

Letter of Father Demaris - THEY HAVE TAKEN AWAY MY LORD

The time is coming when most Catholics may not have good, true priests to say the Mass and to administer the sacraments. This has happened before and the following is a letter to the faithful explaining their plight and how to overcome it. Father Demaris, Professor of Theology, Missionary of St. Joseph, wrote the following at Lyon in 1801. Translated from French by A. Drover.

Dear Children,

In the midst of human vicissitudes and the havoc of shock to the feeling, you voice your fears to your Father and ask for a rule of conduct. I'm going to show you and try to instill into your souls the consolation you need.

Jesus Christ, the model for Christians, teaches us by His conduct, what we must do in the painful situation in which we find ourselves. St. Luke tells us (Chap. 13:31-33) that some Pharisees, coming to our Lord, said: "Depart, and get Thee hence, for Herod hath a mind to kill Thee." Jesus answered, "Go tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and do cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am consummated. Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow, and the day following, because it cannot be that a prophet perish, out of Jerusalem."

You are frightened, my children, at what you see: all that you hear is frightening, but be consoled that it is the Will of God being accomplished. Your days are numbered; His Providence watches over us.

Cherish those men who appear to you as savages. They are the means which Heaven uses in its plans, and like a tempestuous sea, they will not pass the prescribed line against the countering and menacing waves. The stormy turbulence of revolution that strikes right and left, and the sounds that alarm you are the threats of Herod! Let it not deter you from good works, nor change your trust, nor wither the shower of virtues that tie you to Jesus Christ. He is your model. The threats of Herod do not change the course of His Destiny.

I know you can be deprived of your freedom; that one can even seek to kill you. I would say to them what St. Peter said to the first faithful: "For this is thank worthy, if for conscience towards God, a man endure sorrows, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if committing sin, and being buffeted for it, you endure? But if doing well you suffer patiently; this is thank worthy before God. For unto this are you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. Who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly." (1 Peter 2: 19-23)

The disciples of Jesus Christ in their fidelity to God are faithful to their country and full of submission and respect for all lawful authority--firm in their principles with a conscience without reproach--adoring the Will of God, they must not coward-like flee persecution. When one loves the Cross, one is fearless to kiss it and even enjoy death. It is necessary for our intimate union with Jesus Christ. It could happen any instant but it is not always so meritorious or glorious. If God does not call you to it, you shall be like those illustrious confessors of whom St. Cyprian said, "That without dying by the executioner, they have gained the merits of martyrdom, because they were prepared for it."

The conduct of St. Paul mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, tells us how one must model oneself on Jesus Christ. On his way to Jerusalem, St. Paul learnt at Caesarea that he would be persecuted there. "Which when we had heard, both we and they that were of that place, desired him that he would not go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, and said: What do you mean weeping and afflicting my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21: 13-14)

There, my children, such must be your dispositions. The shield of faith must arm you, hope must sustain you and charity guide you in everything. If, in all and always we must be simple as the doves and prudent as the serpents. It must be above all that we are afflicted for Jesus Christ. I will recall for you here a maxim of St. Cyprian, which in these times must be the rule of your faith and piety: "Don't seek too much," said this illustrious martyr, "the chance of a fight, and don't dodge it either. Let us await God's command, and let us hope for His Mercy alone. If God asks of us a humble confession rather than a fierce protestation, then humility is our greatest strength."

This saying invites us to meditate on the strength, the patience and the joy with which the Saints suffered. Look at what St. Paul said and you'll be convinced that when one is animated by faith, troubles only afflict us outside and are but an instrument of battle which victory crowns. This consoling truth can only be appreciated by the righteous, and don't be surprised if in our own time, we see what St. Cyprian saw in his--that most of the faithful succumbed.

To love God and fear Him alone, such is the lot of a small number of the elect. It is this love and this fear that makes martyrs by detaching the Faithful from the world and attaching them to God and His Holy Law. To support this love and this fear, in your hearts, watch and pray. Increase your good works and join to that the edifying acts of which the first Faithful have given us example. Mix with followers of the Faith and then glorify the Lord as did the first Christians whom we retrace in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

This practice will be much more salutary seeing that you are deprived of ministers of the Lord who nourished your souls with Bread of the Word. You weep for these men precious to your piety. I appreciate all your loss. You feel lonely by yourselves, but could not this loneliness be salutary to you in the eyes of Faith? It is by Faith that the Faithful are united. In probing this truth, we find that the absence of the Body does not break this unity, since it does not break the ties of Faith, but rather augments it by depriving it of all feeling.

