to our sisters.

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303. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

May 10, 1816

O my God, fill my heart with a holy joy!

² Dear friend, this will probably be the last letter I shall write to you from here. Our good Mother will arrive at the beginning of next week, and I hope to leave Thursday or Friday. On Monday I shall have our friends from Puch come here, so that we can leave together. Father Chaminade will arrive shortly after our good Mother so that the retreat will take place, I believe, from Ascension day to Pentecost Sunday, at the latest.

³ Dear Lolotte, I repeat my invitation to give in to my wishes and to come and make this retreat with us. Mme Belloc wants me to invite Mlle Compagno also. Be kind enough to give her the invitation from both of us. How happy we would be to have her with us. Besides, it is during a retreat that God speaks to the heart. I hope we shall receive the Holy Spirit together. Please use all your powers of persuasion so that she will not deny us that pleasure. She will lodge with the community.

⁴ Father Chaminade advises us that he will go to Condom only if he can found a Sodality of men there, so it is still not certain that he will go. If there were a nucleus of three or four willing young men, Father would go. I shall do what I can, and I hope to convince him. In any case he will write to the pastor. If he does not come, then Father Castex could go to see him at Agen. Father Laumont could be delegated by Father Chaminade to set up the Sodality in Condom. Let us pray, and all will go well.

⁵ I believe that my aunts will have given you the table of contents of our Rule which I sent them and will have told you of our joy at Father Laumont's visit on the first Friday. My sister has a new little chambermaid, whose name is also Belloc; she is a little angel.

⁶ Our dear Julie's marriage did not come off, and I think the good girl will now want to give herself entirely to God. The Lord allows no one to make a mistake when he alone is sought.

⁷ Please return to Father Castex the enclosed Rule for the Sodalities of Men which Father Chaminade sent to M. Dampierre. The latter is very busy founding his Sodality at Agen.

⁸ Courage, dear friend, and submission to the will of God. In your infirmities the Lord is making you follow the path of the greatest saints. St. Teresa was sick for twenty years of her life. We must want to serve God as he wishes, and not as we might want to. We must not want to work at the conquest of souls when he wants us on a bed of suffering. Follow the example of Mlle Lacombe: offer your prayers for the Sodality, and for the conversion of the youth blinded by this world. We can also offer our sufferings for this intention.

⁹ Farewell, my dear friend; my heart is in the midst of your dear flock, whom I greet with affection.

Adèle

¹⁰ My respects to your mother. I hope she will not forbid you to come to the retreat at Agen; fortunately it is not yet harvest time.

¹¹ I am returning five little books. I sold only four and I have paid you for only two. I owe you for two more, that is, one franc 20.

¹² The enclosed letter from Mme Belloc is sure to please you. It is not her latest.

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Mlle de Lamourous' trip, like Chaminade's, had been delayed. But, finally, all was ready for the foundation.

+ + +

304. To Lolotte de Lachapelle, Condom

+ J.M.J.T.

May 22, 1816

Draw me to you, Lord!

² By the time you receive this letter, my dear friend, I shall be in our dear convent. We are all leaving on Saturday, very early so that we can be there for the arrival of our good Mother in the evening. She cannot stop here, as she had intended, because Father Chaminade will brook no delay.

³ I hope to persuade this good Father to make the trip to Condom. As soon as I know, I shall inform you of the day of his arrival in Agen and the length of his stay. The delay was to your advantage, since you could not come before Pentecost. The good Lord does everything well. May he be blessed forever.

⁴ My dear friend, let us ascend to heaven in heart and in mind. Abandoning this earth, let us pin our hopes and all our desires on the blessed eternity, where our divine Redeemer has prepared a place for us. Let us not lose it; for if we do, it would only be by our own fault.

⁵ Let us spend the next ten days between Ascension and Pentecost in union with the Apostles. What joy if we could avoid every sin. Let us be on our guard and more watchful than ever, so as to avoid it. On the holy day of Pentecost, may we find ourselves completely changed and transformed into new creatures, become strong, courageous, and fervent, burning with love and ready to set others on fire.

⁶ Pray for several of my pupils who will make their first Communion on the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament. May the Lord prepare their hearts and grant them holy perseverance, which is so rare in this unhappy world.

⁷ What of your children at Aurens? I suppose that on your return from Agen you will visit them, unless you go to the spa. The Lord gives such satisfaction for whatever we do for him. Oh, how sweet it is, to serve such a Master!

⁸ Today I am expecting our dear Clémentine⁹⁶ and Mlle Lion. They will join me here, and together we shall leave for the convent. Pray to the good Lord that he will be glorified in all we undertake, and that we might take as our motto that of the glorious St. Ignatius: "For the greater glory of God."

⁹ Farewell, my dear Lolotte; my next letter will undoubtedly be dated from the convent of the Immaculate Conception of Mary.

¹⁰ I embrace you in our heavenly Spouse; united in spirit in the Cenacle.
Adèle

¹¹ My respects to your dear mother. Greetings to all our sisters. My respects to the Father. Tell dear Mlle Compagno that I shall write to her from Agen.

⁹⁶ Clémentine Yannasch (Sister Thérèse de Jésus) and Jeanne Lion (Sister Saint-Esprit), two members of the original community.

