

Spring 2022

Hope in Difficult Times
*with St. Therese of Lisieux and Her
Family*



Discerning Hearts – Webinar text

April 7 – 10, 2022

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Webinar Schedule

Thursday, April 7

10:30 AM Central Time – Presentation: 1

1:30 PM Central Time – Presentation: 2

2:30 PM – Q & A with Fr. Gallagher

Friday, April 8

8:30 AM Central Time – Presentation: 3

1:30 PM Central Time – Presentation: 4

2:30 PM – Q & A with Fr. Gallagher

Saturday, April 9

8:30 AM Central Time – Presentation: 5

1:30 PM Central Time – Presentation: 6

2:30 PM – Q & A with Fr. Gallagher

Friday, April 10

8:30 AM Central Time – Presentation: 7

2:30 PM – Q & A with Fr. Gallagher

LOUIS, ZÉLIE, AND THEIR CHILDREN

1

2

3 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore Guérin, January 1, 1863 [age 32]**

4 My dear brother,

5 I wish you a happy New Year and desire with all my heart that you do well in your studies.
6 I'm sure you'll succeed if you want to, this depends only on you. God protects all who trust
7 in Him. Not a single person has ever been abandoned by Him.

8 When I think of what God, in whom I've put all my trust and in whose hands I've put the
9 care of my whole life, has done for me and my husband, I don't doubt that His Divine
10 Providence watches over His children with special care.

11 My dear friend, I'm very concerned about you [since December 1862, Isidore was enrolled
12 in the School of Pharmacy in Paris]. Every day my husband makes sad predictions. He
13 knows Paris, and he tells me that you'll be up against temptations that you'll find hard to
14 resist because you're not religious enough. He told me what temptations he had and the
15 courage he needed to overcome his struggles. If you only knew what ordeals he went
16 through.... I beg you, my dear Isidore, do as he did; pray, and you will not let yourself be
17 carried away by the torrent. If you give in once, you're lost. On the path of evil as well as
18 that of goodness, the first step is the hardest, and, after that first step, you'll be swept
19 away by the current.

20 If you want to give me a New Year's gift and would agree to this one request I'm asking of
21 you, I'd be happier than if you sent me all of Paris. Here it is: you live very close to Notre-
22 Dame des Victoires. Well! Go there just once a day and say a Hail Mary to the Blessed
23 Mother. You'll see that she'll protect you in a very special way, and that she'll help you
24 succeed in this world and give you eternal happiness. What I'm saying to you is not
25 exaggerated piety and unfounded on my part. I have reason to have trust in the Blessed
26 Mother, I've received favors from her that only I know.

27 You well know that life is not long. You and I will soon be at the end, and we'll be very
28 grateful that we lived in a manner that doesn't make our last hour too bitter.

29 Now, if you have an unkind heart, you'll laugh at me, but if you're kindhearted, you'll say
30 I'm right.

31 When you write to me, don't mention what I said regarding Louis' thoughts about your
32 situation because he wouldn't like it. I'm always so happy with him, he makes my life very
33 pleasant. What a holy man my husband is. I wish the same for all women; that's my wish
34 for them for the New Year.

35 Tuesday I'll send you some potted goose and jars of jam.

36 My little girls [Marie, Pauline] are very cute. Your goddaughter doesn't want to walk by
37 herself anymore. She fell and became so fearful that nothing in the world can persuade her
38 to take a step without support; she goes for a walk along the chairs and the furniture. You
39 can't imagine how good and affectionate she is. She hugs us every minute without our

40 telling her to do so, and she sends kisses to Jesus. She doesn't talk, but she understands
41 everything. In other words, she's an ideal child....

42 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore, April 5, 1863.**

43 ... Marie is always the same; she's doing very well and speaks to us of her uncle in
44 Paris [the young Isidore].

45 Little Pauline walks very well now, and she almost never falls. She's very cute and is
46 beginning to talk well. Her health is delicate, but she's coming along little by little. She
47 knows everything or almost everything by its name. Right now, she's sitting next to me on
48 the desk and doesn't want to leave me alone, so what I'm writing is all crooked.

49 Believe me, she already loves to dress up. When we tell her that we're going out, she runs
50 quickly to the closet where her most beautiful dress is and extends her little face saying,
51 "Wash me." I find all this marvelous, as if it weren't perfectly natural....

52

53 **From Louis Martin to his wife Zélie, October 8, 1863**

54 My dear Friend,

55 I won't be able to arrive until Monday. It seems like a long time to me, and I'm longing to
56 be with you.

57 Needless to say, your letter made me very happy, except that I see you've tired yourself out
58 far too much. So, I strongly recommend calm and moderation, above all in your work. I
59 have some orders from the *Compagnie Lyonnaise*, once again, don't worry so much. We'll
60 manage, with God's help, to build a good little company.

61 I had the happiness of receiving Communion at Notre-Dame des Victoires, which is like a
62 little heaven on earth. I also lit a candle for the intention of our entire family.

63 I kiss you with all my heart, while waiting for the happiness of being with you again. I hope
64 that Marie and Pauline are being very good!

65 Your husband and true friend, who loves you for life

66 Louis Martin

67 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore, November 12, 1863.**

68 You can't imagine the joy I felt when I received your telegram. [Isidore had just
69 received a Bachelor of Science degree]. I cried from happiness for the first time in my life.
70 You know, I contributed a little to your success because I asked the Poor Clares in Alençon
71 to pray for you Wednesday and Thursday at 10:00 in the morning, thinking that was the time
72 of your exams. Then I received Communion for you. I hope you're a little appreciative for
73 all I've done.

74 Louis was very happy as well. In your honor we bought a goose on Saturday and
75 celebrated on Sunday. We were all very sorry that you weren't here to share in the feast and
76 have fun with us!

77 I don't have enough time to write any longer and, besides, the more I say to you the
78 more you'll tease me about my style; I'm certain of it... I did, however, win first prize in
79 style in the past. Out of eleven compositions, I won first prize ten times, and then I was in
80 the first division and in the upper class. So, judge the ability of the others!

81

82 **From Mme Martin to her brother March 5, 1865**

83 You must be very mad at me for having taken so long to respond to your letter, which,
84 however, amused us a lot. Louis laughed with all his heart at your comparison of Father
85 Loth. As for me, I didn't laugh; I must be getting old, and I didn't find it amusing.
86 Nevertheless, I comfort myself by thinking that you're not a prophet. . . .

87 Now, let's speak of something else. For the last two months, my little Léonie has had a kind
88 of purulent eczema on her entire body, and the illness is getting worse every day. I'm very
89 upset, and the doctor doesn't know how to treat it. He told me to give her some
90 antiscorbutic syrup, which I did, but the ravages of the illness didn't lessen. It seems that
91 these kinds of illnesses are almost incurable. Please, give me your advice and tell me what I
92 should do. Perhaps you know some famous specialists who will be able to give you some
93 effective remedies. You wouldn't believe how much I suffer seeing my poor little daughter
94 in this state. I've just written to our sister Élise asking that she say a novena for her (Sister
95 Marie-Dosithée). I'm not asking you for your prayers, I don't have enough confidence in
96 you.

97 Last Tuesday I went to see my little Hélène. I left alone at seven o'clock in the morning,
98 through the rain and the wind that took me there and brought me back home. Imagine
99 how tired I was as I walked along the road, but what kept me going was the thought that I
100 would soon hold in my arms the object of my love. There's no prettier jewel than little
101 Hélène. She's ravishing.

102 I don't know what else to tell you. If you saw, however, the letter I wrote to my sister in Le
103 Mans, you'd be jealous, it was five pages long. But I tell her things I don't tell you. We talk
104 to each other about a mysterious, angelic world, and, to you, I must speak of earthly things.

105

106 **From Mme Martin to her brother, April 23, 1865**

107 Hastily, I'm writing you a few words because I'm unable to write you a long letter. I have a
108 violent headache and I'm up against constant aggravation. Moreover, we have my father-in-
109 law [Captain Pierre-François Martin, Louis' father, was eighty-eight years old] who is near
110 death; I don't think he'll live another two weeks. He's dying of old age; already half his
111 body is paralyzed. . . .

112 Little Léonie is doing well now, as well as the other three. Two weeks ago, I went to see
113 Hélène, the one who is with the wet nurse. I can't remember ever having felt such an intense

114 feeling of happiness as at the moment when I took her in my arms, and she smiled at me so
 115 graciously. I believed I was looking at an angel. Well, I can't express it. I believe we've
 116 never seen, nor will ever see, a little girl so charming. My little H el ene, when will I have the
 117 happiness of possessing her completely? I can't imagine that I have the honor of being the
 118 mother of such a delightful creature! ... Oh! I admit I don't regret being married. If you had
 119 seen the two older ones today, how pretty they looked, everyone was admiring them and
 120 could not take their eyes off of them. And me, I was there beaming. I said to myself,
 121 "They're mine! I have two others who are not here, one beautiful and one less beautiful that
 122 I love as much as the others, but she won't honor me as much."

123 Let's speak of more serious things. You know that when I was a young girl, I hit my breast
 124 on the corner of a table. We didn't think anything of it then, but today I have a gland in my
 125 breast that worries me, especially since it started to be a little painful. However, when I
 126 touch it, it doesn't hurt, although I feel some numbness several times a day, every day. Well,
 127 I don't know what else to say about it, but what's certain is that it's making me suffer.

128 What can I do about it? I'm quite confused. I'm not afraid of an operation, no, I'm
 129 completely willing to have it, but I don't have complete confidence in the doctors here. I
 130 would like to take advantage of your stay in Paris, because you could help me a lot in this
 131 situation. There's only one thing that holds me back, how will my husband manage during
 132 this time? I know nothing about the surgery. Be kind enough to tell me your thoughts on this
 133 subject as soon as possible.

134 Louis sends you his kindest regards, and, since you don't want to pursue your studies for a
 135 doctorate, he would like you to have a pharmacy like that of Monsieur R, (Vital Romet) and
 136 that very one if it were possible.

137 There's nothing else new to tell you, but this is already enough; I, who was only going to
 138 write you a few lines.

139

140 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore, November 18, 1866**

141 I just came back from seeing my little Joseph [he was then with a wet nurse, Rose
 142 Taill e, who lived in Semall e, 8 km from Alen on)]. Oh! My beautiful little boy, he's so big
 143 and strong! It's impossible to wish for better. I never had a child who did so well, except for
 144 Marie. Ah! If you knew how I love my little Joseph! I believe my fortune is made!

145 Kiss my sister-in-law for me. Tell her that I truly love her. A little letter as soon as possible
 146 would make me so happy!

147

148 **From Mme Martin to the Gu erins, December 21, 1867**

149 On Thursday, the 19th, at ten-fifteen in the morning, my little Marie-Joseph-Jean-Baptiste
 150 was born. He's very strong and quite lively, but I had a terrible time, and the baby was in the
 151 greatest danger. For four hours I suffered the most severe pain I've ever felt. The poor little
 152 one was almost asphyxiated, and the doctor baptized him before his birth. Now, I'm
 153 perfectly fine. I got up for a little while, and I'm taking advantage of it by writing to you. I

154 wish with all my heart, my dear sister, that you'll be happier than I am. I ask God that it be
155 so and that He give you a beautiful baby.

156 I won't write any more now; soon I'll send you a longer letter.

157 My little one just left with the wet nurse. I'm afraid he won't be easy to raise. He cried from
158 Thursday night until this morning, that is, thirty-six hours non-stop. The wet nurse did not
159 undress for two nights. Last night I was so sorry to see the poor little one writhing in pain
160 that I didn't sleep. I was crying, as was the wet nurse, who didn't want to take him with her
161 because she was too afraid that he would die at her house. This morning, the doctor
162 reassured us. The baby was very calm all morning long, all he did was sleep, and he was
163 sleeping when he left this afternoon.

164

165 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, January 2, 1868**

166 Yesterday I received news of my little Joseph. He's quite cute, and they have to wake him
167 up to make him drink. He's always sleeping and hardly ever cries. I'm longing to see him
168 very much because I'm in constant fear ever since the tragedy of his little brother. However,
169 I believe that God will leave this one with me.

170

171 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore, February 14, 1868**

172 Your last letter made me happy. However, I would like your business to do even better, and
173 I won't be happy until you can tell me that each year you put 8 to 10,000 francs aside. So,
174 try to write me soon that you're able to do this. In the meantime, you must take heart and not
175 worry. I was like you when I began my Alençon lace business, and I made myself sick over
176 it. Now, I'm much more reasonable. I worry much less and resign myself to all the
177 unfortunate events that happen to me, and may happen to me. I tell myself that God allows
178 it, and then I don't think about it anymore. . . .

179 Today I saw little Joseph. He was sick for almost two weeks. He's doing much better, but
180 he's lost a lot of weight and so is not very strong. He's as pretty as a little bouquet, and he
181 laughs heartily and joyfully until he chokes! I'd like very much for God to leave him with
182 me. I pray and beg Him for this every day. If, however, He doesn't wish it, I'll have to
183 resign myself. The wet nurse always says to me that he's going to die, that he's like the
184 other little Joseph. I have to go and console her, but I don't see him dying, thank God!

185

186 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, February 24, 1868**

187 My dear sister,

188 We received the telegram about nine o'clock this evening. Here, at last, is the little Jeanne so
189 longed for! May God keep her with you and may she be your joy! You wouldn't believe
190 how happy I'd be if I could leave with my father to go give you both a hug. I find him so

191 privileged. I envy him, but I have to resign myself to staying because there's no way of
192 doing otherwise.

193 When I told him the good news, my father was peacefully seated in the corner by the fire
194 smoking his pipe. He wasn't at all determined to leave so quickly. It took all the energy I
195 had to sway him. Finally, I succeeded. . . .

196 I assume the baptism will take place tomorrow? Isidore must write me Wednesday morning
197 to give me your news and that of the charming little Jeanne. As soon as you recover, I'm
198 expecting a letter from you because you'll give me so many more details than my brother.
199 He doesn't tell me half of what he should, and his letters are always too short.

200

201 **From Mme Martin to her brother, March 2, 1868**

202 Tell my father that we're eagerly awaiting his arrival, above all little H el ene, who, every
203 time she returns from class, asks if her grandpa has arrived. L eonie is very worried about her
204 little cousin. She made our lives miserable yesterday. All morning long she had it in her
205 head to leave for Lisieux, and she wouldn't stop crying. We had no peace until her father got
206 angry and told her she couldn't go. The two oldest girls pester me every day, wanting to
207 know how much time remains until summer vacation, when we go to see you. . . .

208

209 **From Mme Martin to Mme Gu erin, April 14, 1868**

210 Your last letter made me very happy. I was so eager to hear from you, and I still am because
211 I'd like to know how little Jeanne is doing, as well as all of you. . . .

212 However, I've had plenty of reasons to be anxious over the youngest one, who was very sick
213 three weeks ago. The wet nurse arrived, sobbing, to tell me that there was no hope, that he
214 was sick exactly like his little brother. The fear of seeing him die in her home frightened her
215 so much that she wanted to return him to me. The doctor went there right away and saw he
216 had bronchitis. We took care of him as best we could, and now he's completely cured.

217 We went to see him today. He smiled at his father and me as if he knew us. I feel so
218 deprived not having him with us, and I'm longing for the moment when he returns, although
219 I already fear the extra problems his return will bring us because we're so overworked here.
220 If I had three times less work, I'd still have so much that I'd rarely have a free moment. But
221 it's such sweet work to take care of little children! If I only had that to do, it seems to me I'd
222 be the happiest of women. But it's quite necessary that their father and I work to earn money
223 for their dowries. Otherwise, when they're grown, they won't be very happy with us!

224 Everyone here is in good health, but my poor L eonie took a bad fall and has two very large
225 and deep cuts on her forehead. This is the third time she has cut her forehead, and the marks
226 from the first two times are very noticeable. I'm sorry about that. But on the other hand she
227 has the best nature you could imagine. She and Pauline are charming; little H el ene is very
228 cute as well. Marie has a very special and determined nature. She is the prettiest, but I'd like
229 her to be more obedient. When you write to me, don't mention what I say to you about this
230 child, other than being so gifted. My husband wouldn't be happy; she's his favorite!

231 From Mme Martin to her brother, August 23, 1868

232 I think we're again going to have the tragedy of losing little Joseph; he's very near death.
233 This morning Louis assured me that it would take a miracle to save him, everyone tells me
234 as much. He's been so much worse since Tuesday. Until then, his condition was not serious
235 and didn't prevent him from sleeping or eating. He even seemed not to suffer because he
236 was very cheerful and never cried, only he didn't thrive. For the last five days he's been
237 throwing up everything he eats.

238 I saw two doctors; one prescribed nothing and the other not much. I believe they don't have
239 any hope of saving him. I'm truly disheartened, and I don't even have the strength to take
240 care of him. It tears my heart out to see a little person suffer so much. He only has a
241 mournful cry. For forty-eight hours he hasn't closed his eyes. He's doubled over with pain.
242 When you receive this letter, he will probably be dead.

243 So, my dear friends, if you come, you see the joy that awaits you. However, I always hope. I
244 can't imagine that God will not leave my dear little boy with me.

245

246 From Mme Martin to her brother, August 24, 1868

247 My dear Isidore,

248 My dear little Joseph died this morning at 7 o'clock (*he was eight months old*). I was alone
249 with him. He had a night of cruel suffering, and tearfully I asked for his deliverance. My
250 heart was relieved when I saw him utter his last sigh. . . .

251 I am, for life, your loving and very unhappy sister.

252

253 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, August 29, 1868

254 My brother asked me to give you an account of what happened today. He's tired, and I sent
255 him to rest.

256 This morning, at seven o'clock, we both said the prayers for the dying at my father's
257 bedside. At ten o'clock, he began to feel better. This improvement continued throughout the
258 day, and we hope to save him. He speaks much more freely and is interested in everything.
259 This evening he's a little worse, the fever returned. I'm afraid of what will happen during
260 the night.

261 Goodbye, my dear sister. As you see, I'm in great pain. This is a sad week for me. My dear
262 little angel, who was so beautiful, had to leave us.

263 I wish with all my heart that you'll never know such sorrow. And my poor father, I'm so
264 afraid of losing him too.

265

266

267 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, September 3, 1868**

268 You know the latest loss we have suffered. This morning, at five o'clock, our good father
 269 offered up his soul into the hands of God. Last night the fever returned. He had been feeling
 270 better all day, and the doctor hoped to save him. I stayed to take care of him until midnight.
 271 Our poor dear father suffered horribly, and I shudder just thinking about it. Each breath was
 272 an effort. However, I had seen him this bad before, and I hesitated a long time before calling
 273 my brother, who so needed his rest. I believed our good father was going to get better, as he
 274 had done so many times before. . . .

275 At five o'clock, the servant called him to tell him that my father's eyes were lifeless and that
 276 he had died. There was still time. They came to look for me, and I was barely able to see his
 277 last sigh. I'd been well expecting that the end was quite near, but my heart was broken in
 278 sorrow and, at the same time, full of heavenly consolation. . . .

279 His grave will be very near that of my two little Josephs (in the cemetery of Our Lady of
 280 Alençon).

281 Good-bye, my dear sister, I embrace you, as well as your little Jeanne. But each time I
 282 intend to speak of her, my heart aches to think of my little Joseph, who was such a
 283 handsome and sweet little boy! I had eagerly looked forward to showing him to you, but
 284 what can you do. I'm used to sorrow....

285

286 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, September 7, 1868**

287 I'm truly touched by the very affectionate concern you showed me, and I'm very grateful to
 288 you for it. I'm sorry that poor Isidore is sick, but he has to be reasonable and resign himself
 289 to the will of God.

290 I preach to others, and I'm hardly reasonable myself. Saturday, I looked everywhere for my
 291 father, it seemed to me that I was going to find him. I couldn't imagine that I was going to
 292 be separated from him forever. Yesterday, I went to the cemetery. To see me, one would
 293 have said, "Here is the most indifferent person in the world." I was kneeling at the foot of
 294 his grave, and I couldn't pray. A few steps away I knelt by that of my two little angels, the
 295 same apparent indifference....