If you were united by those ties to the ministers of the Lord whom you regret, console yourselves--their absence purifies and enlivens the love that unites us. Faith renders present for us, those whom we love in relation to our salvation, whatever the distance and chains that separate us. Faith gives us eyes so piercing that we can see them wherever they are, when they are at the ends of the earth, and when death has separated them from the world. Nothing is far away in Faith. It plumbs the depths of the earth as the heights of the Heavens.

Faith is beyond the senses and its empire beyond the power of men. Who can prevent us loving whom we wish? Who can steal from us, memory? Who can prevent us from presenting to God those we love, and asking Him for our daily bread, by prayers in union with those whom we love? It is not enough, my children, to console you on the absence of the Lord's ministers and to dry the tears you shed on their chains. This loss deprives you of Sacraments and spiritual consolation. Your piety takes fright, it sees itself alone. However, through your desolation, never forget that God is your Father, and if He permits your deprivation of the dispensation of the Mysteries, that doesn't mean that He shuts off the means of His Graces and Mercies. I'm going to offer them to you as the only sources to which you can possibly go for purification. Read what I write with the same intention as I have in writing. Seek nothing but the truth, and our salvation in self-denial, in our love for God and a submission to His Holy Will.

Sacraments

You know of the efficacy of the sacraments; you know of the obligation imposed on you to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance to cleanse us of our sins. But to profit from these channels of mercy, it requires ministers of the Lord. In our position, without worship, without altar, without sacrifice, without priests, we only see Heaven and no longer have mediators among men. Let this abandonment not deject us! We offer Faith to Jesus Christ our immortal Mediator. He reads our hearts, He understands our desires. He will crown our faithfulness. We are in the eyes of His All-Powerful Mercy. The sick one of thirty-eight years old, to whom He said to cure, not to get someone to put him in the bath, but to take up his bed and walk. If life's events change the position of the Faithful, the events change our obligations. Once upon a time we were the servants who received five talents, we had the peaceful exercise of our religion. Today, we have but one talent--our heart. Let us make it fruitful and our recompense will be equal to that of five. God is just. He does not ask of us the impossible. Respectful to the Divine and Ecclesiastical laws, which recall to us to the Sacrament of Penance, I must tell you, that in these circumstances, these laws do not oblige.

Listen to what I tell you:

It is essential for your learning and consolation that you should know these circumstances, in order not to accept your own mind for that of God. The circumstances where these laws do not oblige, are those where God's Will manifests Itself to obtain our salvation without the intermediary of Man. God needs nobody but Himself to save us when He so desires. He is the source of Life and He gives to everyone the ordinary means that He has provided to effect our salvation by extraordinary means that His Mercy dispenses us according to our needs. He is a loving Father who by ineffable means helps His Children, when believing themselves abandoned, they seek Him and yearn for Him. If in the course of our lives, we had in the least neglected the means that God and His Church had provided for our sanctification, we would have been ungrateful children, but if we were to believe that in the extraordinary circumstances we could not do without even greater means, we would be forgetting and insulting the Divine Wisdom Who puts us to the test, and Who, in wishing us to be deprived of it, makes up to us with His Spirit.

Rule Of Conduct

To show you, my children, your exact rule of conduct, I am going to apply to your situation, the principles of Faith, and some examples of the history of religion that should develop all the senses and console you in the use you are able to make of them. It is of Faith, the first and most necessary of all Sacraments, Baptism! It is the doorway of salvation and eternal life. However, the desire, the wish for baptism, suffices in certain cases. Catechumens who were surprised by persecution, only receive it in blood that they spilled for Faith. They found the grace of all the sacraments--the sacraments in the free confession of their Faith, and they were received into the Church by the Holy Ghost, who is the tie, which unites all the members to the Head. It was thus the martyrs saved themselves, their blood serving as baptism (the Holy Innocents). It will be thus that will be saved, all those who, instructed in our Mysteries, shall desire, according to their Faith, to receive them. Such is the Law of the Church, founded on what St. Peter said that one cannot refuse the water of baptism to those who have received the Holy Ghost. When one has the spirit of Jesus Christ, one cannot be separated from Jesus Christ. When we are persecuted for love of Him, deprived of all help, heaped with captives' chains, when we are led to the scaffold, we then have all the Sacraments in the Cross. This instrument of our redemption embraces all that is necessary for our salvation. The tradition and history of the better days of the Church, confirm this dogmatic truth. The faithful who desired the sacraments, the confessors and martyrs, were saved without the sacraments since they could not receive them. From that it is simple for us to conclude that no Sacrament is necessary when it is impossible to receive it, and this conclusion is the belief of the Church ... St. Ambrose regarded the pious Emperor Valentinian as a saint, although he died without the Baptism he desired, but, which he had not been able to receive. "It is the desire and the will that saves us in this case." Said the Doctor of the Church, "He who does not receive the Sacraments from the hand of men, receives them from God; who is not Baptized by his piety and desire, is Baptized by Jesus Christ."

What this great man said of Baptism, let us say of all the Sacraments, of all the ceremonies, and all the prayers that we can be deprived of at the present time. He who is unable to go to confession to a priest, but who, having all the necessary dispositions for the Sacrament, the desire, and in form the most firm and constant wish, hears Jesus Christ who, touched and witness to his Faith, says to him or her what He once said to the sinning woman: "Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less. And He said to her: Thy sins are forgiven thee. And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves: Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And He said to the woman: Thy Faith hath

made thee safe, go in peace.” (Luke 8:47-50) St. Leo said that love of justice contains in itself all Apostolic Authority, and in that he has expressed the belief of the Church.

Confession

The application of this maxim has place for all like ourselves, who are deprived of Apostolic ministry by persecution that removes or incarcerates all true ministers of Jesus Christ worthy of the Faith and piety of the faithful. It has place above all if we are stricken with persecution, we suffer then for justice. The Cross of Christ leaves no blemish when embraced and carried as it should be. Here, instead of reasoning, let us listen to the language of saints. The confessors and martyrs of Africa, writing to St. Cyprian, said boldly that one renewed one's conscience pure and spotless in the courts when one had confessed the name of Jesus Christ. They did not say that one went there with a pure conscience. Nothing silences scruples like the Cross. Surrounded by drastic measures, which are the tests of saints, if we cannot confess our sins to priests, confess them to God. I feel, my children, that your worry and scruples are vanishing and that your Faith and love of the Cross increasing. Say to yourselves, and by your conduct say to all who see you; "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? Or distress? Or famine? Or nakedness? Or danger? Or persecution? Or the sword?" (Romans 8:35) St. Paul then was in your position, and he did not say that any minister of the Lord, where he was able to find one, would be able to separate him from Jesus Christ and change his love for Him. He knew that, robbed of all human help and deprived of an intermediary between himself and Heaven, he found in his love, his zeal for the Gospel and in the Cross, all the Sacraments and means of salvation necessary.

From what I have just said, it is easy for you to see a great Truth, proper to your consolation and to give you courage. It is that your conduct is a true confession before God and before men. If confession must precede absolution, your conduct here, precedes the graces of holiness and justice which God gives you and is confession public and continuous. "Confession is necessary," said St. Augustine, "because it embraces the condemnation of sin." Here, we condemn it in a manner so public and so solemnly, that it is known by all, and this condemnation, which is why we cannot go to a priest, isn't it more meritorious than an accusation of private sin made in secret? Isn't it more satisfactory and edifying? The secret condemnation of our sins to a priest costs us little, while this which we make today is supported by the general sacrifice of our possessions, of our liberty, of our rest, of our reputation and perhaps even of our life! The confession we would be making to the priest would only benefit ourselves, while that which we presently make is useful to our brothers and can serve all the Church. God confers on us, unworthy as we are, the grace of wanting to use us to show that it is an enormous crime to offend against Truth and Justice, and our voice shall be much more intelligible when we suffer greater evils with more patience... our example tells the Faithful that there is more evil than one thinks in doing what is being done to us. We do not confess to a priest, but we confess to the Truth, which is the most noble confession, and the most necessary in these circumstances. We do not confess our sins in secret, we confess the Truth in public. We are persecuted, the Truth is not captive and we have this consolation in the hope that we suffer. That we do not hold back God's Truth in injustice, as the Apostle of the nations says, and that we teach our brothers not to hold it back.