296 I walked along a path I had taken five weeks ago with my little baby and my father. I
 297 couldn't tell you all I was feeling. I didn't pay attention to anything happening around me. I
 298 looked at the places where my father had sat, and I stood there, almost without thinking.
 299 Never in my life had I felt such heartache. When I arrived home, I couldn't eat. It seemed as
 300 if I would now be indifferent to any misfortune that happened to me.

301 If you knew, my dear sister, how much I loved my father! He was always with me, I never
 302 left him; he would help me as much as he could.

303 This morning I received a letter from Élise. She told me that, at first, she cried so much that
 304 she lost her voice, but now her soul rejoices in thinking of the grace God gave us in the holy
 305 death of our father. Apparently, within the Community, they're making the Stations of the
 306 Cross and offering their Communion for the repose of his soul.

307 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, November 30, 1870

308 On the 22nd of this month we had a real alarm in Alençon. We were expecting the Prussians
309 the next day and nearly half the population of the town had left. I'd never seen such
310 desolation. Everyone hid their valuables. . . .

311 I wasn't very afraid. Nothing frightens me anymore. If I'd wanted to flee, I would have gone
312 straight to your house. But my husband would have been very upset all alone, and I would
313 have been very anxious. It was best to stay. . . .

314 In leaving Bellême to go to Alençon, they passed by Mamers [*25.3 kilometers from*
315 *Alençon*], and then they turned off and went towards Le Mans. There were twenty thousand
316 of them.

317 I'm very worried about my two little girls. People were saying there was heavy fighting
318 being waged in Le Mans, and there was no way to go get them. The railroad was
319 requisitioned by the troops, and we couldn't go by road because it was blocked off by the
320 enemy.

321 Saturday morning, I received a letter from my sister telling me not to be alarmed, that the
322 children were safer there than at home because the Prussians would never enter the
323 convents. She said many women in the town had come to ask the nuns to take in their young
324 girls.

325 But the Prussians didn't stop in Le Mans. They want to head for Paris. What worried me
326 most was that the authorities had decided that the town should put itself in a state of defense,
327 and they called up the National Guard. They sent some scouts into the forest. My husband
328 went there Saturday morning and had to spend the night, but since there was no more danger
329 they made him relieve his post at night, so he returned around midnight.

330 I'm worried and upset. However, I don't have as much reason to be, as do many others,
331 because, in all probability, Louis won't leave, and my brother is even surer yet of staying. I
332 thank God for that, but it's still quite possible that they'll make men between the ages of
333 forty and fifty go. I'm almost expecting it. My husband is not worried about this at all [Louis
334 Martin was then forty-seven years old and the head of the family. Isidore was twenty-nine
335 but his pharmacy had been considered a priority for the townspeople]. He would not ask for
336 any preferential treatment and often says that, if he were free, he would soon join the francs-
337 tireurs [name given to bands of armed French civilians created as a guerilla force to monitor
338 the movement of the enemy during the Franco-Prussian War / 1870-1871].

339 My brother is asking if we would have any money available if he needs it? The time is past
340 when I earned eight to ten thousand francs a year and my husband also made a profit from
341 the watchmaker shop. Now we can't even get money to live on. No one wants to pay their
342 debts. I truly don't know what we'll do if this continues. We haven't touched the income
343 from Crédit Foncier (a mortgage bank), nor that of the Railroads [still to be expanded], and
344 all the people who owe us money say they can't pay. We're supposed to receive seven
345 thousand francs in January from the sale of our houses on the rue des Tisons. I'm still afraid
346 that the woman who has to come up with these funds won't be able to pay us. We're
347 counting on this money to help you.

348 If we could only have the eight thousand francs that are owed us from Paris, but I look upon
349 this sum as lost! Madame D also owes us a thousand francs, and we'll never get it; she's
350 destitute.

351

352 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, January 17, 1871**

353 My dear sister,

354 I'm not sure if you know that the Prussians have been in our home since Monday morning,
355 at seven o'clock. They marched in front of the house until one o'clock in the afternoon.
356 There were twenty-five thousand of them. I couldn't describe our anxieties. . . .

357 All the townspeople are appalled. Our poor soldiers went to fight against the Prussians, who
358 were a league [less than 4 kilometers] from the village. We heard the cannon on three
359 different roads, the Mamers road, the Aunay road and the road to Le Mans, until six o'clock
360 in the evening.

361 It was pitiful to see our poor soldiers returning, some without feet, others without hands. I
362 saw one with his face covered in blood. In the end, many of them were injured, and all the
363 mobile hospitals were full. We don't know how many are dead. Among them, there are a
364 number of francs-tireurs.

365 Does it make sense, when we have so few men to fight against the enemy, to send them to
366 the slaughter like that, against an army like this one we've seen with our own eyes? . . .

367 Monday, around three o'clock, all the doors were marked with the number of enemy soldiers
368 to be housed. A big sergeant came to ask us to inspect the house. I took him up to the first
369 floor while telling him we have four children. Fortunately for us, he didn't try to go up to the
370 second floor. Finally, they made us take in nine of them, and we can't complain. In our part
371 of town, small shopkeepers who have only two apartments are taking in fifteen, twenty, and
372 even twenty-five. Those we have are neither mean nor looters, but they love to eat like I
373 have never seen. They eat everything without bread! This morning they asked for cheese. I
374 bought a big one for them, and they ate a quarter of it without even a mouthful of bread!
375 They swallow mutton stew as if it were soup.

376 I'm not bothered by them. When they ask me for too much, I tell them that it's impossible.
377 This morning they brought enough meat to feed thirty people, and we're in the process of
378 having it cooked for them. We've had to let them have the entire first floor and move to the
379 ground floor. If I told you everything, I'd have to write a book.

380 The town refused to pay the amount they demanded, and we've been threatened by reprisals.
381 . . . All the livestock in the surrounding area were taken. Now there's no more milk
382 anywhere. What will my little Céline do? She drinks a liter a day! And what are the poor
383 mothers who have only small children going to do? Nor is there any meat in the butcher
384 shops. In short, the town is in desolation. Everyone is crying except me.

385 My husband is sad. He can neither eat nor sleep. I believe he's going to get sick. I forgot to
386 tell you that, at the beginning, during the bombing of the town, there was a wooden building

387 site and many houses which were burned down. Shrapnel fell even on our street. A projectile
388 smashed a storefront very close to us. We had to go down into the cellar. . . .

389 Please, write me as soon as possible. I'm worried about you because of the occupation of the
390 country.

391

392 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, December 15, 1872**

393 I'm expecting my little angel any day now, and I'm very much at a loss because I still
394 haven't found a wet nurse.

395 I've seen several of them, but they didn't suit me perfectly, and my husband has never been
396 able to make up his mind and choose one. It's not because of the cost. It's because we're
397 afraid of bringing someone into our home who's not very suitable, as are generally all the
398 wet nurses today. . . .

399 If God gives me the grace of being able to nurse my child, it will be nothing but a pleasure
400 to raise her. As for me, I love children unto folly, I was born to have them, but it will soon
401 be time for that to be over. I'll be forty-one years old the twenty-third of this month, old
402 enough to be a grandmother.

403

404 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, January 3, 1873**

405 My little girl was born last night, Thursday, at eleven-thirty. She's very strong and in very
406 good health. They tell me she weighs eight pounds. Let's say six, which is still not bad. She
407 seems very sweet.

408 I'm very happy. However, at first I was surprised. I was so sure I was having a boy. I'd been
409 imagining this for two months because I could feel she was much stronger than my other
410 children.

411 I barely suffered a half hour. What I felt before was practically nothing. She'll be baptized
412 tomorrow, Saturday. The only thing missing to make the celebration complete is all of you.
413 Marie is going to be the godmother. . . .

414 I received your letter, as well as the box containing the New Year's gifts. I don't know if I
415 should scold you. I want to very much, and yet I also want to thank you, but everything is
416 too beautiful and too expensive. Céline wore her beautiful fur and muff for the first time on
417 the first day of the year.

418 I wish all of you a happy New Year. Please remember me to Monsieur and Madame
419 Fournet and Monsieur and Madame Maudelonde.

420

421

422

423 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, January 16, 1873

424 I'm completely recovered now. The little one (Thérèse !) is also doing well. She promises to
425 be very strong, but nevertheless, I don't dare count on it. I'm always afraid of enteritis.

426 I had begun to breastfeed her, and, fearing that this was not enough, I wanted to help by
427 giving her a bottle. This worked very well until Sunday, but the famous bottle spoiled
428 everything. It was impossible to make her go back to breastfeeding. I tried everything. I let
429 her fast, but she cried so pitifully I had to give in. . . .

430 My little one is not at all difficult during the day, but at night she often makes us pay dearly
431 for her good day. Last night I held her until eleven thirty. I was exhausted, and I couldn't do
432 it anymore. Fortunately, afterwards she didn't do anything but sleep.

433 This child is named Thérèse, like my last little girl. Everybody tells me that she'll be
434 beautiful. She already laughs. I saw this for the first time on Tuesday. I thought I was
435 mistaken, but yesterday it was impossible to doubt it any longer. She looked at me very
436 carefully, then gave me a delightful smile.

437 While I was carrying her, I noticed something that never happened with my other children -
438 when I sang, she would sing with me.... I'm confiding this to you. No one would believe it.

439

440 From Mme Martin to her brother, January 17, 1873

441 ... I'm extremely worried about my little Thérèse. I'm afraid she has an intestinal illness. I
442 notice the same alarming symptoms as those of my other children who died. Must I lose this
443 one, too?

444 Tell me how I should feed her, if the bread water with half milk is suitable. All she's been
445 doing is sleeping this morning for three and a half hours. . . .

446 I don't know if it's the weakness that causes this sleepiness, and I'm very anxious. As for
447 me, I barely sleep more than two hours because I'm almost constantly around the little one,
448 who for some time has been very restless a good part of the night.

449 If you can write me and encourage me with your advice, that would make me very happy
450 because I need it so much

451

452 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, March 1873

453 Since I wrote to you, I've had so much trouble. My little girl [Thérèse] became worse and
454 worse. Last Monday I sent for another doctor, Dr. Belloc. He came around five o'clock in
455 the evening. After examining the baby, he asked me what I had been giving her. I told him
456 what I'd been doing. He thought that this was good but not enough to nourish her in the
457 weak state that she was in. He thinks that one can feed a baby without milk for two or three
458 days, but not more. And for two weeks she didn't take anything but barley water almost
459 without milk and for two days gruel water without milk. Finally, he said to me, "This child
460 must be breastfed right away. That's the only thing that can save her."

461 I didn't know what to do because I couldn't think of feeding her myself, and I didn't have
462 any wet nurse in mind. I explained my dilemma to him, and he gave me a prescription.
463 Twice a day I had to give her a spoonful of rice water and one of lime water in two
464 spoonfuls of milk.

465 When I saw the prescription I said to myself, "My little girl is lost. She won't be able to
466 tolerate two-thirds milk in the state she's in." Madame Leriche [Marie Nanteau Leriche, the
467 wife of Louis' nephew, Adolphe Leriche] came to see her that night. She was so shaken that
468 she went to bed without eating dinner and could only cry. She looked at her child and said,
469 "If he were in that state, I would die!" Finally, that night I was looking for a way to find a
470 wet nurse at all costs when I remembered a woman I know very well and who suits me in
471 every respect [Rose Taillé]. But her child is exactly one year older than mine, and I thought
472 the milk was too old.

473 It was 7 o'clock, and I left to go to the doctor's house. I spoke to him about the wet nurse
474 who's been nursing her child for one year. He thought about it a little and said to me, "You
475 must hire her right away. She's the only option we have now to save your baby, and if this
476 doesn't save her, at least you'll have nothing to reproach yourself for." If it hadn't been so
477 late, I would have left that moment to go and get the wet nurse. The night seemed long to
478 me. My little one almost didn't want to drink. All the gravest signs that preceded the deaths
479 of my other little angels were present, and I was very sad, convinced that the poor darling
480 wouldn't take the breast given her weak state.

481 So, at daybreak I left to go to the wet nurse who lives in Semallé, almost two leagues [five
482 miles] from Alençon. My husband was away, and I didn't want to entrust the success of my
483 mission to anyone else. On a deserted country road, I met two men who frightened me, but I
484 said to myself, "Even if they killed me, it wouldn't matter." I had death in my soul. Finally, I
485 arrived at the wet nurse's house and asked her if she would come with me right away to live
486 with us full time. She told me she couldn't leave her children and her house, but she would
487 stay with us a week and then take the little one home with her. I agreed, knowing that my
488 baby would do very well in her home. This woman had already cared for one of my
489 children.

490 We left together after a half-hour, and we arrived home at ten-thirty. The maid said to me, "I
491 wasn't able to make her drink. She didn't want to take anything." The wet nurse looked at
492 the child and shook her head with an expression that seemed to say, "I made this trip for
493 nothing!" I quickly went upstairs to my room. I knelt at the feet of Saint Joseph and asked
494 him for mercy, that the little one be cured, resigning myself completely to the will of God if
495 He wanted to take her. I don't cry often, but I cried while I was praying. I didn't know if I
496 should go downstairs ... finally, I decided to go. And what did I see? The child was suckling
497 with all her heart. She didn't let go of her hold until about one o'clock in the afternoon. She
498 threw up a few mouthfuls and fell against her wet nurse as if she were dead.

499 There were five of us around her. We were all stunned. There was a worker who was crying.
500 As for me, my blood froze. The child had no visible breath. We bent down to try and find
501 some sign of life, but it was no use. We saw nothing, but she was so calm, so peaceful, that I
502 thanked God for having let her die so gently. Finally, a quarter of an hour passed. My little
503 Thérèse opened her eyes and began to smile. From that moment on, she was completely
504 cured. Her healthy appearance returned as well as her cheerfulness. Since then, everything is
505 better.

506 But my poor little one has left [Thérèse was entrusted to Rose from March 1873, to April
507 1874]. It's very sad to have raised a child for two months and then to have to entrust her to
508 strangers' hands. What consoles me is knowing that God wants it this way, since I did
509 everything I could to raise her myself. So, I have nothing to reproach myself for in this
510 regard. I would really have preferred to keep the wet nurse at my house, as would my
511 husband. He didn't want the others, but he very much wanted this one. He knows her to be
512 an excellent woman. . . .

513 You'll think of this what you want, but I hope with all my heart that you never have a child
514 in this state. You don't know what to do or how to handle it. You're afraid of not giving her
515 the right thing. It's a continual death. You'd have to go through it to know what a torture it
516 is. I don't know if Purgatory is worse than this. Well, here's another hard trial that's over.

517

518 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, March 30, 1873**

519 My dear sister, I'm sorry to hear of the fire you told me about [*on March 27, there was a*
520 *fire at Isidore Guérin's drug business, located across the street from his pharmacy*]. When I
521 think of all the trouble my brother went through to organize his drug business and, in an
522 instant, to see all his efforts lost. One must have a great deal of faith and resignation to
523 accept this setback without complaint and with submission to God's will.

524 As for me, I feel the consequences of this misfortune. This, joined with the tribulations I
525 already have, has taken away my courage. I just wrote a letter to my little girls that is hardly
526 going to delight them. I just spoke to them about your disaster and the troubles of this world.
527 It's true that each person has a cross to bear, but there are some for whom it is heavier than
528 others. My dear sister, you've already begun to see that life is not a bed of roses. God wills
529 this to detach us from the world and raise our thoughts toward Heaven.

530 Yesterday, while going with the doctor to see my little Thérèse, who is very sick, I noticed a
531 beautiful château and some magnificent properties. I said to myself that all of that is nothing.
532 We'll only be happy when all of us, we and our children, are reunited in Heaven, and I
533 offered up my child to God.

534

535 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, May 5, 1873**

536 My dear Pauline,

537 I don't have good news to tell you. Marie is not at all better [typhoid]. We're all sorry to see
538 that this illness continues to go on like this. . . .

539 Marie wants me to tell you that little Thérèse came to see us yesterday. We weren't
540 expecting her. The wet nurse arrived with her four children at eleven thirty, just as we were
541 sitting down at the table. She put the baby in our arms and left immediately for Mass.

542 Yes, but the little one didn't want this. She cried almost to the point of passing out! Her
543 father left almost without eating. The entire house was in disarray. I had to send Louise
544 [Marais] to tell the wet nurse to come immediately after the Mass because she was supposed

545 to go buy shoes for her children. The wet nurse left halfway through the Mass and came
546 running. I was annoyed over this. The little one wouldn't have died from crying. Oh well,
547 she was instantly consoled. She's very strong, and everybody's surprised. I walked her and
548 shook her so much to make her stop crying that I got a backache from it that lasted the entire
549 day. We don't find her as beautiful as little Céline. She is, however, very pretty. In other
550 words, it's Céline who, for the moment, has the first prize for beauty, but we can't judge
551 Thérèse yet. She's too little; a tiny baby of four months hasn't blossomed. . . .

552 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, May 22, 1873**

553 My dear Pauline,

554 . . . A week from Monday we'll go by carriage to see little Thérèse. She's very strong now. I
555 saw her last Thursday. Her wet nurse brought her, but she no longer wants to stay with us.
556 She let out piercing screams when she didn't see the wet nurse anymore. So, Louise had to
557 take her to the market where "little Rose" was selling her butter. There was no other way of
558 handling it.

559 As soon as she saw her wet nurse, she looked at her and started laughing. Then she didn't
560 breathe another word. She stayed like that, selling butter with all the good women, until
561 noon! As for me, I can't hold her for a long time without getting very tired; she weighs
562 fourteen pounds. She'll be very good and even very pretty later on.

563 Your father leaves Tuesday on a pilgrimage to Chartres [this pilgrimage took place May 27-
564 28]. He won't be back until Wednesday during the night.

565 Goodbye, my dear Pauline, I hug you with all my heart.

566

567 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, July 1, 1873**

568 My dear little Pauline,

569 . . . Thursday the wet nurse brought little Thérèse. She did nothing but laugh. She especially
570 liked little Céline, who made her scream with laughter. You could say she already wants to
571 play. That will come soon. She holds herself up on her little legs, stiff as a post, and I think
572 she's going to start walking early.

573 Now she's eating well, and I assure you she finds my porridge good! I made a lot on
574 Thursday so little Céline could also have some, but Thérèse didn't think it was too much.
575 All that was left was the part stuck to the pot.

576 We decided that we won't go to see her until next month when you're here. We don't want
577 to have that pleasure without Pauline. . . . I wouldn't be able to go so long without seeing the
578 baby, but the wet nurse brings her to me on Thursdays.

579 Your father just told me to give you a big hug for him. He's leaving to go fishing, his
580 favorite pastime.

581 Goodbye, my Pauline. I also hug you with all my heart.

582 Your loving mother.

583

584 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, July 20, 1873**

585 . . . Céline is big for her age, but she's not strong. I'm always afraid she'll fall ill like little
586 Hélène. Thérèse is a big baby, tanned by the sun. Her wet nurse takes her into the fields,
587 carrying her in a wheelbarrow on top of a load of grass. She almost never cries. "Little
588 Rose" says that you could never see a cuter baby. So, as you see, my dear sister, all is going
589 well. The beginning of the year was sad for me, but apparently the end of the year will be
590 better.

591

592 **From Mme Martin to Louis Martin, Lisieux, August 31, 1873**

593 My dear Louis,

594 We arrived yesterday afternoon at four thirty. My brother was waiting for us at the station
595 and was delighted to see us. He and his wife are doing everything they can to entertain us.
596 This evening, Sunday, there's a beautiful reception in their home in our honor. Tomorrow,
597 Monday, we're going to Trouville. Tuesday there will be a big dinner at the home of
598 Madame Maudelonde and, perhaps, a drive to the country house of Madame Fournet [in
599 Saint-Ouen-le-Pin]. The children are thrilled and if the weather were good, they'd be
600 ecstatic.