Finally, if we do not confess our sins, the Church confesses them for us. Such are the admirable rules of Providence, which allows these trials to make us obtain merit and make us reflect seriously on the use we have made of the Sacraments. The habit and ease that we had for Confession often made us lukewarm. Instead of as at present deprived of confessor, one turns in on oneself, and the fervor increases. Let us look at this privation as a fast for our souls and a preparation to receive the bread of penance, which, greatly desired, will become a more salutary nourishment. Strive to banish from our conduct, which is our confession before men and our accusation before God, all the faults that might have crept into our ordinary confessions, above all, aim for interior humility. What I have said is more than sufficient. However, I am not sure that I have been able to tranquilize you on the anxieties and scruples which are conjured up in a soul that has to judge itself, and to follow its own directions. I sense, my children, all the importance of your solicitude, but when one trusts in God, one must not do it by halves as this would show lack of confidence, as looking at the extraordinary means by which God calls and keeps his elected in justice, as incomplete and leaving something to desire in the order of grace. You found in the wisdom, maturity and experience of ministers of the Lord, advice and wise practices for avoiding sin, to do good and gain in virtue. All that was not of a sacramental character, but of private enlightenment. A virtuous, zealous, enlightened, charitable friend, could on this point be your judge and guide. Pious persons did not go to the tribunal of Penance only for instruction and enlightenment. They opened their hearts to illustrious people by their holiness in their intimate discussions. Do the same, but let the most discreet charity reign in these mutual interchanges of your souls, of your wills and desires. God will bless them and you will find there the guidance you need. If this means is not open to you, rely on the mercy of God. He will not abandon you. His Spirit itself will speak to your hearts by holy inspirations that will inflame and direct them towards the high objectives of your destiny.

You are finding me concise on this subject, your desires go well beyond, but have patience and the rest will thoroughly answer your expectations. One cannot say everything at once, especially on such a delicate matter that demands the greatest exactitude. I'm going to continue talking to you as I talk to myself. Removed from the resources of the sanctuary, and deprived of all exercise of the Priesthood, there remains no mediator for us, save Jesus Christ. It is to Him we must go for our needs. Before His Supreme Majesty we must bluntly tear the veil off our consciences, and in the search of good and bad that we shall have done, thank Him for his graces, confess our sins and ask pardon and to show us the direction of His Holy Will, having in our hearts the sincere

desire to do it to His minister, whenever we are able to do so. There, my children, is what I call confessing to God! In such a confession well made, God Himself will absolve us.

It is the Gospel that teaches this to us, in giving us the example of the Publican, who, humiliating himself before God, went away justified, since the best sign of absolution is justice, which cannot be tied, because it unties (looses). So in the total isolation in which we find ourselves, that is what we must do. Holy Scriptures here outlines our duties. All which attaches to God is holy. When we suffer for the truth, our sufferings are those of Jesus Christ, who honors us then with a special character of resemblance to Him with His Cross. This grace is the greatest happiness that could possibly happen to a mortal in this life. It is thus in all painful situations that deprive us of the Sacraments. The carrying of the Cross like a Christian is the source of the remission of our sins; such as once carried by Jesus Christ, it was for the sins of the whole human race. To doubt this truth is to wound the crucified Savior. It is to confess that one does not realize deeply enough, the virtue and merits of the Cross. Tell me, would it be possible that the good thief received on the Cross the forgiveness of all his sins, and the faithful one who gives up everything for his God should not be forgiven his? The Holy Fathers observe that the thief was a thief right to the Cross to show the Faithful what they must hope for from this Cross when they embrace it, and remain attached to it for justice and truth. Jesus ending His sufferings entered Heaven by the Cross. To be sanctified by the Cross, our actions must reflect the virtue of Jesus. It is not sufficient in these times, that animated with His love, like St. John you rest your head on His breast. You must serve Him with firmness and constancy, on Calvary and on the Cross. There, in confessing to God, if your confession is not crowned by the imposition of the hands of the priest, it will be by the imposition of the Hands of Jesus Christ. See those adorable Hands which appeared so heavy by nature, and that are so light to those who love Him. They are spread over you from morning till night, to heap you with all sorts of blessings, if you do not reject Him yourselves. There is no blessing like that of Christ crucified, when He blesses His children from the Cross.

The sacrament of penance is for us at this moment like the well of Jacob, whose water is pure and salutary, but the well is deep. Without anything we are unable to prevent entry. That is the picture of our position. Look at the action of our persecutors as a punishment for our sins. It is certain that if we could approach the well with Faith, we would find Jesus there talking to the Samaritan woman. But do not be discouraged, let us go down in the Valley of Bethulie where we will find several springs, which are not guarded, where we can leisurely quench our thirst. Let Jesus Christ live in our heart and His Holy Spirit inflame it, and we will find in ourselves that spring of living water that gives life and makes up for Jacob's well. As Sovereign Pontiff, Jesus Christ Himself, does in an ineffable manner in the confession, which we make to God, that which men cannot take away. So carrying Jesus in us, who looks after us continually, we can do it any time, any place and in any disposition. It is something worthy of admiration and recognition to see that what the world does to us to drive us away from God, only brings us closer. Confession must not be only a remedy for past sins, but must be a preservative for sins to come. If we seriously reflect on this double efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance, we are able to have much to humiliate us and to bewail, and we shall be so much better founded in it, that our advancement for virtue shall have been slower, and that we shall be found the same still before and after confession. We are able now to repair these faults, which came from too great a trust in absolution and that one did not examine thoroughly enough one's weaknesses. Obligated to bewail now before God, the faithful soul considers all its deformities. And there at the feet of Our Savior, stricken with grief of repentance, it remains there silent, only speaking with tears as did the sinning woman of the Gospel. Seeing on the one hand all her wretchedness and on the other, the goodness of God, she prostrated herself before His Majesty until her sins were cleansed by one of His looks. That is how the divine light enlightens a contrite and humble heart right to the particles that can darken it. Let this confession to God be for you a short daily practice, but fervent, and that from time to time you do it from one epoch to another as you have been doing it daily. The first fruit you will draw from it apart from the remission of your sins, will be to learn to know yourself and to know God, and the second will be, to be ever ready to present yourself to a priest, if you are able, enriched in character by the mercy of the Lord. I think I have said all that I should have, my children, on your actions during privation of the Sacrament of Penance. I am going to discuss now the privation of that of the Eucharist and after that all those things you mentioned in your letter.

The Holy Eucharist

The Holy Eucharist had for you many joys and advantages when you were able to participate in this Sacrament of love, but now you are deprived of it for being defenders of truth and justice. Your advantages are the same, for who would have dared approach this fearsome table if Jesus Christ had not given us a precept, and if the Church, which desires that we fortify ourselves with this Bread of Life, had not invited us to eat It by the voice of its ministers, who re clothed us with a nuptial dress. All was obedience, but if we compare obedience by that which we are deprived of with that which led us there, it will be easy to judge the merit. Abraham obeyed in immolating his son, and in not immolating him, but his obedience was greater when he took the sword in his hand than when he returned it to its scabbard. We are obedient in going to Communion, but in holding ourselves from the sacrifice we are immolating ourselves. Quenched of the thirst of justice and depriving ourselves of the Blood of the Lamb which alone can slake it, we sacrifice our own life as much as it is in us to do. The sacrifice of Abraham was for an instant, an angel stopped the knife, ours is daily, renewing itself everyday, every time that we adore with submission the Hand of God that drives us away from His altars, and this sacrifice is voluntary. It is to be advantageously deprived of the Eucharist, to raise the standard of the Cross for the cause of Christ and the glory of His Church. Observe, my children, that Jesus, after having given His Body, found no difficulty in dying for us. There is the action of a Christian in the persecutions, the Cross