601 As for me, I'm finding it hard to relax! None of that interests me! I'm absolutely like the fish
602 you pull out of the water. They're no longer in their element and they have to perish! This
603 would have the same effect on me if I had to stay a lot longer. I feel uncomfortable, I'm out
604 of sorts. This is affecting me physically, and it's almost making me sick. However, I'm
605 reasoning with myself and trying to gain the upper hand. I'm with you in spirit all day, and I
606 say to myself, "Now he must be doing such and such a thing."

607 I'm longing to be near you, my dear Louis. I love you with all my heart, and I feel my
608 affection so much more when you're not here with me. It would be impossible for me to live
609 apart from you.

610 This morning I attended three Masses. I went to the one at six o'clock, made my
611 thanksgiving and said my prayers during the seven o'clock Mass, and returned for the high
612 Mass.

613 My brother is not unhappy with his business. It's going well enough.

614 Tell Léonie and Céline that I kiss them tenderly and will bring them a souvenir from
615 Lisieux.

616 I'll try to write you tomorrow, if possible, but I don't know what time we'll return from
617 Trouville. I'm hurrying because they're waiting for me to go visiting. We return Wednesday
618 evening at seven thirty. How long that seems to me!

619 I kiss you with all my love. The little girls want me to tell you that they're very happy to
620 have come to Lisieux and they send you big hugs.

621

622 **From Mme Martin to M. and Mme Guérin, October 27, 1873**

623 This morning I received your letter, and it made me very happy. I've already read it many
624 times because I always read your letters several times to make the pleasure last as long as I
625 can. . . .

626 I brought the children back to Le Mans on the 8th of this month. Léonie still hasn't started
627 school there yet. I pushed that back until the first of the year. If it weren't so important to me
628 that her aunt prepare her for First Communion, she'd never go to the Visitation Monastery,
629 but I want to see if our sister manages to change her, as I hope.

630 Céline doesn't go to class. I'm teaching her to read myself. She's such a delicate child that I
631 have to keep her near me. In spite of all my care, I'm very afraid I won't be able to raise her.
632 She's almost always burning with fever. She's a little girl who's turning out exactly like her
633 little sister Hélène. Thérèse is still doing very well. She's very big and strong. She holds
634 herself up leaning against the chairs, and I think she'll be walking by her first birthday. My
635 husband went to Lourdes on a diocesan pilgrimage and brought us back two little stones
636 broken off from a rock a few meters from the Grotto of the Apparition. . . .

637 When the pilgrims returned to Alençon there was an enormous crowd around the station and
638 all along the road. I was unable to go meet Louis, and it was fortunate! One would have said
639 I suspected what was going to happen. The travelers were wearing all the badges from the
640 pilgrimage.

641 My husband left first, with a little red cross attached to his chest. Several people heckled
642 him, and others laughed. But that was nothing compared to what happened next. When they
643 saw most of the pilgrims wearing rosaries around their necks with beads as big as chestnuts,
644 they insulted them in every way. Several were brought to the police station. However, they
645 [the pilgrims] didn't return in a procession because the town council had forbidden it.

646

647 **From Mme Martin to Marie and Pauline, November 1, 1873**

648 My dear little daughters,

649 . . . I haven't seen little Thérèse since the day we all went together to Semallé, and I miss her
650 very much. And yet I have to make up my mind to go there, but it's very hard for me. It's so
651 far away! Fortunately, she won't have to stay there much longer. . . .

652 My dear little daughters, I must go to Vespers to pray for the intention of our dear late
653 relatives. There will come a day when you will go there for me, but I have to see to it that I
654 won't have too much need of your prayers. I want to become a saint, and that won't be easy.
655 There's a lot of wood to chop and the wood is as hard as rock. It would have been better if
656 I'd tried earlier, while it was less difficult. Well, "better late than never."

657

658 **From Mme Martin to her brother Isidore and his wife, January 11, 1874**

659 ... Last Monday I took the children back to the Visitation Monastery. Léonie was delighted
660 to go. If she likes it there and they're able to educate her, I'll let her be a boarding student
661 for a good many years. . . .

662 My little Thérèse has been walking on her own since Thursday. She's as gentle and cute as a
663 little angel. Already we see that she has a delightful nature, and she has such a sweet smile.
664 I'm longing to have her home with us.

665

666 **From Sister Marie-Dosithée to Mr. and Mrs. Guérin. 8th February 1874**

667 . . . Nearly all our children have got colds here, including Marie and Pauline who have had
668 bad ones and a temperature, they had to stay in bed for several days, now they are better,
669 although weak. Marie never fully recovered from her typhoid fever; even though she is not
670 ill anymore, she isn't very well. Pauline is pale, nobody in this little family is strong, not
671 even their mother (...)

672 pains in her back and her chest and a cough all winter! If she isn't careful, she won't last
673 long; it would however be a great loss to her family. I would have liked her to consult the
674 doctor before beginning the Lenten fast she intends to do, because even though many people
675 dispense with this obligation too lightly, I believe that it would be prudent of her to ask the
676 doctor for advice since he is a religious man and is trustworthy on this point.

677 You wanted me to give you news of Léonie: it's no small matter I assure you having three
678 children to manage it is a lot of trouble it is difficult to train children to be virtuous; you are
679 already experiencing it with your little Jeanne, it's not over you've only just started you will
680 need a great deal of patience to reach your goal, but above all, put your trust in God, that's
681 the key! Human beings are nothing but instruments God wants to use, but they must
682 recognize their limitations, make an effort as if everything depended on them and yet only
683 expect their success to come from God and I assure you that by acting in this way the Lord
684 pours out his blessings and everything goes wonderfully. I have proof in my Léonie; as you
685 know this poor child had a good many faults; during the first month I scolded her when she
686 didn't do things right and that happened, so frequently that I hardly did anything else...

687 (especially since her sisters kept coming and accusing her, I could see very well that I would
688 make this little girl unhappy without (...)) and that's what I didn't want, I wanted to be an
689 example of God's Providence to her so I implored God to help and enlighten me because I
690 only had good intentions. I began therefore to treat her more gently by avoiding scolding,
691 and by telling her that I saw she wanted to be good and please me, that I had confidence in
692 her. This produced a magic effect that was not only immediate but also lasting, because it is
693 continuing and I find her entirely sweet, I am more pleased with her than with her sisters.
694 What is unimaginable is the desire she has to please me, it makes her overcome her laziness
695 – she is studying well now, she comes to me candidly to tell me what she has done wrong, I
696 told her I wanted her to do so, and she is very obedient. And this is the one whom we
697 thought was heartless and who does in fact love more than the others, I hope God will bless

698 our efforts and that she will become very good, because there is still work to do and we will
699 still more than once need to season our gentleness with firmness.

700

701 **From Sister Marie-Dosithée to Zélie Martin. February-March 1874**

702 . . . I can only say one thing. Léonie does give me trouble it's true but no more than Marie
703 did, she has faults, but she has many qualities as well, she has such a good heart and is very
704 obedient. She never answers back no matter what we say to her unlike her 2 sisters who
705 always want to be in the right; but her biggest fault is that she doesn't understand, no more
706 than if she were a child of 3.

707

708

709 **From Sister Marie-Dosithée to Mr. and Mrs. Guérin, 5th April 1874**

710 My dear Brother and my dear sister

711 . . . I am expecting Zélie tomorrow, it won't be a joyous visit I assure you, she must fetch
712 her Léonie, what can we do with this poor Léonie? what a cross! how I pity my poor dear
713 sister! How I would like to be able to help her!... but I can't do anything, nothing at all!...
714 However, I hope in the Lord, yes and with all my strength, I have so much faith in him! I do
715 not distrust him in the least! I know him so [2r^o] well, he can do whatever he likes I shall
716 hope in him and not be confounded.

717 Friday 10th. I saw Zélie, she was very resigned, she thinks that when children are not like
718 others it is the parents' duty to have the bother of looking after them; but in the meantime
719 she doesn't know what to do, she is going to keep her, her pain is great, she was so confident
720 that the gentleness and love of the Visitation convent would change her daughter and now
721 this hope has vanished; I hope that God will come to her aid. . . .

722

723 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, June 1, 1874**

724 I know you've learned from her aunt in Le Mans of my poor Léonie's departure from the
725 boarding school [second and final attempt]. As you can imagine, this upsets me greatly. That
726 doesn't say it enough. This has caused me profound sorrow which still continues. My sister
727 was my only hope to reform this child, and I was convinced they would keep her. But it
728 wasn't possible, in spite of their best good will, or else they would have had to separate her
729 from the other children. As soon as she found herself in their company, she couldn't control
730 herself and displayed a lack of discipline without equal.

731 Finally, I believe that only a miracle could change her nature. It's true, I don't deserve a
732 miracle, and yet I hope against all hope. The more I see her being difficult, the more I
733 convince myself that God will not permit her to remain that way. I'll pray so much that He'll
734 let Himself be swayed. At the age of eighteen months, she was cured of an illness that could

735 have killed her. Why would God have saved her from death and not plan to show her
736 mercy?

737 I would have liked to take her on the pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial, which leaves June 25,
738 because it was through the intercession of Blessed Margaret Mary [Alacoque] that she was
739 cured before, but I can't go away at that time. On the other hand, I'm intending to take her,
740 every year, to Notre-Dame de Séz on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

741 I would lose my mind over it, but thank God, I'm consoled by other things. Marie and
742 Pauline are as well as possible. Céline and Thérèse show a lot of promise. There's only one
743 thing that worries me about Céline; she's terribly thin. She's growing a lot. I'm always
744 afraid she'll become like my little Hélène.

745 As for my big Thérèse, it's not the same. I've never had such a strong child, except for the
746 first. She seems very intelligent. I'm very happy to have her, and I think she'll be the last.
747 She'll be beautiful, she's already graceful. I love her little mouth, which the wet nurse used
748 to tell me was "big as an eye!"

749 I hug you with all my heart, as well as my brother. Your affectionate sister, Z.
750 Martin

751

752 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, July 24, 1874**

753 . . . I'm very satisfied with my two oldest daughters, and, on the other hand, I'm deeply
754 saddened to see Léonie as she is. Sometimes I have hope, but often I lose heart. My sister
755 told me however that she's convinced Léonie will become a saint.

756 She's going to take lessons in the afternoon at the home of two elderly women (former nuns)
757 who taught in the past and can cope better. I'm happy to have found them, but it's painful to
758 have to go there because she'd be much better off with her sisters.

759

760 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, January 13, 1875**

761 . . . I'm having so many problems with my poor Léonie. You know that every day she was
762 taking lessons in the home of two elderly retired nuns. I wasn't dissatisfied with the way
763 they were teaching her, and then, all of a sudden, I discovered something about these so-
764 called good Sisters [two elderly teachers had put on a religious habit to command respect]
765 that absolutely prevents me from continuing to entrust Léonie to them.

766 Imagine that they let languish a poor eight-year-old child [Armandine V.] they'd adopted,
767 supposedly out of charity. I began to learn of this story two months ago. Before acting, I
768 wanted to be very sure of what I suspected because it would cost me a great deal to
769 denounce them. But last Thursday, an event made up my mind completely.

770 There's a big uproar here that I won't begin to tell you, but which has already caused me and
771 will still cause me a great deal of concern and a lot of aggravation. I was able to obtain a
772 place at The Refuge for the little girl, and I'm waiting for her mother, so she'll take her

773 there. I told the Sisters the whole truth of what I thought of them, these unfortunate
774 hypocrites who pray, or pretend to pray, to God from morning 'til night, and I took Léonie
775 away from them.

776

777 **From Mme Martin to Marie and Pauline, January 17, 1875**

778 My dear little girls,

779 I received your letters which made me very, very happy.

780 I see you enjoyed yourselves a lot, much more than I did, because I can tell you that I just
781 went through the most disturbing two weeks of my life. You're going to ask yourselves, "So
782 what happened that was so distressing?" And perhaps you're going to find that it's nothing
783 when I explain to you that it's about little Armandine V. Since I have nothing new to write
784 you about other than this, I'm going to tell you the whole story.

785 You know what an unshakable aversion I had to upsetting the good Sisters who are giving
786 lessons to Léonie. It was stronger than I was, I couldn't bring myself to do it. But the
787 Thursday after you left, I learned some things that shook me so much all my scruples
788 vanished.

789 They had left Armandine without anything to eat from morning until three-thirty in the
790 afternoon. That is to say, at noon they gave her five or six spoonfuls of soup. It's true they
791 would have dined earlier had it not been for a visitor who'd detained them. Finally, at three-
792 thirty they gave her a tiny piece of bread with a little fat from the cold beef stew while they
793 themselves ate mutton. The little one begged them to at least give her a little piece of cheese,
794 and they called her bold. So she had to content herself with her dry bread, and in such small
795 quantity that she pleaded with them for some more, which they brutally refused. Léonie had
796 forgotten to bring her the afternoon snack I usually prepared for this poor child.

797 In the evening, while going to pick up Léonie, the maid saw Armandine looking haggard
798 and asked her, "Are you sick?" She replied, "I have a stomach ache; they don't want to give
799 me anything to eat. They gave me so little that I'm as starved as I was before."

800 When they told me this, I was so outraged I didn't want to take the time to have dinner. I
801 immediately wrote to the priest in Banner, where the little one is from, to question him about
802 Armandine's mother and if she would consent to come for her daughter and put her in The
803 Refuge.

804 The next day I sent the little one two slices of bread and jam in a basket she'd forgotten at
805 our house the other day. I had a premonition that everything was going to be exposed that
806 day, so I told Léonie how she had to respond. My predictions came true. Armandine, for fear
807 of being discovered, hid her basket under her apron, even though Léonie had advised her not
808 to do it so she wouldn't look like she was hiding something. That's all it took, and the good
809 Sisters wanted to see what she was hiding.

810 Finally, an hour later, I received a visit from Sister Saint-Louis (one of the women
811 pretending to be a nun). My heart was pounding very strongly, but I'd decided not to show
812 her any consideration, and I was even happy that the situation had presented itself. I told her

813 why I sent bread to this child ... and in terms the Sister probably found too strong. However,
814 she wasn't angry; she was even laughing the entire time. She took my hands.... I offered to
815 provide bread for the little one on the condition that they would let her eat as much as she
816 wanted. She answered, laughing the whole time that she wouldn't promise that; and then she
817 left, still laughing!

818 When the maid went to get Léonie, the scene had changed. Sister Saint-Louis was crying
819 and playing the persecuted saint, saying that this was one more pearl in her crown. She said
820 God had suffered a lot more, and she would return good for evil and take care of my
821 daughter with as much love and concern as in the past....

822 Louise was confused. As for me, I didn't let myself be taken in because I knew more or less
823 who I was dealing with. My intention was to remove Léonie, but I thought it would be better
824 to send her the next day, which was Saturday, in order to have Armandine come to our
825 house on Sunday. I thought the Sisters wouldn't dare refuse me this, and I wanted to
826 question her in depth.

827 Saturday morning, I went to The Refuge. Faced with such a deed, the Superior welcomed
828 my request right away. She told me they didn't have room, but they would make a place for
829 my protégé.

830 Finally, on Sunday, I had the little one with me, who had been badly beaten because of all
831 this. Then she said to me, "You know, Madame, since you spoke to them, I eat all that I
832 want." And she told me the foolishness of every kind that Sister Saint-Louis had rattled off
833 against me.

834 I was committed. That night I wrote a beautiful letter to Sister Saint-Louis, a letter that
835 would have moved the heart of a rock. I assure you, it was nicely phrased! I thanked her for
836 the good care she had given my daughter, but I informed her that, given the present
837 situation, I thought I shouldn't send her to them anymore. In addition, I'd thoroughly
838 persuaded the little one to go to The Refuge. She was looking forward to it and had
839 promised to give her mother a warm welcome when she comes to get her.

840 Tuesday a woman who prepared the child's work – for Armandine worked a little on lace –
841 went to the Sisters' home. The little one begged her to quickly come find me so that I let her
842 mama know right away to come get her because the Sisters made her very unhappy. The
843 next day I sent Louise and Léonie to thank the nuns and pay them. Sister Saint-Louis was
844 just about to leave to pay me a visit. Louise said to her, "Don't go, Sister, it's possible
845 something unpleasant will be said." She answered, "I want to go there."

846 She did, indeed, arrive, with a courtesy I can't describe. She assured me, while trying to cry,
847 that if I'd thought she was a saint, she wanted to humble herself before me and free me of
848 this notion. She went on like this for a quarter of an hour. I answered, "But, Sister, you use
849 the language of a saint, the saints spoke no better than you do." Her face glowed because she
850 thought she had won me over with her humility and I was going to throw myself at her
851 feet....

852 I continued, "So, Sister, do you regret what you made the child endure?" Then her face took
853 on a fierce expression, and she declared that none of my accusations were true. I answered
854 her coolly, without getting angry, that everything I accused her of in my letter was the truth,
855 and she left controlling her rage as well as she could.

856 Then I received a letter from the priest in Banner who had known these unfortunate people.
857 He told me they had never been nuns, they'd worn the habit without any right to do so, and
858 he'd had them thrown out of his parish. He said he wasn't surprised by what had taken place
859 and was going to inform Armandine's mother.

860 Seeing that she wasn't able to convince me by her humility, Sister Saint-Louis sent
861 Mademoiselle E to see me on Thursday. Mademoiselle E is a good person taken in by
862 beautiful speeches and who, in spite of all that the child had revealed, didn't want to believe
863 me. I told her nothing would be able to shake my conviction, and I wouldn't have gotten so
864 involved without being sure of the facts. Then she told me the little one had confided in her
865 that she was going to leave for The Refuge and that I had written to her mother. This
866 revelation did not make me happy. I was afraid this young woman would take the initiative
867 and prevent me from carrying out my plan.

868 Finally, from Thursday to Saturday I heard nothing. I was already anxious, and it seemed to
869 me I would see Armandine's mother at any moment, and then what would happen? I
870 foresaw many difficulties, but I never suspected those that awaited me! About four o'clock
871 in the afternoon I saw a woman come up to one of our windows that was slightly open, and
872 she asked me if number 36 was nearby. I realized right away that she was the little one's
873 mama. She came in and said to me, "I just left the Sisters' house. I took hold of my child and
874 wanted to take her with me. As I reached the doorway, they opened their window and
875 shouted, 'Help! A child abductor!' A crowd gathered, and four sturdy men snatched the little
876 one from my hands while the Sisters were spewing a flood of foolish remarks directed at
877 you, Madame, and at me!"

878 Faced with this situation, I asked for Mademoiselle X, who knew everything and had offered
879 to act as an intermediary, if necessary. She immediately went to find the Sisters to explain
880 all the trouble they would get into by acting this way. They wanted to hear nothing of it,
881 saying that they would go all the way to the end.

882 So I saw myself forced to go with your father – I, for the first time in my life – to the Police
883 Station. The Police Chief wasn't there. They told us that they would not remove a child
884 under these conditions, the matter would not be resolved for a while and, finally, perhaps we
885 could see the Police Chief the next day, but it wasn't certain.

886 The poor mother was devastated. She's a good person who had entrusted her child to the
887 Sisters, persuaded that by doing so, she was ensuring her happiness. The nuns had made her
888 beautiful promises, to the point that Armandine would inherit all that they owned!

889 "I thought my child was very happy," she continued, "because she just wrote me that she
890 was the happiest little girl in Alençon." Your father, hearing this, was outraged by such a
891 deception and exclaimed, "So the other children are like Blessed Labre, who ate the cabbage
892 cores from the garbage!"

893 While feeling we had done our duty, he regretted, however, the child's fate that had become
894 known to us. I didn't sleep that night, that is, I had in total two hours of nightmares. I
895 dreamed I saw the little girl, emaciated, begging me to have pity on her, and across from her,
896 the face of Sister Saint-Louis appeared as a diabolical vision and I woke up with a start.

897 So I got up early the next morning and wrote to the Police Chief to tell him this woman's
898 story, who couldn't remain in Alençon for long because she has a small business. I was

899 insistent that he settle the matter as soon as possible. I even added that she would live on his
 900 doorstep until she could see him, quite determined not to leave it in spite of the rain. He
 901 didn't wait long. He received her and said many complimentary things about your father.
 902 During this time I was at High Mass. There was a sermon, but I don't know what they
 903 preached about. That's how much I was absorbed in my thoughts. I'm sure you're bored
 904 with this long epistle. However, my children, all this is an event for me. I believe God
 905 permitted this thing to expose these unfortunate people and snatch their prey from them.