follows on from the Eucharist. Let not the love of the Eucharist drive us away from the Cross. It is to arise and make glorious advance in the grace of the Gospel, to go out from the Cenacle, to go to Calvary. Yes, I have no fear in saying it. When the storm of the malice of men roars against truth and justice, it is more advantageous to the Faithful to suffer for Christ than to participate in His Body by Communion. I seem to hear the Savior saying to us: "Do not be afraid to be separated from My table for the confession of My Name: it is a grace I give you, which is very rare. Repair by this humiliating deprivation that glorifies Me, all the Communion which dishonor me. Feel this grace. You can do nothing for Me and I put into your hands a means of doing what I have done for you, and to return to Me with magnificence, that which I have given you is the greatest. I have given you My Body, and you give it back to Me, since you are separated from it in My service. You give back to the truth what you have received from My love. I could not have given you anything greater. Your gratitude matches by that, the grace I have given you--the greatness of the gift I made to you. Console yourselves if I do not call upon you to pour out your blood like the martyrs, there is Mine to make up for it. Every time that you are prevented from drinking it, I will regard it the same as if you had spilled yours; and Mine is far more precious."

So that is how we find the Eucharist, even during the deprivation of the Eucharist. From another view, who is able to separate us from Christ and His Church in Communion in approaching its altars by faith in a much more efficacious manner since it is spiritual and further from the sense. It is what I call communicating spiritually in uniting oneself with the Faithful who are able to do it in different places on the earth. You were familiar with this sort of Communion in the times when you were able to go to the Holy table. You knew the advantages and the manner of it, so I will not discuss it with you, but I am going to show you what Holy Scripture and the Annals of the Church offer in reflections on the deprivation of the Mass, and the necessity of a continual sacrifice for the Faithful in times of persecution.

Give particular attention, my children, to the principles I am going to recall. They are for your edification. Nothing happens without the Will of God! Whether we have a worship that allows us to assist at Mass, or that we be deprived of it, let us submit to His Holy Will, but in all circumstances let us be worthy. The worship that we owe to Christ depends on the assistance that He gives us and the necessity we have of His help. This worship outlines for us our duties as isolated Faithful just as it outlined for us before, in the public exercise of our religion. As children of God, according to the witness of Sts. Peter and John, we participated in the priesthood of Jesus Christ to offer prayers and promises. If we are not entitled to sacrifice on visible altars, we are not without offering, since we can offer it in worship by our love in sacrificing Christ ourselves to His Father on the invisible altar of our hearts. Faithful to this principle, we shall gather all the graces that we would have been able to gather had we been able to assist at the Holy sacrifice of the Mass. Charity unites us to all the Faithful of the universe who offer this divine sacrifice, or who assist at it. If we lack a material altar and sensible species, there are no longer any in Heaven where Jesus Christ is offered in the most perfect manner. Yes, my children, the faithful who are without priests, offer their sacrifice without temple, without minister and without anything sensible. It needs only Jesus Christ to offer it. "For the sacrifice of the heart, where the victim must be consumed by the fire of love for the Holy Ghost, it requires to be united to Jesus Christ," said St. Clement of Alexandria, "by words, by deeds and by heart." We are united to Him by words when they are true, by our actions when they are just, by our hearts when charity inflames them. So, let us speak the truth, follow nothing but the truth, love nothing but the truth. Then we shall render to God the glory that is His due. When we are true in our words, just in our actions, submit to God in our desires and thoughts, in speaking for Him alone, in praising Him for His gifts, in humiliating ourselves for our sins, we offer God an agreeable sacrifice, and that cannot be taken from us. It remains for me to consider the Eucharist as a Last Sacrament. You could be deprived of it at death, so I must enlighten you and caution you against so terrible a deprivation.