906 If they had succeeded in keeping the little one for a longer time, they would have taken
 907 advantage of it by getting everyone to think badly of me. Out of malice, they would say I'd
 908 wanted to rob them of their protégé for my own benefit, but the law decided in their favor.
 909 They would have believed it, and I truly had a narrow escape! Finally, thank God, I was
 910 relieved of this problem, but Léonie is still there, and what to do about it? I believe the more
 911 she goes, the more she finds it difficult to learn. I don't know what's going to become of all
 912 this. However, if after many trials and tribulations I can succeed as I did with little
 913 Armandine, I'd be happier than if she'd always given me satisfaction.

914 I'd wanted to entertain you with little stories about Thérèse, but this will be for another time.
 915 She talks continuously about Marie and Pauline who are in Le Mans. Yesterday, little
 916 Thérèse fell against the table leg and cracked her forehead down to the bone. The split was a
 917 good centimeter wide, and I think it will leave a life-long scar [the scar disappeared
 918 completely]. I'm devastated over it.

919 Your father sends you a kiss, and I do, too. Your loving mother

920

921 **From Mme Martin to her sister, August 31, 1875 [the only letter preserved]**

922 I was delighted by our trip to Lisieux. I have a sister-in-law who has a kindness and a
 923 sweetness that are incomparable. Marie says that she doesn't know her to have any faults,
 924 and neither do I. I find that Isidore, in spite of all his problems, is very happy to have such a
 925 wife. It would take a long time to tell you her virtues, but that will be for later.

926 I assure you that I love her as much as a sister, she seems to feel the same way and shows
 927 my children an almost maternal affection. She showed them every possible attention and did
 928 everything to make our lives pleasant. If I seemed worried, she looked at me with sympathy,
 929 this seemed to hurt her. Marie quickly came over to say to me, "Mama, please, look more
 930 cheerful. My aunt thinks you're sad, and she's hurt over it." I answered her, "Leave me
 931 alone, I can't do better." And I reproach myself for it!

932 Monday we were in the countryside. I went there reluctantly to accompany the others. Then
 933 we settled in a meadow to rest, and during this time my sister-in-law secretly went to
 934 prepare a snack for us. When she brought it to us, I was so upset at the trouble she went to
 935 that I was far from showing appropriate gratitude. She contented herself with laughing at my
 936 apparent coldness.

937 Oh well, I'm truly not very pleasant. Fortunately, I'm still willing to admit it! But if I don't
 938 know how to show signs of affection, I feel the sentiments inside. I believe I wish for my
 939 brother's prosperity more than mine. I have a burning desire to see him happy, him and his
 940 wife, and I would be ready to make every sacrifice for their happiness.

941 If I didn't have a home and children, I would live only for them, and I would give them all
 942 the money I earn. But since I can't do that, God will provide. Certainly, people like them are
 943 bound to succeed, and I have complete confidence in them. Unfortunately, poor Isidore has
 944 made hardly any profit from his drug business, and yet he works hard. This saddens me for
 945 him.

946

947 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, September 29, 1875**

948

949 It hurts me that my brother is worried. However, I understand because I worry over a lot
 950 less. But it's especially the little things that bother me the most. When it's a real misfortune,
 951 I'm completely resigned to it and await God's help with confidence.

952 I certainly share a very large part of all your troubles, and I'm as sensitive to yours as I am
 953 to mine. But I have the firm hope that this time of trial won't continue. Why I'm so
 954 confident, and nothing can take that away from me, is above all the edifying way in which
 955 you keep Sunday holy. . . .

956 As for me, I'm going to be very careful not to buy anything on Sunday anymore. I'm not as
 957 strict about this as you and my husband are. For example, when I need a small loaf of bread
 958 for my children, I have it bought. But very often I admire Louis' scruples, and I say to
 959 myself, "Here's a man who never tried to make a fortune. When he set up his business, his
 960 confessor told him to open his jewelry store on Sunday until noon. He didn't want to accept
 961 permission to do so, preferring to pass up good sales. And nevertheless, he's rich." I can't
 962 attribute the affluence he enjoys to anything other than a special blessing, the fruit of his
 963 faithful observance of Sunday.

964

965 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, October 10, 1875**

966 I can't resist the desire to write to you today. This is going to do me good because I think
 967 about you all day long. My memory of you isn't fading; it's just the opposite. I've never
 968 missed you so much. This is probably because you returned to school alone. Then, you see,
 969 my affection for you is growing from day to day. You're my joy and my happiness. Well, I
 970 must reason with myself and not let my love grow too much because if God was going to
 971 take you with Him, what would become of me?

972 When I left you Wednesday evening, I was very sad, and, since you returned to school too
 973 early, I deeply regretted the quarter of an hour I would still have been able to spend with
 974 you. I waited a full hour at the station. I put myself in a little corner of the waiting room so
 975 no one would disturb me, promising myself that I would do my best to enter a compartment
 976 with women only. For three quarters of an hour, I was quiet and deep in thought when I saw
 977 a brave woman with two little children arrive, one twenty-nine months old and the other two
 978 months old. In addition, she had two enormous packages.

979 Seeing her predicament, I left my thoughts to go help her. She was also going to Alençon
 980 and had been traveling for three days like this, even during the night. She was bringing these

981 innocent creatures two hundred and fifty leagues [605 miles] to place them with a wet nurse
982 in her family, not being able to keep them because of a job she has with her husband at the
983 law courts in Valence. I can't tell you what I suffered to see her abandoning these two poor
984 little ones until the age of ten. And yet she looked like a good mother, but she has a lot more
985 courage than I do, because I would much rather die than leave my children like that. She, on
986 the contrary, didn't seem affected by it.

987 Finally, I put myself to work helping this woman carry the children and the packages, but it
988 was too much for two people. An employee, seeing our difficulty, took a child in his arms
989 and put it in the compartment for women only. A woman who was already there made a
990 harsh face when she saw the group of children enter the car! To cheer her up, I wanted to tell
991 her the story of the long journey of this mother and her children, but she didn't answer me.
992 Embarrassed, I said to myself, "I absolutely have to know if she is or isn't a mute." Finally, I
993 was able to make her say a few words. Then I was happy to see that she was neither deaf nor
994 mute, and I left her in peace, that is, not completely, because we were taking care of both of
995 the little babies.

996 While talking and rocking, we arrived in Alençon. I took the tiny baby, who was well
997 wrapped, and went into the waiting room. Your father was waiting for me there. He noticed
998 the package and wanted to quickly relieve me of it, and he seemed quite surprised to see me
999 with such a badly wrapped package! As he realized I wasn't letting go, he looked more
1000 closely and saw a little hand come out. I told him then that I'd found a little girl, and I'd
1001 brought her home. He didn't look too happy....

1002 Finally, the mother arrived. She'd stayed behind to check her parcels. I carried the little girl
1003 to the woman's parents' house, and we didn't return home until midnight. As you see, my
1004 dear Pauline, I have the luck of always finding little children along my way. When we went
1005 to Lisieux, it was the same thing. You'll remember for a long time, won't you, the good
1006 woman with her two infants who shouted during the entire journey, much louder than her
1007 two little ones. Marie felt so awful about it she began to cry. My brother made fun of me as
1008 much as he could, and he wasn't wrong because that woman was able to do without me
1009 much better than the one on Wednesday. . . .

1010 I hug you with all my heart.

1011

1012 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, December 5, 1875**

1013 My dear Pauline,

1014 . . . At the moment I'm reading the Life of St. Jane de Chantal. I told you this two weeks
1015 ago; and I was intending to finish the first volume in two hours. But I've found it so
1016 beautiful that I've not been so quick to finish it. It's taken me two weeks, and I'm beginning
1017 the second volume today.

1018 I'm carried away by admiration. It's all the more interesting to me because I love the
1019 Visitation Monastery very much, but now I love it more than ever. How happy I find the
1020 people who are called to it! Finally, I don't speak of anything anymore other than St. Jane de
1021 Chantal and all that I'm reading.

1022 Louise is angry. When the second volume arrived, she said, “Well! Here’s another two
1023 weeks of hearing nothing talked about but St. Jane de Chantal and St. Francis!”

1024 My poor Pauline, my hands are so cold I’m finding it difficult to write. Along with this, I
1025 can’t see, and I can say I’m writing by feeling my way along. I have very bad eyes. It’s my
1026 Alençon lace that tires me the least, but while writing I see double and often have to close
1027 my eyes and cover them with my hand to rest them. It’s even worse today than usual.

1028

1029 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, December 28 [?], 1875**

1030 I’m sending you the New Year’s gifts today. As we agreed, I’m giving a box of paints to
1031 Jeanne and a History of France bingo game to Marie, and then Christmas shoes with little
1032 Jesuses and other things that they will like. They’ll find these Christmas morning in their
1033 shoes, and it will make them happy.

1034 I also made some for my little girls. On Christmas day they’ll receive our presents, and on
1035 New Year’s Day they’ll receive your New Year’s gifts.

1036

1037 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, January 16, 1876**

1038 . . . As for me, I imagine that if I were in a magnificent chateau, surrounded by everything
1039 one could wish for on earth, the emptiness would be bigger than if I were alone, in a little
1040 attic room, forgetting the world and being forgotten. So I do nothing but dream of the
1041 cloister and solitude. With the ideas I have, I really don’t know how this wasn’t my vocation
1042 or how I didn’t remain a spinster, or retreat into a convent. Now I’d like to live to be very
1043 old, so I can withdraw in solitude when all my children are grown.

1044 But I feel that all these are only empty ideas, so I hardly pay attention to them. It’s better to
1045 use the present time well than to think so much about the future.

1046

1047 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, February 6, 1876**

1048 Céline is always sick. I’m very happy Marie is here to give her lessons because it would be
1049 impossible to send her to boarding school. Sometimes her big sister becomes discouraged,
1050 saying, “What good does it do to teach her, if she has to die?” But since we don’t know the
1051 future, we can’t leave her without an education, while making sure we don’t tire her too
1052 much. They say that children, in their seventh year, change their constitution, and since
1053 she’ll soon reach that age, I hope she’ll do better then.

1054 Well, we only live to have torments of every kind. I still have another worry that makes me
1055 suffer very much, and that is my poor business, which isn’t doing well. I’m sure you’re
1056 going to laugh and say so much the better because I’ve worked enough. You’re right. I, too,
1057 would say the same thing, but there’s something else that stops me.

1058 It’s not the desire to amass a great fortune that drives me because I have more than I ever
1059 wanted. But I think it would be foolish of me to leave this business having five children to

1060 provide for. I must go all the way for them, and I see myself in a dilemma. I have workers,
1061 and I have no work to give them while other companies are doing very well. That's what
1062 distresses me the most! Poor Marie is very unhappy over it. She curses the Alençon lace and
1063 declares she would prefer to live in an attic rather than make her fortune at the same price
1064 that I've paid. I don't think she's wrong. If I were alone and had to endure all over again
1065 what I've suffered these last twenty-four years, I would prefer to die of hunger, because just
1066 the thought of it makes me tremble!

1067 I often tell myself that if I'd done half of all this to win Heaven, I could be a canonized
1068 saint! I also think of my brother and if he's enduring the same troubles as I am. I feel sorry
1069 for him with all my heart, because I know from experience what he's going through!

1070

1071 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, March 26, 1876**

1072 My dear Pauline,

1073 . . . We've had a little disaster happen to us that I'm going to tell you about. Your father
1074 received a letter from Monsieur M, whose building very close to our garden and digging a
1075 cesspool. He picked a quarrel, and your father made every concession to make peace.
1076 Finally, the neighbor made his hole so close to the wall that it collapsed. The other day,
1077 about eight o'clock in the evening, we heard a terrible crash, and it was the wall falling
1078 down.

1079 The next morning Monsieur M saw this disaster and got very angry, claiming that we had to
1080 pay half the costs for rebuilding the wall when the accident was due to his carelessness. He
1081 had a summons sent from the Justice of the Peace, and last Friday your father appeared
1082 there.

1083 He explained the matter so well that everyone, including the judge, was indignant about our
1084 neighbor. But he can make us bear all the costs since the law is on his side because our walls
1085 are a few centimeters short of the required thickness.

1086 We asked for an expert who's coming tomorrow at nine o'clock. He already paid us a visit
1087 this morning. He confided to us that we weren't in good hands because this Monsieur M
1088 knows legal quibbling like no one else and is going to make us eat more than the costs of
1089 rebuilding the wall.

1090 That's where we are, and I don't know when it will be over. I'm not too concerned about it.
1091 We can only accept disputes with patience, since we must suffer on this earth. If this can
1092 spare us a little time in Purgatory, we'll bless Monsieur M in the other world for having
1093 made us spend a part of it in this life. But I prefer that he be the one who does us these
1094 wrongs rather than if we had to blame ourselves for creating a quarter of them for him. I'll
1095 tell you next time how it turns out. . . .

1096 I hug you with all my heart.

1097

1098

1099 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, May 14, 1876**

1100 . . .It's been a long time since my letter was interrupted. Since then, I've been to High Mass,
1101 and then we went on a long walk in the fields. We picked beautiful bouquets for the month
1102 of Mary, and we were very happy with this outing. On our way back we met a poor old man
1103 who had a good face. I sent Thérèse to bring him a few alms. He seemed so touched by this
1104 and thanked us so much that I saw he was very unfortunate. I told him to follow us and that I
1105 was going to give him some shoes. He came, and we served him a good dinner, he was
1106 dying of hunger.

1107 I couldn't tell you how many troubles he was suffering from in his old age. This winter he
1108 had frostbitten feet, he sleeps in an abandoned hovel and has nothing. He's going to huddle
1109 outside the barracks to be given a little soup.

1110 Finally, I told him to come whenever he wants, and I'll give him bread. I would like your
1111 father to arrange for him to enter the Hospice; he wants to go there so much. We're going to
1112 negotiate the matter.

1113 I'm very sad over this encounter, and I do nothing but think about this fellow who,
1114 nevertheless, was delighted by the few pennies I gave him. "With this," he said, "I'll eat
1115 soup tomorrow, I'll go to the soup kitchen, then I'll go have some tobacco and get a shave."
1116 In a word, he was as cheerful as a child. While he was eating, he would pick up his shoes,
1117 look at them happily and smile at them. Then he recited a beautiful prayer for us that he
1118 always says at Mass.

1119

1120 **From Mme Martin to her brother, the beginning of October 1876**

1121 It's been two weeks since I received a letter from my sister, as well as the Superior of the
1122 Visitation Monastery. They asked me not to send Pauline back to school because of the
1123 prospect of her aunt's imminent death, and since Pauline is very sensitive, they wanted to
1124 spare her this pain.

1125 Pauline wrote a letter to her aunt that brought tears to my eyes. Finally, she went back to
1126 school. As for me, I'd replied to the Superior that if she thought my sister was going to
1127 suffer more by Pauline's presence, I'd keep her home.

1128 I saw my sister Wednesday, and she's very sick, very changed. She can only walk with the
1129 help of a cane and the infirmarian, who supports her. However, she spent two hours with us
1130 on two separate occasions, and even her voice was very strong, much better than I'd thought
1131 it would be.

1132 She told us that she's "the happiest patient in the world." Her face radiates joy, and she's
1133 awaiting the hour of her deliverance with a heavenly peace. I've never seen anything so
1134 edifying. . . .

1135 I saw the Superior of the Visitation Monastery alone. She told me that the doctor believed
1136 our dear patient wouldn't last until the end of the year, but that she'd walk up until the end.
1137 She gets up at five o'clock in the morning after a night spent coughing in her bed. Her feet

1138 are always swollen, but she still goes downstairs to take her meals with the Community. She
1139 has a raging fever every day from two o'clock in the afternoon. . . .

1140 All the Sisters I saw think she doesn't have much longer to live. . . .

1141 She's thought of as a true saint within the Community, and the nuns told me that their
1142 Superior cites her as an example.

1143 If you're going to see her, write me before Thursday. If I were you, I wouldn't delay long.

1144

1145 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, October 20, 1876**

1146 . . . As for being unduly distressed over my bothersome gland, I'm not convinced it's
1147 necessary. If God allows that I die from it, I'll try to accept it as best I can and resign myself
1148 to my fate to lessen my time in Purgatory. But I hope all will be well. I'll make your
1149 remedies exactly to put my mind at rest because I don't have great confidence in all that. . . .

1150 Please, don't worry about me. In no way am I suffering from the gland, and the little
1151 shooting pains I thought I felt are completely gone. I think it will be nothing, or, if it's
1152 serious, it will only be much later, when it will be time to die.

1153

1154 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, November 2, 1876**

1155 . . . I'm properly making the remedies you sent me, only when I put the fresh ointment on
1156 the area to be treated, it hurts. I feel nothing only when it's dry. It probably must be that way
1157 for it to work well?

1158 I kiss you with all my heart. Your very loving sister, Z. Martin

1159

1160 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, November 3, 1876**

1161 My dear Pauline,

1162 Since you want me to write to you today, my letter will not be as long as usual because I
1163 have hardly any time, being very harried by work and busy in every way. Also, I long for
1164 rest. I don't even have the courage to continue the fight. I feel the need for a little quiet
1165 reflection to think about my salvation, which the troubles of this world make me neglect.

1166 And yet I should remember these words from the Imitation [of Christ] : "Why do you seek
1167 rest, whereas you are born to labor?" But when you are too engrossed in your work and no
1168 longer have youthful energy, you can't help wishing to be relieved of it, at least in part. Oh
1169 well, I live in this hope. It seems to me, for many reasons, my business is winding down. . . .

1170

1171

1172 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, November 12, 1876

1173 . . . Tuesday I received news from Le Mans. I'm not at all reassured about my sister's health.
1174 I think it's still declining and soon it will be over. This gives me sad thoughts, and it seems
1175 to me I'll find myself abandoned. I need her and her advice. Well, I have to resign myself. . .
1176 .

1177 My brother wants me to give him some news about my health. It's very good, and, apart
1178 from my mood, I'm not suffering at all. I'm certainly not filled with joy. I'm extremely
1179 worried, right or wrong. Ah! If only I were freed from my business, I would be happy. But
1180 no, my poor Léonie would be there preventing me from being completely happy because I
1181 fear for her future. What will become of her when we're no longer here?

1182 I'm doing my remedies properly. Supposedly, they're necessary to take away this lump, but
1183 they take absolutely nothing away. Well, I feel guilty when I miss it, which, from now on, I
1184 don't want to do anymore, I promise you.

1185

1186 From Mme Martin to Pauline, December 3, 1876

1187 My dear Pauline,

1188 . . . I already spoke to you about a poor man whom we've known since spring. He was in the
1189 most extreme poverty, since he didn't have any shelter and slept in a barn with an openwork
1190 door, which caused him to get frostbite on his fingers and feet. No one took care of him, and
1191 he asked for nothing and only went to the door of the barracks to have a little soup. He was
1192 starving. Your father had noticed him in the doorway of the Hôtel de France in such a
1193 miserable state and with such a gentle expression that he took an interest in him.

1194 As for me, I wanted to know more about him, and while on a walk, I approached the fellow.
1195 I brought him home and questioned him. I then discovered that he was childlike and
1196 languishing without any help. I asked him to come here every time he needed something, but
1197 he never came.

1198 Finally, in the beginning of winter, your father met him one Sunday. It was very cold, and he
1199 had bare feet and was shivering. Overcome with pity for this unfortunate man, he began to
1200 take all kinds of steps to have him enter the Hospice. How many steps he took, and how
1201 many letters he wrote to get a copy of his Baptismal certificate! And the petitions! But all of
1202 this was a waste of time because we discovered the fellow was only sixty-seven years old,
1203 three years less than the required age.

1204 However, your father did not admit defeat. He took this cause to heart and prepared for the
1205 assault once again to have him enter the Home for the Incurables. The poor man has a
1206 hernia, but usually they won't take someone in for such a little thing, and I had no hope.
1207 Finally, he entered there last Wednesday, against all expectations. Your father went to track
1208 him down in his barn Tuesday evening, and the next morning he admitted him. He saw the
1209 old man again today, who cried tears of joy to find himself so perfectly happy. In spite of
1210 his weakened mind, he tried hard to thank him and prove his gratitude.

1211

1212 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, December 17, 1876

1213 My dear sister,

1214 My heart is pounding thinking of how much I'm going to hurt you. I hesitated a moment
1215 whether or not to tell you the entire truth, but I feel I must, I need your advice.

1216 I'd made up my mind, last Sunday, to go find a doctor. I was more worried than I wanted to
1217 make known, seeing my disease getting worse. If I delayed so long, it was because I was
1218 doing my brother's remedy, and he didn't advise me to see a doctor.

1219 I also knew there was nothing to do except have an operation, and the thought of that makes
1220 me tremble. Not because of the suffering, but because I was convinced that from that
1221 moment on, I would go to bed and never get up again.

1222 Finally, upon receiving your letter, I would have gone to find Dr. X if I hadn't had a
1223 shipment of lace to do. So I waited until Friday. My husband, reading your letter, began to
1224 become more worried. He went to find Monsieur Vital Romet because I was saying I didn't
1225 want to see a doctor. Monsieur Vital came and insisted on an operation, naming several
1226 ladies whom I knew and who'd pulled through.

1227 In the end, I went to see Dr. X, who, after having examined me thoroughly through touch,
1228 said to me after a moment of silence, "Do you know that what you have there is of a very
1229 serious nature? It's a fibrous tumor. Would you shrink from an operation?" I answered, "No,
1230 although I'm certain that instead of saving my life, this operation would shorten my days." I
1231 added proof to support this, so much so that he continued immediately, "You know as much
1232 as I do, all this is the truth. Also, I can't advise you because it's quite uncertain." I asked him
1233 if there was a one in a hundred chance, and he answered evasively.

1234 I'm very grateful to him for his frankness because I'm going to hurry to put my affairs in
1235 order so as not to leave my family in an awkward position.

1236 He offered me a prescription. I said to him, "What will it do?" He looked at me and replied,
1237 "Nothing, it's to make the patients happy."

1238 I couldn't help myself from telling my family everything. I regret it now because there was a
1239 grief-filled scene ... everyone was crying, poor Léonie was sobbing. But I named so many
1240 people who'd lived ten or fifteen years like this, and I didn't seem very upset, doing my
1241 work as cheerfully as always, perhaps more so, that I calmed everyone down.

1242 And yet, I'm quite far from deluding myself, and I have trouble falling asleep at night when
1243 I think about the future. However, I'm resigning myself as best I can, but I was far from
1244 expecting such a test. My sister is very happy to die. She'll know nothing of these sad affairs
1245 because I don't want to poison her last days. I won't say anything more to Pauline. If she
1246 knew, she wouldn't be able to return to boarding school. Knowing her as I do, that would
1247 hurt her more than seeing me.

1248 If you have any advice to give me about the operation, please write me this week because
1249 Pauline arrives Wednesday, and I don't want her to see your letter.

1250 My husband is inconsolable. He's given up the pleasure of fishing and put his lines up in the
1251 attic, he doesn't want to go to the Vital Circle anymore. It's as if he's shattered. That same
1252 night he went to find Monsieur Vital to give him an account of the consultation, and
1253 Monsieur Vital still says the operation is very necessary. Please, give me your advice.

1254 I'm not suffering a lot. There's a numbness along the whole side to just under the arm and a
1255 dull pain on the right side of the lump. I can't lie down on that side anymore.

1256 I would like that this not worry you too much and that you resign yourself to the will of
1257 God. If He found me useful on earth, certainly He wouldn't permit me to have this illness
1258 because I've prayed so much that He not take me from this world as long as I'm necessary
1259 to my children.

1260 Marie is now grown-up. She has a very, very serious nature and no youthful illusions. I'm
1261 sure that when I'm no longer here she'll make a good mistress of the house and do
1262 everything possible to raise her little sisters well and set a good example for them.

1263 Pauline is also charming, but Marie has more experience and, moreover, she has a lot of
1264 influence over her little sisters. Céline shows the best tendencies, and this one will be a very
1265 pious child. It's quite rare at her age to show such an inclination towards piety. Thérèse is a
1266 true little angel. As for Léonie, only God can change her, and I'm convinced He will.

1267 I hope to go and see you one more time, and if I notice that the illness is progressing too
1268 much, I'll go before the vacation. If Pauline were here, I would have taken her and Marie to
1269 stay with you, and I would have left them with you several weeks, in fear that it may not be
1270 possible this summer.

1271 They'll be very happy to have you when I'm no longer here. You'll help them by your good
1272 advice, and, if they have the misfortune of losing their father, you'll take them into your
1273 home, won't you?

1274 It consoles me a lot to think that I have such good family and that they'll be good
1275 replacements for us in case of misfortune. There are poor mothers much more unfortunate
1276 than I who don't know what will become of their children and who leave them in need
1277 without any help. As for me, I have nothing to fear in that respect. In short, I don't look at
1278 the dark side of things. It is a great grace that God is giving me.

1279 Since I wrote you the above lines, quite a lot of time has passed. I was waiting to send my
1280 letter until I received the one that arrived today from Le Mans, and which I'm enclosing in
1281 mine.

1282 Don't worry about me at all. I'm hardly sick at the moment. It's a little thing, and if I didn't
1283 see the lump, I would think it's nothing. I have a corn on my foot that hurts me much more,
1284 and I don't have to see it to feel it. Be that as it may, let's make the most of the time that's
1285 left to us and not worry. Besides, it will still only be what God wants. If the illness gets
1286 worse, I'll go on some pilgrimages. If I'd listened to Louis, I think we would have been to
1287 Lourdes already, but it's not urgent.

1288 I would wish, for a moment, to go spend a day with you, and you'd see that I look well, my
1289 appetite is good, and I'm very cheerful. It's true that I'm not sad.

1290 While waiting to hear from you, I hug you with all my heart.

1291

1292 **From Mme Martin to her brother, December 1876**

1293 My dear brother,

1294 You put death in my heart with your operations. I know enough about it to be sure that my
1295 days would be shortened by it. Please, let me live and don't try to find a doctor who says the
1296 same as you. We like Doctor X, and you trust him since you'd asked me to consult him. I
1297 told you the whole truth. He is far from advising me to have an operation. If you don't rely
1298 on my word, write to him or come speak with him.

1299 Finally, to make you happy, I'll go to Lisieux on Saturday [December 23]. I'll leave at
1300 eleven-ten in the morning.

1301 I'll spend Christmas with you. I don't want to go to Paris to consult with a doctor right
1302 away. I trust Doctor X and Doctor Notta completely.

1303 Good-bye, until Saturday. Don't worry, you'll see that I'm not dying, I'm absolutely fine
1304 except for this little nothing [*bobo*] with which I can live many years, if they leave me alone.

1305 You know that it's a period of fasting, and I'm fasting because I'm not sick enough to
1306 exempt myself. So don't get anything ready for me, please.

1307

1308 **From Mme Martin to her husband, December 24, 1876**

1309 My dear Louis,

1310 I arrived in Lisieux yesterday afternoon at four thirty. My brother was waiting for me with a
1311 carriage, where I found a good foot warmer. Upon arriving at his house, I saw Madame
1312 Fournet and Monsieur and Madame Maudelonde, who gave me a very warm welcome.

1313 After dinner I did everything possible to cheer up my brother and give him a little courage.
1314 He spoke to me a lot of Monsieur Vital, who'd written to him the same day, telling him
1315 about the consultation with Doctor X and begging him to act forcefully and take me to Paris.
1316 I would have wanted to see this letter, but they refused to let me see it.

1317 Finally, I slept perfectly last night, against my expectations, but I was tired from the trip.
1318 The doctor arrived this morning at eight-thirty. He examined the area of the illness well and
1319 gave exactly the same advice as Doctor X, that an operation wasn't necessary and that it
1320 would be a big mistake to try. He prescribed some pills, and I don't know what else. Now
1321 my brother is quite certain and no longer wants to take me to Paris.

1322 Doctor Notta finds it very regrettable that, from the very beginning, they didn't do the
1323 operation, but now it's too late.

1324 However, he seemed to think that I can go on a very long time like this. So, let's put it into
1325 the hands of God because He knows much better than we do what we need. "It is He who

1326 causes the wound, and He who binds it.” (Job 5:18). I’ll go to Lourdes on the first
1327 pilgrimage, and I hope the Blessed Mother will cure me, if it’s necessary. In the meantime,
1328 let’s stop worrying.

1329 I’m rejoicing very much at the thought of seeing you all again. How long the time seems!
1330 How I would like to come home today! I’m only happy when I’m with you, my dear Louis.

1331 I have to end my letter because it’s time for supper, and Monsieur and Madame Fournet are
1332 going to join us. I’ve just spent the best moment of my day with you because I’m a little
1333 bored of going to pay visits and receiving them, but this isn’t going to last long.

1334 I’m going to Midnight Mass with my brother. Madame Maudelonde is also coming, for the
1335 first time in her life.

1336 Nevertheless, I have to finish, but I very much regret the blank paper that remains. I would
1337 tell you much more.

1338 I’m leaving Tuesday morning (December 26) at nine-thirty, arriving in Alençon at one-forty.
1339 I kiss all of you. Good-bye.

1340

1341 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, December 31, 1876**

1342 . . . I’ve thought of you many times since I left you, and I still see you surrounding me with
1343 every possible care. Truly, if I stayed with you a long time you would spoil me completely.
1344 Do you know, afterwards it seems hard going back to work and having all kinds of troubles?
1345 I’d very quickly get used to the gentle life you gave me for those three days.

1346 I think I’m cured, or on the road to being cured, because I haven’t felt the slightest pain
1347 since Thursday. In any case, I’d be able to go a very long time like this. It won’t be the same
1348 for my sister. We don’t expect anything anymore except very sad news. It’s sad for us but
1349 not for her because I find her very happy having prepared for such a holy death.

1350 As for me, I’m trying to convert myself, but I may not get through it. It’s quite true that we
1351 die as we lived. We can’t go against the current when we want. I assure you, I realize it well,
1352 and sometimes I become discouraged by it. And yet they say it only takes a moment to make
1353 a reprobate a saint, but I think that’s only a very little saint! Well, there must be all kinds. In
1354 spite of my wanting to hide my illness from Pauline, she’s already heard too much about it.
1355 This morning she asked me what it all meant. I told her I could live fifteen to twenty years
1356 like this, and she was very reassured. It seemed like an eternity to her. That’s how it is when
1357 we’re young; we don’t worry about something so far away.

1358

1359 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, February 6, 1877**

1360 . . . I’m still the same, yet the illness is slowly getting worse. They’re saying a novena to the
1361 Blessed Mother for my intentions. I put on Lourdes water and drink some of it, but I have to
1362 use it sparingly because I’m not at the source!

1363 If I were in the Blessed Mother's place, I would very quickly give in to so many prayers to
 1364 free myself of people. The Poor Clares are also going to start a novena, but I don't like
 1365 asking for prayers for myself because it would be better for me if it was for the intentions of
 1366 others. . . .

1367

1368 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, February 13, 1877**

1369 My dear Pauline,

1370 . . . I'm going to have to end my letter, my dear Pauline, because I still have to write to your
 1371 aunt, and I can't think of anything else of great interest to tell you. I don't know anything
 1372 amusing to tell you about Thérèse, except this little detail which comes back to me.

1373 The other day I wanted to kiss Thérèse before going downstairs. She seemed to be in a deep
 1374 sleep, and I didn't dare wake her up when Marie said to me, "Mama, she's pretending to be
 1375 asleep, I'm sure of it." Then, I bent down over her forehead to kiss her, but she immediately
 1376 hid herself under the blanket, saying to me, sounding like a spoiled child, "I don't want
 1377 anyone to look at me." I was less than pleased, and I let her know it.

1378 Two minutes later I heard her crying, and the next thing I knew, to my great surprise, I saw
 1379 her at my side! She'd left her little bed all by herself and came down the stairs barefoot,
 1380 encumbered by her nightgown which was longer than she was. Her little face was covered in
 1381 tears. "Mama," she said, while throwing herself at my knees, "I was naughty, forgive me!"
 1382 Forgiveness was quickly given. I took my little angel in my arms, pressing her to my heart
 1383 and covering her with kisses.

1384 When she saw herself so well received, she said to me, "Oh! Mama, if only you wanted to
 1385 wrap me in a blanket like when I was little! I'd eat my chocolate here at the table." I took the
 1386 trouble to go look for her blanket and then I wrapped her in it like when she was little. I
 1387 looked like I was playing with a doll!

1388 Good-bye, my Pauline. I'll write you a week from Sunday to make up for such a short letter,
 1389 and I'll try to make it longer next time. Meanwhile, I hug you with all my heart.

1390 Your mother who loves you tenderly.

1391

1392 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, February 20, 1877**

1393 I'm enclosing a letter I just received a moment ago which doesn't leave us any more hope,
 1394 as you can see [about the health of her sister, Sr Marie-Dosithée]. Last week I sent some
 1395 roasted goose to my sister since she'd wanted to eat some cooked in our house. I also sent
 1396 her a pound of gumdrops and a dozen cakes, but Pauline wrote Marie that she gave almost
 1397 all of them to her.

1398 Finally, I think her death is imminent, and it makes me very sad. But on the other hand, I
 1399 want my poor sister to be freed as soon as possible.

1400 Thursday I received your letter. I was thinking about you, and I would say to myself,
1401 “They’re angry because I didn’t want to go to the doctor.” I saw my brother telling you all
1402 kinds of things against me!

1403 At the same time, I heard the bell ring violently, but it was only the postman, who rang it
1404 again, just as violently. It was, in fact, your letter. I can’t tell you how happy it made me. I
1405 was consoled by it all day long.

1406 I’m not any sicker, and I’m still suffering very little. The most sensitive spot to touch is
1407 where the second gland is near my neck. However, it’s nothing compared to the lump.

1408 Finally, God is granting me the grace of not being afraid. I’m very calm, and I find myself
1409 almost happy. I wouldn’t change my lot for anything.

1410 If God wants to cure me, I’ll be very happy because, deep down, I want to live. It’s hard for
1411 me to leave my husband and children, but, on the other hand, I say to myself, “If I’m not
1412 cured, perhaps it’s because it will be more helpful for them if I go away....”

1413 Meanwhile, I’m doing everything possible to obtain a miracle. I’m counting on the
1414 pilgrimage to Lourdes, but if I’m not cured, I’ll try to sing on the return trip all the same. . . .

1415

1416 **From Mme Martin to her brother, February 26, 1877**

1417 ... I have no more information than you do, my dear Isidore, about the death of our holy
1418 sister [February 24, from tuberculosis, age 48]. Here are the contents of the letter from
1419 Mother Superior, written Saturday night:

1420 “It was this morning at seven o’clock that our very dear Sister Marie-Dosithée finished her
1421 so edifying life by a death worthy of envy.

1422 “For two days a significant weakening told us that the end was approaching. Difficulty
1423 breathing and a sort of perpetual anxiety made our patient suffer more, our patient who
1424 never lost her sense of peace, her perfect resignation and who felt more and more the desire
1425 to go see Our Lord.

1426 “Yesterday she again had the consolation of receiving Holy Viaticum, then several
1427 indulgences. Her presence of mind, her serenity, were admirable up until the end. We can
1428 say, dear Madame, that you and we have one more holy protector in Heaven [...], because it
1429 would be difficult to end a more virtuous life in a more saintly way.

1430 “I had the consolation of assisting our beloved Sister until her last moment. She had all the
1431 help, all the overabundant graces one could possibly want, and her heart, full of faith,
1432 expressed to us, even this night, all her gratitude towards the good God who was so
1433 generous to her.

1434 “Her death was very gentle, and we can say that our dear Sister truly didn’t suffer a lot.
1435 Tomorrow at twelve-thirty we will take her to her final resting place, surrounded by the
1436 regrets of our Community, who were deeply attached to her.

1437 “This morning we gave your good little Pauline the sad news. The poor child is very
1438 sensitive, but her faith and her piety gave her courage.

1439 “P.S. That same night our beloved Sister, at our request, blessed you all from the bottom of
1440 her heart. Oh! How she’s going to pray for her two dear families, whom she loved so
1441 tenderly.”

1442 When I received this letter I never found the courage to open it because I knew too well
1443 what it contained. Finally, Louis took it from me and read it, and I ended up reading it, also,
1444 a long time after he did. Now, I don’t want to part with it. When you write me, return
1445 Pauline’s last letter to me. It includes a few lines in my sister’s hand, and these are the last
1446 she wrote. I’d like to see them again. . . .

1447

1448 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, March 4, 1877**

1449 . . . I’ve been suffering a little more these last few days, but it’s still not acute. I’d very much
1450 like to see Doctor Notta again because I don’t have nearly as much confidence in Monsieur
1451 X.

1452 I’m sending you a little article from the newspaper that Madame Deverny sent me because I
1453 had to tell her about my situation so she would leave me alone about her orders.

1454 That didn’t prevent her from giving me an order of fifteen meters of lace to make in four
1455 months, so I’ll have to work up until the end! . . .

1456

1457 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, March 4, 1877**

1458 My dear Pauline,

1459 This evening, after Vespers, I went with Marie to see a poor worker and her husband who
1460 have both been sick for almost four months.

1461 Upon returning, I found the package containing the objects of devotion that your dear aunt
1462 kept up to the end: her rosary and the cross she kissed before her last sigh, as well as her
1463 Ecce Homo and also her hair [and probably her obituary].

1464 Marie and I hurried to read the letters. Marie cried a lot while reading yours, which touched
1465 me deeply, but at the same time consoled me. If you knew how much good this letter did
1466 me, you would be happy. Yes, my dear Pauline, you will be a saint like your aunt; I have
1467 hope of it. Nevertheless, she was much better than you at your age. I loved her so much, my
1468 poor dear sister! I couldn’t do without her.

1469 One day, shortly before she left for the convent, I was working in the garden, but she wasn’t
1470 with me. I couldn’t remain without her, and I left to look for her. She said to me, “What are
1471 you going to do when I’m no longer here?” I answered that I would leave, too. In fact, I left
1472 three months later, but not by the same road.

1473 I went to see her for the first time at the monastery on my wedding day. I can say that on
1474 that day I cried all my tears, more than I'd ever cried in my life, and more than I would ever
1475 cry again. My poor sister didn't know how to console me. . . .

1476 You who love your father so much, my Pauline, are you going to think that I was hurting
1477 him and that I'd ruined our wedding day for him? No, he understood me and consoled me as
1478 best he could because his inclinations were similar to mine. I even think our mutual
1479 affection grew from it. Our feelings were always in accord, and he was always a comfort
1480 and a support to me.

1481 But when we had our children, our ideas changed somewhat. We lived only for them. They
1482 were all our happiness; and we never found any except in them. In short, nothing was too
1483 difficult, and the world was no longer a burden to us. For me, our children were a great
1484 compensation, so I wanted to have a lot of them in order to raise them for Heaven.

1485 Four of them are already in a better place. The others, yes, the others will go there as well, to
1486 the heavenly kingdom, laden with more merits since they will have fought much longer.

1487 It's only Léonie who's still a very heavy cross to bear. May her dear aunt obtain for me a
1488 change in my poor child, I'm always hoping for it. This evening she came to ask me if she
1489 could see her aunt's mementos. Céline and Thérèse looked at them at the same time and
1490 kissed them. . . .

1491 The time didn't seem long, my dear Pauline, and here it is chiming ten-thirty, and I thought
1492 it was only nine o'clock. I've been writing since six-thirty and this is my fourth letter. I
1493 wrote to Lisieux, to the uncle in Paris, to Alphonsine [first cousin of Zélie] and, then, to you.

1494 Good-bye, I kiss you with all my love.

1495

1496 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, March 12, 1877**

1497 ... I think my sister has obtained a great grace for me. You know that I wasn't able to have
1498 any influence over Léonie; she ran away from me.... I'd tried everything, nothing worked!
1499 She was fascinated by the maid [Louise Marais] who, nevertheless, made her very unhappy
1500 without my realizing it. Marie is the one who discovered everything and told me about it.