Last Sacrament

God, who loves and protects us, wishes to give us His Body at the approach of death--to take away our fear on this last journey. When you look to the future and see yourself on your deathbed, without the last sacrament, without Extreme Unction and without any help on the part of the ministers of the Lord, you see yourself abandoned in the most sad and terrible way. Console yourselves, my children, in the trust you have in God. This tender Father will pour on you His graces, His blessings and His mercies, in these awful moments that you fear, in more abundance than if you were being assisted by his ministers of whom you have been deprived only because you wouldn't abandon Him Yourself. The abandonment and forsakenness that we fear for ourselves resembles that of the Savior on the Cross when He said to His Father: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27: 46) Ah! How constructive and consoling are these words! Your pains and abandonment lead you to your glorious destiny in ending your life like Jesus ended His. Jesus, in His sufferings, His abandonment and His death, was in most intimate union with His Father. In your pains and abandonment, be to Him likewise united, and let your last sigh be like His, that God's Will be done. Being deprived of Extreme Unction, and in the hands of persons, who not only do not help, but insult me, I shall be much happier that my death shall have more conformity with that of Jesus who was a spectacle of opprobrium to all the world. Crucified by the hand of His enemies, He was treated like a thief and died between two thieves. He was Wisdom itself and was taken for an idiot; He was Truth, and He was taken for a cheat and deceiver. The Pharisees and Scribes triumphed over Him and in His Presence. They were finally sated with His Blood. Christ died in the most shameful infamy of torture and excruciating pains of the Cross. Christians, if your last moments and death are an occasion for your enemies to treat you with insults and disgrace, what were those of Jesus? I am not sure that the angel who was sent to make up for the hardheartedness and callousness of men was not to teach us, that in similar circumstances, we receive the consolation of Heaven

when that of men is missing. It was not without a special plan of God, that the Apostles who ought to have consoled Jesus, remained in a deep sleep. So the Faithful should not be surprised to find himself without a priest in his last moments. Jesus reproached His Apostles that they slept, but He did not say that they left Him without consolation, to teach us, that if we go into the Garden of Olives, if we climb up to Calvary, if we die alone and without human help, God watches over us, consoles us, and for us that suffices. Faithful, you are afraid of what follows the present time. Lift your eyes up to Jesus, keep them on Him, contemplate Him -- He is your model.

After having contemplated on Him, would you still fear the deprivation of prayers and ceremonies of the Church that was established to sanctify and honor our last moments, our death and burial? Remember that the cause for which we suffer and die gives to this deprivation a new glory and gives to us the merit of the last bit of resemblance we can have to Jesus Christ. Providence has wished and permitted for our instruction, that the Pharisees should put guards at the sepulcher to guard the body of Jesus Crucified. It has even wished that after His death, His body should remain in the hands of His enemies, and that in order to teach us that however long the domination of our enemies might be, we must suffer it with patience and pray for them. St. Ignatius, the martyr, who had so much ardor to be eaten by wild beasts, did not he prefer to have them for a sepulcher than the most beautiful mausoleum? Even the first Christians who were delivered to the executioner, all the confessors and all the martyrs, never worried about their last moments nor their graves. None of them worried on what should become of their bodies. Yes, my children, when one has trusted Jesus Christ all his life, he still trusts Him after his death. Jesus on the Cross and near to death, saw the women who had followed him from Galilee. His Mother and Mary Magdalene and His beloved Apostles were near the Cross in sorrow, silence and grief. There, my children, is the picture you shall see. Most Christians feel sorry for those among the Faithful who find themselves persecuted, but they keep themselves apart, while some like the Mother of Jesus go to the innocent which wickedness strikes down. I remark with St. Ambrose, that Jesus' Mother, who stayed at the foot of the Cross, knew that Her Son was dying for the Redemption of mankind, and wishing to die with Him for the accomplishment of this great work, She did not fear to annoy the Jews with Her presence and desiring to die with Her Son. When you see someone die all forsaken, my children, or by the sword of persecution, imitate the Mother of Jesus, and not the women who had followed Him from Galilee, but kept back at the foot of the Cross. Be pierced with this truth: that the most glorious and salutary time to die is when virtue is strongest in our heart. One must never fear for a friend of Jesus Christ when he is suffering. Help him, even by our looks and our tears. That, my children, is what I believe I had to tell you. I believe it sufficient to answer your questions and calm your fears. I have put the principles without going into detail, which appears useless. Your reflections will certainly make up for it, and our conversations if Providence ever permits, shall be on what you have done and what will inspire you to new desires.

I must tell you, my children, not to worry at what you are witnessing. Faith is not allied to these terrors. The number of the elect was always small. Only fear that God does not reproach you for lack of Faith, and for not having been able to watch an hour with Him. I admit however, that humanity can grieve, but in so saying, I shall add that Faith must gladden. God does all. Bear this judgment; it is the only one worthy of you. The unbelievers themselves delivered this judgment when the Savior was making miraculous cures. What He is doing now is far greater, in His mortal life He cured the body, but now, He cures souls and completes by trials the number of the elect.

Whatever God's plans are for us, let us adore the depth of His Judgments and put all our confidence in Him. If He wishes to deliver us, the time is near. Everything turns against us, our friends oppress us, our relations treat us like strangers, the Faithful who used to worship with us are turned away with a single look. They fear to say that not only unlike us, they are faithful to their country and submit to its laws (right or wrong) and also claim to be faithful to God. They fear to say that they love us, or even know us. If we are without help alongside men, we are assured of God's help, who according to the Prophet King, will deliver the poor from the powerful and the weak who have no help.

The universe is the work of God. He reigns over it and every happening is according to the plans of His Providence. When we believe that desertion is going to be general, we forget that a little Faith is enough to give Faith to the family of Jesus--like a little leaven makes all the dough rise. These extraordinary events where the mob wields the axe to undermine the work of God, serve marvelously to show His Omnipotence. In every country will be seen what the people of God saw. When the Lord was wanted by Gideon to show His power against the Midianites, He had him send back most of his army. Only three hundred men remained, and those without arms, in order that it could be seen that the victory was God's. This small number of Gideon's soldiers is the number of the Faithful elect of that century. You have seen with the saddest astonishment, my children, that out of all those called, since all of France was Christian, the greater part, like in Gideon's army, remained weak, timid and fearing to lose their temporal interests. God sends them back, for use in His justice. God only wants those who give themselves to Him entirely. Do not be surprised at the great number who quit. Truth wins, no matter how small the number of those who love and remain attached to Him. For my part I have only one wish, the desire of St. Paul. As a child of the Church, as a soldier of Christ, I wish to die under His standard.

If you have the works of St. Cyprian, read them, my dear children. One must go back to the first centuries of the Church to find worthy examples to serve as a model. It is in these Holy Books and in those of the first Defenders of the Faith that one must form a precise idea of the object of martyrdom and of the confession of Jesus Christ. It is Truth and Justice. These are the august, eternal and unchangeable objects of the Faith which one must confess. It is the Gospel. For human instructions, however wise they may be, they are temporary and changeable. But the Gospel and the Law of God holds for Eternity. It is in thinking over this distinction that

you will clearly see what is Caesar's and what is God's. As by the example of Christ you must render to one with respect, and to the other that that is His due.

Every century, the Church is in agreement, that there is nothing more glorious and holy than to confess the name of Jesus Christ. But remember, my dear children, that to confess it in a manner worthy of the Crown that we desire. It is during the time one suffers most that one must have the greatest holiness. I can find nothing more beautiful than the words of St. Cyprian when he praises all the Christian virtues in the confessors of Jesus Christ. "You have always observed," he says to them, "the command of the Lord with a severity worthy of your firmness, you have conserved simplicity and innocence, charity and concord, modesty and humility, you have carried out your ministry with care and exactitude. You have been vigilant to help those who need help, to have compassion for the poor, of constance in defending the truth and discipline, in order that there be nothing wanting in these great examples of virtue that you have till now given. It is by your confession and generous sufferings that you highly animate your brethren to martyrdom and to show them the road."

I hope, children, although God does not call you to martyrdom nor to a distressing confession of His Name, to be able to speak to you one day as in the example of this illustrious martyr when he spoke to the confessors Celerius and Areie, and to praise in you your humility rather than your steadfastness and to glorify you more for your holiness than for your sufferings and wounds. In looking towards this happy moment, profit from my advice and sustain yourselves by my example, if necessary.

God watches over us, our hope is justified. It shows us either the persecution stops or the persecution will be our crown. In the alternative of one or the other, I see the accomplishment of our destiny. Let God's Will be done, since in whatever manner He delivers us, His Eternal Mercies pour into us. I end, my dear children, in embracing you and praying to God for you, as my Faith and as my sincere resignation to have no other will but that of God.

In the Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Father Demaris