1501 I've suffered a lot, I assure you, not understanding this child's very strange behavior.
1502 Consequently, I didn't think there was any need for me to live, not being able to be helpful
1503 to her at all. But since Saturday, everything has changed, and in such a way I never hoped
1504 for, and I can't get over it.

1505 I don't have time to give you a lot of details, but all I can tell you is that she doesn't want to
1506 leave me. I'm taking care of her exclusively, as is Marie. The other one has lost her
1507 influence forever. I can do as I please with Léonie. Before, I couldn't persuade her to get
1508 dressed to go out, but yesterday and today she put on an outfit to come with me and wants to
1509 follow me everywhere. She was sorry this morning because she didn't have enough time
1510 with me and is asking me when this letter is going to be finished so she can talk to me and
1511 sit by my side.

1512 I received your good letter which I was awaiting impatiently. So I see that there's no hope
1513 for me as far as the doctor goes, but yet, I want to live, especially now, to begin to raise my
1514 Léonie.

1515

1516 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, March 12, 1877**

1517 My dear Pauline,

1518 . . . Today my mind no longer inhabits the earth. It's travelling among higher spheres, and I'm
1519 not going to be able to speak to you about things here below. But, sadly, since it's too limited
1520 to speak of the wonders of Heaven, I don't know what to say.

1521 I believe I've obtained a great grace through the prayers of your aunt. I've commended my
1522 poor Léonie to her so many times since her entrance into Heaven, and I believe I'm feeling
1523 the effects of it.

1524 You know what your sister was like: a spirit of insubordination, never wanting to obey me
1525 except by force, acting defiantly, doing the complete opposite of what I wanted, even when
1526 she would have wanted to do it, and, finally, obeying only the maid.

1527 I'd tried everything in my power to draw her to me. It had all failed until today, and that was
1528 the greatest sorrow I'd ever had in my life.

1529 Since your aunt died I've begged her to return this poor child's heart to me, and Sunday
1530 morning my prayer was answered. Now I have her heart as completely as possible: she
1531 doesn't want to leave me for a moment, she hugs me to the point of suffocating me, does
1532 everything I tell her without arguing, and works by my side all day long.

1533 The maid completely lost her authority, and it's certain that she'll never again have any
1534 influence over Léonie by the way in which things happened. She found it a severe blow; and
1535 she cried and moaned when I told her to leave immediately and that I wanted her out of my
1536 sight.

1537 I'm going to wait some time before I make her leave because she begged me so much to
1538 stay, but she's forbidden to direct a word to Léonie. Now, I treat this child with so much
1539 gentleness that I hope to succeed, little by little, in correcting her faults.

1540 Yesterday she came with me to go for a walk, and we went to the Monastery of the Poor
1541 Clares. She whispered to me, "Mama, ask the cloistered sisters to pray for me so that I
1542 become a nun." Finally, all is well, and let's hope that this continues.

1543 My dear Pauline, since you're so favored by your aunt, pray to her so that she cures me of
1544 my illness, which you know about. I want now, more than ever, to stay with you. It's more
1545 necessary for Léonie than for the little ones. Oh well, if it's as helpful as I believe it is, the
1546 Blessed Mother will certainly cure me. I'll definitely go to Lourdes this year. . . .

1547 Good-bye, my dear Pauline. I kiss you with all my love.

1548

1549 From Mme Martin to Pauline, March 22, 1877

1550 . . . I didn't have the courage to give the maid all the messages that were in your letter. I
1551 don't at all profess to be as sympathetic to her as you are, especially recently. I know she's
1552 devoted and attached to us in her own way, but I'm not happy with her violent nature.

1553 I won't be sorry to see her go, especially since I discovered what she'd put Léonie through.
1554 That, you see, I'll never forget. I would never have believed that one could have done, for so
1555 long and so coldly, the things she did to a poor creature who didn't dare complain "for fear
1556 of it getting twice as bad," as she now admits.

1557 And would you believe this girl claims that she was being a great help to me, thinking she
1558 was very clever to have been able to control your sister, who, in her opinion, no one else was
1559 able to tame? But brutality never converted anyone, it only makes slaves of people, and
1560 that's what happened to this poor child.

1561 I'm still convinced that it's your aunt who's responsible for this being discovered. Now
1562 Léonie doesn't leave me for a minute. She goes everywhere with me, showing a happy face
1563 and, little by little, giving up her bad habits.

1564 She no longer puts up any resistance to me. On the contrary, she anticipates everything that
1565 would please me and doesn't wait for my instructions.

1566 I didn't know why she never wanted to take a minute of playtime. When a meal was
1567 finished, she would clear the table, put the room in order, and in short, do the servant's
1568 work. I was tired of saying to her, "Go outside and play in the garden. I don't want to see
1569 you here while everyone else is enjoying themselves."

1570 She would say to me grudgingly, "I want to stay here." I've since learned that the maid had
1571 said to her, "If your mother tells you to go play, go, but you know that afterwards you're
1572 going to pay." You see, all of that outrages me to a point I can't express. . . .

1573 Now Léonie plays with the joy of a four-year-old child. She makes a little too much noise
1574 and isn't quiet enough, and I have to calm her down, but she tries very hard. Let's hope that,
1575 little by little, she'll change completely with God's help.

1576 That's why now I have a desire to live that I never knew until today. My child needs me
1577 very much. After I die, she'll be too miserable, and no one will be able to make her obey
1578 except the one who made her suffer so much. But no, this won't be because when I'm dead
1579 she'll have to leave right away. I don't think they'll refuse to carry out my last wishes.

1580 But I trust in God, I'm asking Him now for the grace to let me live. I know very well that He
1581 won't take away my illness and my dying, but I ask that He grant me enough time so that
1582 Léonie won't need me anymore.

1583

1584 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, May 10, 1877

1585 . . . I'm about the same. I'm not suffering a lot, and yet now I feel, almost continuously, the
1586 inner work that the illness is doing, but the suffering is quite bearable.

1587 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, May 29, 1877**

1588 . . . I saw in The Religious Week from [the Diocese of] Séez that a pilgrimage to Lourdes
 1589 will leave from Angers on June 10. I wrote to a nun at the Visitation Monastery in Angers
 1590 who had been my oldest daughters' headmistress for seven years in Le Mans and asked if
 1591 she would be kind enough to provide me with information about it. She replied that the
 1592 pilgrimage will depart June 18 and not the 10th, and that she was responsible for the tickets. I
 1593 asked her for four of them since Marie, Pauline and Léonie will come with me. . . .

1594 The disease is progressing and spreading more and more. I expect the tumor will burst
 1595 before the month of August. I'm still suffering very little, but the mild suffering is almost
 1596 continual and, at times, quite violent. For about a month I've also had pain in my arm. I
 1597 don't need to ask you for your prayers, I'm quite sure there's no shortage of them, nor those
 1598 of your good family who show me so much sympathy. . . .

1599 Léonie continues to become a good child, but it's difficult land to cultivate. It definitely
 1600 needs the dew of Heaven, which, I'm sure, won't fail us. I'm doing everything possible to
 1601 cultivate it well, and God will make the flowers and the fruits grow. This little one has a
 1602 heart of gold. You only have to know how to handle her, with a great deal of gentleness.

1603 I'm so gentle with her that they criticize me for it, but I know what I'm doing and don't
 1604 listen to these criticisms. She was brought to this point by an extreme harshness that I didn't
 1605 suspect and under the influence of the maid who went about it very badly, although she's a
 1606 nice girl deep down.

1607 Oh well, who knows? I believe God allowed this bad treatment, which I was unaware of, to
 1608 first subdue this strange nature and make it more accommodating so that the task may be
 1609 easier in the future. Otherwise, she would never have known the value of gentleness and
 1610 friendship, but it was important that it ended as quickly as possible, or else she would have
 1611 been lost.

1612 If my wishes aren't granted and I'm not cured, the maid will leave as soon as I return from
 1613 Lourdes. I don't want this child to fall under her control ever again. I hope God will help me
 1614 find the kind of person I want to raise her, but rather let's hope that I'm the one He's chosen
 1615 for this task. . . .

1616

1617 **From Mme Martin to her brother and his wife, June 7, 1877**

1618 My dear brother and sister,

1619 I received your letters which I was anxiously awaiting. I'll do my best to follow the good
 1620 advice you've given me. So I intend to go to see Doctor X next Wednesday, fearing I won't
 1621 find him available the last few days before I leave for the pilgrimage.

1622 Soon I'll really need you if the Blessed Mother doesn't cure me because my illness is getting
 1623 worse and worse. Last night especially I suffered a lot for two hours. It's no longer possible
 1624 to touch the sore spot, it's too sensitive. I wouldn't be at all surprised if it burst before I left.

1625 As long as hemorrhaging doesn't occur, because it seems that this happens when the illness
1626 is far along. Well, it's in God's hands! I'll have to be very sick not to go.

1627 Yet I'm still hoping to be cured, perhaps too much. If I'm not, I'll be much more
1628 disappointed. I tell you again, it was from the moment I saw what was happening to Léonie
1629 that I became attached to life. Now I know how much she needs me. That servant, whom I
1630 trusted, tricked me....

1631 However, I have nothing to reproach myself for, God sees well that I did the best I could....
1632 I did the work of four people, who still wouldn't have had time to waste. I led a difficult life
1633 that would be very hard to do all over again. I don't think I'd have the courage.

1634 And just when I would finally be able to breathe, I see the signal to leave, as if they're
1635 saying to me, "You've done enough, come rest." But no, I haven't done enough; these
1636 children aren't grown up yet. Ah! Except for that, I wouldn't be afraid of death.

1637

1638 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, June 14, 1877**

1639 ... So yesterday I went to see Doctor X. I told him I came back to consult him to find out if
1640 there was anything else that could be done now.

1641 He didn't seem to know what I was asking of him. Finally, he wrote me a prescription.

1642 Seeing that he'd decided to say very little, I tried to pull a few words out of him. I asked him
1643 if he thought the tumor would soon burst, and I got no answer.

1644 I asked him again if he thought they could perform the operation, and he answered, "You
1645 well know that idea was abandoned." Then, finally, he said to me, "It's so much better if it
1646 does burst, the illness will run its course that way." I answered, "Yes, when I'll die." "Yes,
1647 that's possible," he admitted, "but it's not impossible that you'll be cured. We don't know
1648 how it will turn out."

1649 All of this was said in an indifferent, bored tone with a forced grin that made a profound
1650 impression on me.

1651 It will be very hard to go back to this man if I'm cured. Either he'll not pay attention to what
1652 I'm telling him or he'll reel off a lot of foolishness to me because he believes nothing. All
1653 the same, I'll go; but it will be the last time.

1654 If I'm not cured, I'll never go back, and he'll never treat me again because just the sight of
1655 him would make me sick. Nevertheless, he once did me a favor, it was the day he told me
1656 the truth. That consultation was priceless for me. . . .

1657 Good-bye, my dear sister, thank you for all that you do for me, I'm touched to the bottom of
1658 my soul. I'll ask Our Lady of Lourdes to give it back to you a hundredfold, in this world and
1659 the next.

1660 I kiss you with all my love.

1661 P.S. Do you know that I'm still making Alençon lace? I received some orders, very few, it's
1662 true. Well, I'm fulfilling them, and we'll go on like that up to the end.

1663 [

1664 **June 17-23, trip to Lourdes]**

1665 **From Mme Martin to Pauline, June 25, 1877**

1666 My dear Pauline,

1667 . . . We didn't arrive in Alençon until six-thirty [Saturday, June 23]; the train was almost a
1668 half hour late. Your father was waiting for us for an hour with the two little ones. He was
1669 happy to see us, although quite sad. He'd had some difficult moments since Thursday
1670 expecting the famous telegram at any moment, and each time the bell rang, he would jump.

1671 He was very surprised to see me return as cheerfully as if I'd received the much-desired
1672 grace. This renewed his courage and put everyone in a good mood again.

1673 I still have a very strong hope of being cured which only increases. I see a look of disbelief
1674 on the face of certain people who come to ask about the results of my pilgrimage, but that
1675 doesn't trouble me.

1676 First of all, I can't help having the feeling of confidence that invigorates me. I'm saying my
1677 novenas again, and every night I put Lourdes water on my wound, and after that, I live in
1678 hope and peace, expecting that God's time has come.

1679 . . . As for me, I'm still expecting a miracle from the goodness and omnipotence of God
1680 through the intercession of his Holy Mother. Not that I'm asking Him to take away my
1681 illness completely, but only to let me live a few years to have time to raise my children and,
1682 especially, poor Léonie, who needs me so much and who I feel so sorry for.

1683 She has fewer natural gifts than you, but in spite of this, she has a heart that asks to love and
1684 be loved. Only a mother would be able to continually show her the attention she's hungering
1685 for and follow her progress closely enough to do her good.

1686 My dear child treats me with infinite tenderness. She anticipates my wishes and nothing is
1687 too much. She looks into my eyes to try and guess what would make me happy. She's
1688 almost doing too much.

1689 But as soon as anyone else asks her for something, her face clouds over and her expression
1690 changes instantly.

1691 Little by little I'm managing to make her get over this, although she still often forgets.
1692 However, with time, I'm sure I'll be able to manage to make her love God a lot and be
1693 pleasant to everyone.

1694

1695

1696

1697 From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, July 8, 1877

1698 I think you're expecting news from me, which is why I decided, with regret, to write you
1699 today because I have nothing satisfying to tell you. Not only is the illness still progressing
1700 and continuing to ooze since it burst two weeks ago, but the strain in my neck that happened
1701 when I tripped in Lourdes makes me suffer immensely, especially since last night. If this
1702 continues, it will be terrifying; I would have to remain completely immobile.

1703 It still doesn't hurt during the day, but at night, when I have to lie down or get up, it's awful.
1704 It gives me a terrible jolt, and I'm ready to faint.

1705 Up until now it's been bearable, and last night I was even happy to notice that I could turn
1706 over a lot more easily. So I fell asleep almost right away and began to dream again of my
1707 processions in Lourdes, because every night I dream about Lourdes and miracles.

1708 Around a quarter to twelve I woke up and wanted to turn over. It was then that I felt the
1709 most violent pain one could possibly have. Finally, after incredible effort, I succeeded in
1710 sitting up, but I felt as if my head was going to fall off. Then I got up and took a
1711 handkerchief which I soaked in Lourdes water and applied it to my neck. But how could I lie
1712 down again? I asked the Blessed Mother to help me lie down in the direction I wanted, and I
1713 managed to do it because the slightest movement in the opposite direction caused me acute
1714 pain. Then I was able to fall back asleep until four-thirty.

1715 I had to get dressed at five o'clock to go to the first Mass. I was alone because Louis was at
1716 Nocturnal Adoration. I got up to look at the time, and fortunately, the Blessed Mother
1717 helped me because I don't know what I would have done. It was still too early.

1718 I sat down on my bed. I didn't dare lie down so as not to have to sit up a half hour later.
1719 Finally, at five o'clock I called Marie to help me get dressed. I had a great deal of difficulty
1720 sitting down and kneeling in church. I had to stop myself from crying out, so I'm not going
1721 to go to High Mass anymore.

1722 However, it's better at the moment, and, if I'm very careful, I'm able to move a little. If I
1723 could manage not to strain it anymore, I would be cured of this, but unfortunately, that's
1724 hardly possible.

1725 On top of that, this week I felt a general malaise that took away all my strength. I'm feeling
1726 better today, and I feel like I have more energy. If I didn't have this pain in my neck, it
1727 would seem as if I were freed from all my other illnesses.

1728 Let's continue our prayers and applying the Lourdes water. I still have hope. However, I'm
1729 not sure I'm going to be cured, and sometimes this thought makes me sad. What will
1730 become of my poor Léonie? . . .

1731 Do I have to see my entire life's dream vanish just as it's going to become a reality? We're
1732 so at peace when we have no strangers in the house. During the ten days the maid was away,
1733 everything was in the most perfect order because my children gave me great satisfaction. . . .

1734 I hope to be well enough to go to Lisieux next month; we'll leave August 18. I want to
1735 spend the Feast of the Assumption in Alençon because perhaps the Blessed Mother will
1736 begin to cure me that day, and I wouldn't be able to prepare myself for such a grace while

1737 on a trip. It's quite settled that I'll only bring Marie and Pauline with me, and they'll stay
 1738 with you for some time. But, I beg you, don't talk to me about bringing the others. That
 1739 would upset me and my husband, as well. . . .

1740 . . . If the Blessed Mother prolongs my existence, it's not so that I earn money. So, last
 1741 month I was sad to see a new order arrive, not knowing if I should accept it or let it go
 1742 because of the hope I still have of being cured. I have enough business, although now that I
 1743 have big girls it would be less painful than it was before when, because of it, my family was
 1744 too much at the mercy of silly or malicious servants. . . .

1745 I kiss you all with love.

1746

1747 **From Mme Martin to Mme Guérin, July 15, 1877**

1748 My dear Sister,

1749 Your letter is truly touching, as well my brother's. It brought tears to my husband's eyes. He
 1750 admires your devotion, and, I assure you, it consoles me greatly when I contemplate my
 1751 leaving this world, to think of the help you'll be for my dear children. . . .

1752 As for going to live in Lisieux, my husband says neither yes nor no [to a suggestion from the
 1753 Guérins that Louis Martin come live in Lisieux near them in the event his wife dies]; we
 1754 must let time take care of it. . . .

1755 Again, you ask me to speak to you about my illness. Sadly, what can I tell you about it?
 1756 Except that the illness is getting worse every day. I can neither get dressed nor undressed by
 1757 myself anymore, and my arm on the side where I'm sick refuses to do anything, but my hand
 1758 still wants to hold a needle!

1759 What's more, I feel a general malaise, some intestinal pain, and I've had a fever for about
 1760 two weeks. Finally, I can't remain standing and have to sit down.

1761 As for my neck, it's not cured, but I haven't endured as much pain as I felt the Sunday I
 1762 wrote to you. I have almost no attacks during the day, it's only at night when my nerves
 1763 tense up, and then I have to take unbelievable precautions to change my position. However,
 1764 I've learned by experience, and I'm beginning to know how to go about raising myself up so
 1765 that it keeps me from having an attack.

1766 I've been sleeping well enough for the last three nights. The previous nights were very bad
 1767 because I was too restless. Not being able to move myself overexcited me more, so I decided
 1768 to go out every night into the garden and tire myself out a little bit. This experience did me
 1769 good.

1770 You tell me not to lose confidence, and I'm certainly not losing confidence. I know very
 1771 well that the Blessed Mother can cure me, but I can't help fearing that she doesn't want to,
 1772 and I'll tell you honestly that a miracle seems very doubtful to me now. I've taken that stand
 1773 and am trying to act as if I have to die. It's absolutely necessary that I not lose the little time
 1774 I have left to live, these are days of salvation that will never come again, and so I must make
 1775 the most of them.

1776 I'll have double the benefits. I'll suffer less by resigning myself, and I'll do part of my
1777 Purgatory on earth. So please, ask for resignation and patience for me, I need it very much.
1778 You know that I have hardly any patience. . . .

1779 I kiss you with all my love.

1780 Your very loving sister, Z. Martin

1781

1782 **From Mme Martin to her brother, July 27, 1877**

1783 My dear brother,

1784 Yesterday I called out for you in a loud voice, believing that you alone could relieve my
1785 pain. For twenty-four hours I suffered more than I'd ever suffered in my entire life, so those
1786 hours were spent moaning and crying out. I begged all the saints in Heaven, one after the
1787 other, but no one answered me!

1788 Finally, not being able to obtain anything else, I asked to be able to spend the night in my
1789 bed. I hadn't been able to stay there in the afternoon. I was in a dreadful position, it was
1790 impossible to rest my head anywhere. We'd tried everything, but my poor head could touch
1791 nothing, nor could I make the slightest movement, even to swallow some liquid. My neck
1792 was stiff on all sides, and the gentlest move put me in atrocious pain.

1793 Finally, I was able to stay in bed as long as I was sitting up. When I began to fall asleep, the
1794 imperceptible movement that I no doubt made woke up all my sufferings. I had to moan all
1795 night. Louis, Marie and the maid stayed by my side. From time to time poor Louis would
1796 hold me in his arms like a child.

1797 The doctor came this morning at eleven o'clock and prescribed a sedative, but I haven't
1798 taken it yet since the big crisis has passed, although I continue to suffer all over.

1799 You're right to get ready to come, I would be happy to see all of you. However, it would be
1800 better to wait until the week of the 19th because the house is too messy at the moment, and
1801 we have to get it in order. I'm going to begin to bring people in to do quite a few things. The
1802 Sisters of Mercy are going to take care of me starting today, and they won't stop until I die.

1803 I can no longer write to you. I can't see anymore, and I'm incomprehensibly weak.

1804 A nursing sister just came. She can't stay tonight. She tells me that she's cared for several
1805 people suffering from the same illness as me and that they also had pain in their neck, but
1806 not the terrible pain I'm going through.

1807 The Blessed Mother didn't cure me in Lourdes. What can you do, my time is at an end, and
1808 God wants me to rest elsewhere other than on earth.

1809 I kiss you all with love.

1810 Z. Martin

1811

1812 **From Mme Martin to her brother, Thursday, August 16, 1877 [final letter]**

1813 ... I saw the doctor the day I received your last letter. I showed him the packets, and he told
 1814 me they were good but as ... [sic] I'd asked for it for my stomach and intestinal pains. I was
 1815 expecting a treatment that would have relieved me, but he only prescribed a bottle of
 1816 mineral water! Yet it seems to me that they could do something to relieve my pain because I
 1817 can no longer stand up. I hardly ever go downstairs. I go from my bed to the armchair and
 1818 from the armchair to my bed. I just spent two very cruel nights. . . .

1819 I can't write any longer, my strength is at an end. You were right to come to Alençon when I
 1820 could still stay with you.

1821 What can you do? If the Blessed Mother doesn't cure me it's because my time is at an end,
 1822 and God wants me to rest elsewhere other than on earth....

1823

1824 On August 26, Zélie received the Last Rights surrounded by her family.

1825 On August 27, Isidore and Céline came from Lisieux to be with Zélie as she dies.

1826 On August 28, 1877, Zélie died on Tuesday at 12:30 a.m. surrounded by Louis, Isidore,
 1827 Marie and the nursing sister.

1828 On August 29, 1877, Zélie's funeral occurred on Wednesday, at 9 a.m. in the Church of
 1829 Notre Dame d'Alençon.

1830

1831 **From Louis Martin to his five daughters Marie/ Pauline/ Léonie/ Céline/ Thérèse in**
 1832 **Lisieux**

1833 Alençon, 25th November 1877.

1834 Dear girls,

1835 Today, Sunday, is the day when I am the least busy, I am hurrying to address a few words to
 1836 you.

1837 I can't wait to be with you again, and I'm hurrying the workers to finish the Alençon lace
 1838 that several of them are still assembling. I therefore hope that on Thursday we will have the
 1839 pleasure of being reunited and not parting company immediately.

1840 Dear Marie, tell "petit Paulin" that her gold shells [which she used for her miniature models]
 1841 won't arrive before next Tuesday, I asked for three of them instead of two. As for your pins,
 1842 I think they will be easier to find in Lisieux. The moss you mentioned can't be found in this
 1843 season, but we will try to have some later on.

1844 Children, pay attention to all your uncle and kind aunt's instructions; you are aware of the
 1845 great sacrifices I had to make to secure you their help and good advice, therefore don't miss
 1846 a single opportunity to take advantage of it.

1847 You, Marie, my eldest, my first, you know how much I love you; well, continue to devote
 1848 yourself more and more to your sisters, take care that when seeing you, they may have
 1849 before their eyes a good model to imitate.

1850 Tell Léonie that if she continues being an absolutely good girl, I will certainly give her
 1851 something that she will like on New Year's Day.

1852 A Dieu, my dear children, I press you all to my heart out of love, and entrust you to your
 1853 holy mother.

1854

1855 **Louis and Zélie: testimonies for the process of beatification of Thérèse (1910-1911)**

1856

1857 **Sr. Agnes of Jesus (Pauline):** "Our parents were looked upon as religious, even very
 1858 devout, people. In spite of her hard-working life, mother attended half-past five Mass every
 1859 morning with father, and they both went to Holy Communion four or five times a week.
 1860 Towards the end of his life, father became a daily communicant; he was also a member of
 1861 the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the nocturnal adoration sodality, etc. Both observed the
 1862 Lenten fast and abstinence, despite mother's delicate health. Father observed Sunday rest
 1863 strictly, even though closing his shop on that day was particularly damaging to his business.
 1864 . . .

1865 One might say that our spiritual welfare was your parents' only concern. . . . Mother made
 1866 us raise our hearts to God often during the day and brought us on visits to the Blessed
 1867 Sacrament. She brought us up rather strictly, and let nothing pass, especially anything that
 1868 savored of vanity, etc. Father was gentler. . . ."

1869

1870 **Sr. Marie of the Sacred Heart (Marie):** "Our parents had the reputation of being
 1871 extraordinarily devout. Mother observed Lent without availing herself of any lawful
 1872 mitigations, and both of them attended 5:30 Mass every morning, because, they said, it was
 1873 the poor people's Mass. They received Communion frequently, more than once a week, with
 1874 was rather exceptional at that time. At Lisieux, my father received Communion four or five
 1875 times a week. My mother has a great abhorrence of worldliness and wanted nothing
 1876 luxurious in the house. One day, while reading the life of Madame Acarie (Blessed Mary of
 1877 the Incarnation), mother said, 'How blest she was to have given three daughters to God!'
 1878 Mother was very energetic and lively, but without any harshness, and she had a very
 1879 sensitive and generous heart. Above all, she had the spirit of self-denial, which made her
 1880 forgetful of herself, and she worked with great fortitude so as to have the means of giving us
 1881 a good Christian upbringing. In sorrow, too, for example at the death of my brothers and
 1882 sisters, she showed wonderful strength of soul. One could see from her letters that she was
 1883 brokenhearted, but her faith helped her to rise above it all.

1884 Father's outstanding characteristic was his very great honesty. He set himself the
 1885 task of declaring his faith even before unbelievers. When the priest came to bring Holy
 1886 Viaticum to our dying mother, he offered to escort the Blessed Sacrament as far as the
 1887 church, with a candle in his hand. He was very charitable, and so devoted to his neighbor

1888 that he would never allow anyone to speak ill of him. His whole character gave an
 1889 impression of kindness. One also observed in him a great purity of life, which was reflected
 1890 in his whole person. He took the upmost care to remove from us anything that he thought
 1891 might be an occasion of temptation.

1892 Our parents reared all of us in a spirit of detachment from the good things of this
 1893 world. This seems to me to have been the characteristic note of our upbringing. They
 1894 frequently reminded us of eternity. Our family upbringing was very affectionate, but by no
 1895 means soft.”

1896

1897 **Sr. Genevieve of St. Theresa (Céline):** “What impressed me most about my parents was
 1898 their detachment from the things of this world. Life at home as simple and patriarchal; we
 1899 shunned the disturbance of worldly acquaintances and tended to keep to ourselves.

1900 Eternal life was the dominant concern of my parents. My mother once wrote to
 1901 Pauline (4 March 1877): ‘I wanted to have many children so as to rear them for heaven.’
 1902 Whenever one of my little brothers or sisters died, her spirit of faith gave her such energy
 1903 and she was so consoled by the thought that these little angels were in heaven, that people
 1904 around her said: ‘It is not worth commiserating with Mme Martin; she does not grieve over
 1905 the death of her children.’

1906 Both my parents went to early Mass every day, and received Communion as often as
 1907 they could. Both fasted and abstained throughout the whole of Lent. . . .

1908 My father was wonderfully kind to his neighbors, and never spoke the least evil of
 1909 them. He made excuses for all their faults and allowed no criticisms of them. Above all, he
 1910 had great esteem for priests. People spoke of him as a saint. . . .

1911 Our father loved his children very much; he had an almost maternal love for us. We,
 1912 for our part, had an affectionate reverence for him that almost amounted to worship. He was
 1913 especially fond of Thérèse, whom he called his ‘little queen,’ but we found that quite
 1914 natural, and were not at all jealous. Besides, we were conscious of the fact that at heart he
 1915 loved us all equally. Nor did Thérèse take advantage of this affection for her own ends.”

1916

1917 **Sr. Françoise Thérèse (Leonie):** “Our family was what is called patriarchal. Our parents
 1918 had both thought of entering religious life when they were young, and they kept up a very
 1919 high standard of Christian living during their married life. Father made the closing of his
 1920 shop on Sunday an absolute law for himself, in spirit of the fact that all the other jewelers
 1921 remained open, in spite of pressure from friends, who pointed out to him that he was thus
 1922 losing the custom of those people who liked to take a walk on Sunday and do their shopping
 1923 then. Besides, he was very much given to religious practices and willingly sought the
 1924 company of the clergy. He always saluted a priest, even a stranger, out of respect for the
 1925 priesthood. Mother was very devout, and a member of the Third Order of St. Francis. In
 1926 rearing her children, she put a lot of attention to training them in devotional practices and to
 1927 making them think in accordance with their faith.”

1928

1929 **Bishop Guy Gaucher, OCD, from “A Brief Sketch of Zélie Martin”**

1930 “Zélie’s spontaneity was expressed throughout her correspondence, as well as her liveliness
 1931 touched by humor. A sound common sense that, by its origins, one could describe as down
 1932 to earth, shows that she had her feet planted firmly on the ground and that she had a deep,
 1933 selfless sisterly affection that was not afraid of expressing reproaches and advice. She
 1934 exhibited a strong courage throughout her life, in her exhausting work as a lace maker and
 1935 especially during her terrible illness. She went to the limits of her strength in her role of
 1936 wife, mother and educator, her love expressing itself in a thousand subtle ways—worry
 1937 about her family’s health, pride in the qualities of her children, heart-wrenching pain in the
 1938 loss of four of them, and continuous desire for their sanctity. She knew, in many little ways,
 1939 how to develop her daughter’s emotional lives, especially by her vigilant love.” (*A Call to a
 1940 Deeper Love*, pp. xii-xiii)

1941

1942

THÉRÈSE

1943

1944 **Letter of Thérèse to her Aunt, Mme Guérin, November 16, 1891 [18 years]**

1945 J.M.J.T.

1946 Jesus +

1947 Dear Aunt,

1948 It is very sweet for your littlest daughter to come with her older sisters to wish you a happy
 1949 feast day.

1950 Each year, I see the date of November 19 [St. Elizabeth of Hungary: Céline’s full name was
 1951 Élisabeth-Céline] return with joy, and if it is filled with sweet memories for me, it is also rich
 1952 with hope for the future. . . .

1953 The more I go on in life the more I appreciate how sweet a mother’s feast day is. Alas, in
 1954 my childhood God seemed to take from me forever a joy I had never experienced. But from
 1955 the height of heaven she who could no longer bestow her caresses on me awakened in a
 1956 maternal heart, dear to her, the tenderness of a mother for her poor little child, and since then
 1957 she was able to feel the sweet joys one experiences in honoring a dear mother!

1958 Dear little Aunt, since she has been on the mountain of Carmel, your little Thérèse feels still
 1959 more deeply, if that be possible, the affection she has for you; the more she learns to love
 1960 Jesus, the greater, too, becomes her tenderness for her dear relatives.

1961 The little gift [a card with some of Thérèse’s hair, cut after her reception of the habit, and
 1962 arranged to represent a branch of lilies] that our good Mother was happy to have made for
 1963 your feast will tell you better than I, dear Aunt, what I am powerless to tell you. My heart is
 1964 filled with emotion when seeing this poor hair which undoubtedly has no other value but the
 1965 delicate workmanship and the gracefulness of its arrangement, but which nevertheless was
 1966 loved by him whom God took away from us [Louis is at Bon Sauveur in Caen]. . . .

- 1967 Dear little Aunt, do you understand? I am happy when seeing it is to her—who is dearest to
 1968 me in this life, after my father—this hair is offered, which he would have received with so
 1969 much pleasure.
- 1970 Dear little Aunt, this letter hardly resembles a feast day letter in which one must speak only
 1971 of joy and happiness. But I myself cannot speak except with my heart, it alone guides my
 1972 pen; and I am sure the maternal heart I am addressing will be able to understand me and
 1973 even guess at what I cannot express. . . .
- 1974 Dear Aunt, I am obliged to terminate my letter, but first I want to send you all my kisses,
 1975 and I beg you to tell your little daughters it is they whom I entrust with giving them to you
 1976 for me. I am sure they will be charmed by the mission I confide to them and that they will
 1977 carry it out perfectly. . . .
- 1978 Your little daughter is sending you all her best wishes, and I beg you, dear little Aunt, to
 1979 believe in all the tenderness of her childlike heart. . . .
- 1980 Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus
- 1981 rel. carm. ind.
- 1982
- 1983 **Reply of her aunt, the same day:**
- 1984 Dear little Thérèse,
- 1985 I read and reread your nice letter, and I really do not know how to respond to so much
 1986 thoughtfulness. I am very much moved when seeing all the affection you are showing me
 1987 and of which your sisters and yourself have already given me so many proofs.
- 1988 What have I done, then, that God has surrounded me with such loving hearts! I did nothing
 1989 but answer the last look of a mother whom I loved *very much, very much*. I believed I
 1990 understood that look [the night before Zélie died] which nothing will be able to make me
 1991 forget. It is engraved within my heart. Since that day, I have tried to replace her whom God
 1992 had taken away from you, but alas! Nothing can replace a mother! . . .
- 1993 However, God has willed to bless my feeble efforts, and today He permits me to receive the
 1994 affection of these young hearts. He willed that the mother who guided your early childhood
 1995 be raised to a more sublime glory and enjoy heavenly delights.
- 1996 When I consider this good father, venerable Patriarch we are pleased to call him, bent under
 1997 the weight of his trial, dragging his cross painfully, and when I remember him as so kind, so
 1998 happy among his children, taking his dear little queen by the arm, I say to myself: ‘There
 1999 must be a beautiful heaven where all this will be rewarded. This good father has given three
 2000 of his children to God, and there remains nothing in return. . . .
- 2001 All these reflections came to me, dear little Thérèse, when reading your nice letter and
 2002 receiving your beautiful hair so artistically and delicately arranged. I am very happy to
 2003 possess this souvenir which is very precious to me, and you will thank your good Mother for
 2004 me until I can do so myself.

2005 I have not written your sisters, dear little Thérèse; you will be my messenger to them, telling
 2006 them of all the pleasure their affectionate letters gave me, thanking them for their prayers for
 2007 me and mine, which I beg them to continue.

2008 Remember me to Reverend Mother Marie de Gonzague. I am very appreciative of the
 2009 remembrance of the entire Carmel. Remember me to Mother Geneviève. In a word, little
 2010 Thérèse, remember me to all the sisters, telling them of my gratitude.

2011 I kiss you with my whole heart and your two dear sisters as well.

2012 Your very devoted aunt

2013 Céline Guérin

2014

2015

2016 **From Thérèse to Céline, October 19, 1892**

2017 J.M.J.T.

2018 Jesus +

2019 Dear Céline,

2020 Formerly, in the days of our childhood, we used to enjoy our feast because of the little gifts
 2021 we mutually exchanged. The smallest object had then an incomparable value in our eyes. . .
 2022 . Soon, the scene changed. Wings grew on the youngest of the birds, and it flew away far
 2023 from the sweet nest of its childhood, and all illusion vanished! Summer had followed
 2024 spiring, life's reality, the dreams of youth. . . .

2025 Céline, was it not at that decisive moment that the bonds that joined our hearts were
 2026 tightened? Yes, separation united us in a way that language cannot express. Our childlike
 2027 affection was changed into a union of feelings, a unity of souls and minds. Who, then, could
 2028 have accomplished this marvel? . . . Ah! it was He who had ravished our hearts. "The
 2029 Beloved chosen among thousands, the odor alone of his ointments suffices to draw us after
 2030 him [Sg: 5:10; 1:3-4]. Following his steps, young maidens run lightly on the road" [John of
 2031 the Cross, C, XXV].

2032 Jesus has attracted us together, although by different ways; together He has raised us above
 2033 all the fragile things of this world whose image passes away [1Cor 7:31]. Like Zacchaeus,
 2034 we climbed a tree to see Jesus [Lk 19:4]. Then we could say with Saint John of the Cross:
 2035 "All is mine, all is for me, the earth is mine, the heavens are mine, God is mine, and the
 2036 Mother of my God is mine" [John of the Cross, Prayer of the Soul Enkindled by Love].
 2037 With regard to the Blessed Virgin, I must confide to you one of my simple ways with her. I
 2038 surprise myself at times by saying to her: "But good Blessed Virgin, I find I am more
 2039 blessed than you, for I have you for Mother, and you do not have a *Blessed Virgin to love*. . .
 2040 . It is true you are the Mother of Jesus, but this Jesus you have given entirely to us . . . and
 2041 He, on the Cross, He gave you to us as Mother. Thus we are richer than you since we
 2042 possess Jesus and since you are ours also. Formerly, in your humility, you wanted one day to

2043 be the little servant of the happy Virgin who would have the honor of being the Mother of
 2044 God, and here I am, a poor little creature, and I am not your servant but your child. You are
 2045 the Mother of Jesus, and you are my Mother.” No doubt, the Blessed Virgin must laugh at
 2046 my simplicity, and nevertheless what I am telling her is really true! . . . Céline, what a
 2047 mystery is our grandeur in Jesus. . . . This is all that Jesus has shown us in making us climb
 2048 the symbolic tree about which I was just talking to you. And now what science is HE about
 2049 to teach us? Has He not taught us all? . . . Let us listen to what He is saying to us: “Make
 2050 haste to descend, I must lodge today at your house” [Lk 19:5]. Well, Jesus tells us to
 2051 descend. . . . Where, then must we descend? Céline, you know better than I, however let me
 2052 tell you where we must now follow Jesus. In days gone by, the Jews asked our divine
 2053 Savior: “Mater, where do you live?” [Jn 1:38]. And He answered: “The foxes have their
 2054 lairs, the birds of heaven their nests, but I have no place to rest my head” [Mt 8:20]. This is
 2055 where we must descend in order that we may serve as an abode for Jesus. To be so poor that
 2056 we do not have a place to rest our head. This is, dear Céline, what Jesus has done in my soul
 2057 during my retreat. . . . You understand, there is question here of the interior. Besides, has
 2058 not the exterior already been reduced to nothing by means of the very sad trial of Caen? . . .
 2059 In our dear Father, Jesus has stricken us in the most sensitive exterior part of our heart; now
 2060 let us allow Him to act, He can complete His works in our souls. . . . What Jesus desires is
 2061 that we receive Him into our hearts. No doubt, they are already empty of creatures, but,
 2062 alas, I feel mind is not entirely empty of myself, and it is for this reason that Jesus tells me
 2063 descend. . . . He, the King of Kings, humbled Himself in such a way that His face was
 2064 hidden, and no one recognized Him [Is 53:5] . . . and I, too, want to hide my face, I want my
 2065 Beloved alone to see it, that He be the only one to count my tears . . . that in my heart at least
 2066 He may rest His dear head and feel that there He is known and understood! . . .

2067 Céline, I cannot tell you all I would like, my soul is powerless. . . . Ah, if only I could! . . .
 2068 But, no, this is not in my power . . . why be sad, do you not always think what I am
 2069 thinking? . . . Thus all I do not tell you, you divine. Jesus makes you feel it in your heart.
 2070 Has He not, moreover, set up His abode there to console Himself for the crimes of sinners?
 2071 Yes, it is there in the intimate retreat of the soul that He instructs us together, and one day
 2072 He will show us the day which will no longer have any setting. . . .

2073 Happy feast. How sweet it will be one day for your Thérèse to wish it to you in heaven! . . .

2074

2075 **From Thérèse to Mme. Pottier (Céline Maudelonde), July 16, 1894**

2076 J.M.J.T.

2077 Jesus +

2078 Dear little Céline,

2079 Your letter gave me real joy. I marvel at how the Blessed Virgin is pleased to answer all
 2080 your desires. Even before your marriage, she willed that the soul to whom you were to be
 2081 joined form only one with your by means of an identity of feelings. What a grace for you to
 2082 feel you are so well understood, and, above all, to know your union will be everlasting, that
 2083 after this life, you will still be able to love the husband who is so dear to you! . . .

2084 They have passed away, then for us both the blessed days of our childhood! We are now at
2085 the serious stage of life; the road we are following is different, however, the goal is the
2086 same. Both of us must have only one same purpose: *to sanctify* ourselves in the way God
2087 has traced out for us.

2088 I feel, dear little friend, that I can speak freely to you; you understand the language of faith
2089 better than that of the world, and the Jesus of your First Communion has remained the
2090 Master of your heart. In Him, you love the beautiful soul who forms only one with yours,
2091 and it is because of Him that your love is so tender and so strong.

2092 Oh! How beautiful is our religion; instead of contracting hearts (as the world believes), it
2093 raises them up and renders them capable of *loving*, or *loving* with a love *almost infinite* since
2094 this love must continue after this mortal life which is given to us only for meriting the
2095 homeland of heaven where we shall find again the dear ones whom we have loved on earth!

2096 I had asked for you, dear Céline, from Our Lady of Mount Carmel [July 16] the grace you
2097 have obtained at Lourdes. How happy I am that you are clothed in the holy scapular [sent to
2098 her by her cousin, Marie Guérin, shortly before Céline's marriage]. It is a sure sign of
2099 predestination, and besides are you not more intimately united by means of it to your little
2100 sisters in Carmel? . . .

2101 You ask, dear little cousin, that I pray for your dear husband; do you think, then, I could fail
2102 in this? . . . No, I could not separate you in my weak prayers. I am asking our Lord to be as
2103 generous in your regard as he was formerly to the spouses at the wedding of Cana. May He
2104 always change water into wine! [Jn 2:7-9]. . . That is to say, may He continue to make you
2105 happy and to soften as much as possible the trials that you encounter in life.

2106 Trials, how could I place this word in my letter, when I know everything is happiness for
2107 you? . . .

2108 Pardon me, dear little friend; enjoy in peace the joy God is giving you, without disturbing
2109 yourself regarding the future. He is reserving for you, I am sure, new graces and many
2110 consolations.

2111 Our good Mother Marie de Gonzague is very appreciative of your kind remembrance of
2112 her, and she herself is not forgetting her dear little Céline. Our Mother and sister Marie of
2113 the Sacred Heart are also very happy because of your joy, and they ask me to assure you of
2114 their affection.

2115 I dare, dear little *cousin*, to beg you to offer my respectful regards to *Monsieur Pottier*,
2116 whom I cannot refrain from considering also as my *cousin*.

2117 I leave you, dear Céline, remaining always united to you in my heart, and I shall, throughout
2118 my life, be happy to call myself,

2119 Your little sister in Jesus,

2120 Thérèse of the Child Jesus

2121 rel. carm. ind.

2122

2123 **From Thérèse to Sister Marie of Saint-Joseph, September 8-17, 1896, first of a series of**
 2124 **eight notes**

2125 I am delighted with the little child, and the *one* who carries her in His arms is still more
 2126 delighted than I. . . . Ah! how beautiful is the little child's vocation! It is not *one mission*
 2127 that she much evangelize but all *missions*. How will she do this? . . . By *loving*, by *sleeping*,
 2128 by THROWING FLOWERS [*en jetant des fleurs*] to Jesus when He is asleep. Then Jesus
 2129 will take these flowers, and, giving them an inestimable value, He will throw them in His
 2130 turn; He will have them fly over all shores and will save souls (with the flowers, *with the*
 2131 *love of the little child*, who will see nothing but will always smile even through her tears! . . .
 2132 (A child, a missionary, and even a warrior, what a marvel!)

2133

2134 **Story of a Soul, chapter 9**

2135 “How will she prove her *love* since *love* is proved by works? Well, the little child
 2136 will strew flowers [*jettera des fleurs*], she will perfume the royal throne with their
 2137 sweet scents, and she will sing in her silvery tones the canticle of *Love*.

2138 Yes, my Beloved, this is how my life will be consumed. I have no other means of
 2139 proving my love for you other than that of strewing flowers, that is, not allowing one
 2140 little sacrifice to escape, not one look, one work, profiting by all the smallest things
 2141 and doing them through love. I desire to suffer for love and even to rejoice through
 2142 love; and in this way I shall strew flowers before Your throne. I shall not come upon
 2143 one without *unpetalling* it for You. While I am strewing my flowers, I shall sing, for
 2144 could one cry while doing such a joyous action? I shall sing even when I must
 2145 gather my flowers in the midst of thorns, and my song will be the more melodious in
 2146 proportion to the length and sharpness of the thorns.

2147 O Jesus, of what use will my flowers be to You? Ah! I know very well that this
 2148 fragrant shower, these fragile, worthless petals, these songs of love from the littlest
 2149 of hearts will charm You. Yes, these nothings will please You. They will bring a
 2150 smile to the Church Triumphant. She will gather up my flowers unpetalled through
 2151 love and have them pass through Your own divine hands, O Jesus. And this Church
 2152 in heaven, desirous of playing with her little child, will cast these flowers, which are
 2153 now infinitely valuable because of Your diving touch, upon the Church Suffering in
 2154 order to extinguish its flames and upon the Church Militant in order to gain the
 2155 victory for it!

2156

2157 **Last Conversations, Sister Marie of the Trinity, June 1897**

2158 I have always felt the three long months of our Angel's agony. I'd been forbidden to
 2159 speak to her under the pretext that as I was young, I might contract her sickness! (I
 2160 was certain of the opposite, for Sister Thérèse had told me nobody would catch her
 2161 disease, that she had asked God for this.) Each day, news of her health was sadder
 2162 and sadder, and I was smothered with pain. One day, I went to take a walk in the

2163 garden, and I saw her in her wheelchair under the chestnut trees. She was all alone
 2164 and she made a sign for me to approach. “Oh! no, they would see us, and I have no
 2165 permission.” I entered the grotto of the Holy Face where I began to cry; lifting up
 2166 my head, I saw with surprise little Sister Thérèse seated on a trunk of a tree at my
 2167 side. She said,

2168 “I haven’t been forbidden to come to you, and even though I should die of it,
 2169 I want to console you.”

2170 She dried my tears and placed my head on her heart. I begged her to return to her
 2171 wheelchair, for she was trembling with fever:

2172 “Yes, but not before you have laughed for me!”

2173 This I did immediately for fear she would get worse, and I helped her regain her
 2174 wheelchair.

2175 (Recounted in a letter to Mother Agnes in 1934)

2176

2177 **The Story of a Soul, chapter 11, Thérèse and Sister St. Peter:**

2178 With her poor crippled hands she was trying to manage with her bread as well as she
 2179 could. I soon noticed this, and, each evening, I did not leave her until I had rendered
 2180 her this little service. As she had not asked for this, she was very much touched by
 2181 my attention, and it was by this means that I gained her entire good graces, and this
 2182 especially (I learned this later) because, after cutting her bread for her, I gave her my
 2183 most beautiful smile before leaving her all alone.

2184

2185 **Sister Geneviève (Céline), in the process of beatification of Thérèse**

2186 Sister St. Peter gave me a detailed account of the charitable care which Sister
 2187 Thérèse took of her. Then she added solemnly: “Such acts of virtue must not remain
 2188 hidden under a bushel.” The Servant of God’s [Thérèse] virtue must have been of a
 2189 very special gentleness to impress a rough temperament such as hers like that. What
 2190 she had found particularly striking was the angelic smile with which her kindly
 2191 helper left her on each occasion

2192

2193 **Thérèse to Father Adolphe Roulland, missionary in China, May 9, 1897**

2194 [*Reply to his letter of February 24, the real possibility of martyrdom*] . . . I do not
 2195 understand, Brother, how you seem to doubt your immediate entrance into heaven if the
 2196 infidels were to take your life. I know one must be very pure to appear before the God of all
 2197 Holiness, but I know, too, that the Lord is infinitely just; and it is the justice which frightens
 2198 so many souls that is the object of my joy and confidence. To be just is not only to exercise
 2199 severity in order to punish the guilty; it is also to recognize right intentions and to reward
 2200 virtue. I expect as much from God’s justice as from His mercy. It is because He is just that

2201 “He is compassionate and filled with gentleness, slow to punish, and abundant in mercy, for
 2202 He knows our frailty, He remembers we are only dust. As a father has tenderness for his
 2203 children, so the Lord has compassion on us!!” [Ps 103: 8, 14, 14]. . . .

2204 This is, Brother, what I think of God’s justice; my way is all confidence and love. I do not
 2205 understand souls who fear a Friend so tender. At times, when I am reading certain spiritual
 2206 treatises in which perfection is shown through a thousand obstacles, surrounded by a crowd
 2207 of illusions, my poor little mind quickly tires; I close the learned book that is breaking my
 2208 head and drying up my heart, and I take up Holy Scripture. Then all seems luminous to me;
 2209 a single word uncovers for my soul infinite horizons, perfection seems simple to me. I see it
 2210 is sufficient to recognize one’s nothingness and to abandon oneself as a child into God’s
 2211 arms. Leaving to great souls, to great minds, the beautiful books I cannot understand, much
 2212 less put into practice, I rejoice at being little since children alone and those who resemble
 2213 them will be admitted to the heavenly banquet. I am very happy there are many mansions in
 2214 God’s kingdom, for if there were only the one whose description and road seems
 2215 incomprehensible to me, I would not be able to enter there. . . .

2216 **Thérèse, Story of a Soul, chapter 10**

2217 You know, Mother, I have always wanted to be a saint. Alas! I have always noticed that
 2218 when I compared myself to the saints, there is between them and me the same difference that
 2219 exists between a mountain whose summit is lost in the clouds and the obscure grain of sand
 2220 trampled underfoot by passers-by. Instead of becoming discouraged, I said to myself: God
 2221 cannot inspire unrealizable desires. I can, then, in spite of my littleness, aspire to holiness.
 2222 It is impossible for me to grow up, and so I must bear with myself such as I am with all my
 2223 imperfections. But I want to seek out a means of going to heaven by a little way, a way that
 2224 is very straight, very short, and totally new.

2225 We are living now in an age of inventions, and we no longer have to take the trouble of
 2226 climbing stairs, for, in the homes of the rich, an elevator has replaced those very
 2227 successfully. I wanted to find an elevator which could raise me to Jesus, for I am too small
 2228 to climb the rough stairway of perfection. I searched, then, in the Scriptures for some sign
 2229 of this elevator, the object of my desires, and I read these words coming from the mouth of
 2230 Eternal Wisdom: “*Whoever is a LITTLE ONE, let him come to me*” [Prv 9:4]. And so I
 2231 succeeded. I felt I had found what I was looking for. But wanting to know, O my God,
 2232 what You would do to the *very little one* who answered Your call, I continued my search
 2233 and this is what I discovered: “*As one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you; you*
 2234 *shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you*” [Is 66:, 13, 12].
 2235 Ah! never did words more tender and more melodious come to give joy to my soul. The
 2236 elevator which must raise me to heaven is Your arms, O Jesus! And for this I had no need to
 2237 grow up, but rather I had to remain little and become this more and more.

2238

2239 **Sister Marie of the Trinity, letter to Sister Germaine, May 29, 1917**

2240 You see, the way to be happy on the “Little Way” of Thérèse is to abandon yourself to God
 2241 and to think of yourself as little as possible, not even to seek keeping an account of whether
 2242 you make progress or not. That’s not our business. We have only to try to perform all the
 2243 little acts of daily life with the greatest possible love, to recognize humbly but without

2244 sadness, our thousand imperfections which are always resurfacing and to ask God with
2245 confidence to transform them into love.

2246

2247

LEONIE

2248

2249 **From Sr. Françoise-Therese (Leonie) to Isidore Guerin, May 13, 1900**

2250 Dearest Uncle,

2251 Our dear Mother wanted me to send you a telegram to tell you the good news immediately.
2252 My gratitude to our beloved Mother and the whole Community is indescribable. I'd like to
2253 be able to describe the joy and deep affection with which I was received. I knew I was well-
2254 loved here, but I didn't imagine it was to such an extent.

2255 Dear Uncle, I'm sure your joy is great too. I have known your fatherly affection for me for a
2256 long time.

2257 You were once very worried about my future, especially as you didn't believe I had a
2258 religious vocation. It is understandable, dear Uncle, after all that's happened over the last
2259 thirteen years My God how I suffered! But I don't regret it, as I appreciate and savor
2260 my happiness all the more now. Soon I'll be able to call myself the Spouse of Jesus. Is that
2261 possible? I must be dreaming! But I'm not, it's true, it's an absolute certainty. I have reached
2262 port, what bliss! My holy Visitandine aunt's prophecy has come true to the letter; I am and
2263 will be a little (oh yes, very little!) Visitandine for Eternity.

2264 Thank you for your kind letter, dear Uncle. You will bring me immense pleasure by coming
2265 to my profession. It cannot take place before 1st July, and I ardently hope that the Bishop
2266 arranges it for the same day as the feast of the Visitation.

2267 Now, in deep peace, I'm going to prepare for the greatest and most wonderful day of my
2268 life. I want to be adorned like my little Thérèse on the day of her own profession, so I'm
2269 praying very hard to her to help me.

2270

2271 **From Mother Agnes of Jesus (Pauline) to Sr. Françoise-Therese (Leonie), May 14, 1900**

2272 J.M.J.T.

2273 Jesus+

2274 Beloved little sister,

2275 What joy! What a surprise! It made me weep with happiness . . . [Leonie has been admitted
2276 to profession of vows, for July 2] There are no words to convey my feelings. We haven't
2277 forgotten, little sister, that we promised you your crown of roses for the day of your
2278 Profession. Tell us what you'd like it to be made of. Do you want there to be buds in it?

- 2279 What pictures would you like for the keepsakes? It's our Mother who wants me to ask you
2280 these questions, but above all, tell us when the big day is.
- 2281 I see from your letters that you are really happy. I'm so grateful to your dear Mothers. Oh,
2282 please keep telling them that we'll try to show how grateful we are by praying for them.
- 2283 Goodbye, darling sister. What else do you want me to say? In heaven, you'll know
2284 everything that goes through my head and heart about you. And so the prophecy of our dear
2285 Aunt from Le Mans has come true. Can you remember how struck we were to read, in one
2286 of her letters, "I cannot help but believe that this child will become a Visitandine"?
- 2287 I send you a big kiss, little sister, at the risk of ruffling your little white veil, the one that will
2288 soon be replaced by that of the professed nuns.
- 2289 I can't believe it!
- 2290 Your loving little sister, Agnes of Jesus
- 2291 u.c.n.
- 2292 Our dear Rev. Mother and the whole Community share in your joy.
- 2293
- 2294 **From Sr. Françoise-Therese (Leonie) to Mother Marie de Gonzague, May 21, 1900**
- 2295 . . . how touched I am, dear Mother, by your kind thought. Mother Agnes tells me you
2296 would like for my crown and profession pictures to be made at the Carmel. This would bring
2297 me immense pleasure and I'm being mindful not to choose either the crown or the contents
2298 of the pictures, given that your taste and that of my sisters is very much my own.
- 2299 My profession will take place on 2nd July, the feast of the Visitation. The Bishop won't be
2300 able to preside the ceremony, which was a disappointment for me at first. But must this not
2301 be another of God's intentions for my soul? Sweet Jesus wants to marry me in modesty,
2302 without pomp and in private: I was struck by this thought and it comforted me.
- 2303
- 2304 **From Sr. Françoise-Therese (Leonie) to her two Carmelite sisters, May 25th, 1941 [five**
2305 **weeks before her death]**
- 2306 V + J!
- 2307 Beloved little sisters,
- 2308 My heart is full to bursting at seeing so much affection on your part. The tears I shed are
2309 very sweet. I can feel your prayers significantly helping me climb my Calvary, together with
2310 the blessings of our family up above, and in particular those of our holy Visitandine Aunt
2311 whom I love so dearly and venerate still. Our Mamma Lamb [superior of the Visitation]
2312 believes that once I'm gone, the close ties that exist between our two families with diminish
2313 considerably. I personally think the contrary. I beg of you, reassure her, for it pains her, and
2314 me as well as a result. Do you have any more propaganda pictures left to give her? Her large

2315 and very generous heart is insatiable when it comes to pleasing others and spreading
2316 devotion to her favorite saint.

2317 This is a little note from the soul of a great sinner, one who cannot be afraid of God! On the
2318 contrary, it's my extreme poverty that makes me so confident and it fills me with joy to
2319 think that, when I leave the maternal arms of our beloved Mother, I'll quite naturally fall
2320 into those of Jesus and my heavenly Mamma. How bold I am!!

2321 I'm so pleased to know that the Constitutions relating to our revered Aunt are in your hands.

2322 Your little sister who loves you so very dearly

2323 Sr Françoise-Thérèse

2324 B.B.G.

2325

FOR PERSONAL PRAYER AND REFLECTION, AND FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayerfully reflect on what has spoken to your heart, unhurriedly rereading the texts as helpful.

What do you see in the Martin family in these letters?

What speaks to your heart? What speaks to your vocation? The calling, tasks, and relationships in which God has placed you?

Who is Louis? What kind of man is he? What kind of father? Husband?

Who is Zélie? What kind of woman is she? What kind of mother? Wife?

How does each relate to the other? To the larger family?

How does each work?

What struggles do they undergo? How do they respond to them?

How do they relate to each child?

What place does faith have in her life?

What do you see in Sr. Marie-Dosithée? In Isidore and Céline Guérin? In the Martin children as they grow into adulthood? How do these act? What place does faith have in their lives?

What speaks to your own experience in what they live and describe? What does their example say to you?

What do you notice in Thérèse?

What are her desires?

How does she relate to God?

How does she relate to others?

How does she view herself?

What, in her, relates to your own life? How can it make a difference?

What do you notice in Leonie?

What are her struggles? How does she respond to them?

How does she view herself?

What helps her to grow?

What are her desires?

How does she relate to God?

How does she relate to others?

What, in her, relates to your own life? How can it make a difference?

Supplemental Material

An Outline of the Examen

This outline is based on Ignatius's presentation of the examen in the *Spiritual Exercises* (no. 43). I place it here as an introduction to all that follows; it may also serve, once the content of this book has been assimilated, as a practical tool in praying the examen.

Transition: I become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin this examen.

Step One: Gratitude. I note the gifts that God's love has given me this day, and I give thanks to God for them.

Step Two: Petition. I ask God for an insight and a strength that will make this examen a work of grace, fruitful beyond my human capacity alone.

Step Three: Review. With my God, I review the day. I look for the stirrings in my heart and the thoughts that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God. I review my choices in response to both, and throughout the day in general.

Step Four: Forgiveness. I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love and respect for me, removes my heart's burdens.

Step Five: Renewal. I look to the following day and, with God, plan concretely how to live it in accord with God's loving desire for my life.

Transition: Aware of God's presence with me, I prayerfully conclude the examen.

Acknowledge, Relate, Receive, Respond

You have sat with God's Word. Once you feel God is saying something to you, **acknowledge** what stirs within you. Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and desires. These are important.

Once you've **acknowledged** what's going on inside your heart, **relate** this to God. Don't just think about what's going on. Don't simply think about God. Don't think about how God might react. **Relate** to God. Tell him how you feel. Tell him what you think. Tell him what you want. Share all your thoughts, feelings, and desires with God. Share everything with Him.

Once you've shared everything with God, **receive**. Listen to what He's telling you. It could be a subtle voice you hear. It could be a memory that pops up. Maybe He invites you to re-read the Scripture passage. Perhaps you feel something in your body. Perhaps he invites you into a still, restful, silence. Trust that God is listening to you and **receive** what He wants to share with you.

Now **respond** however you want. It could be more conversation. It could be a resolution. It could be tears or laughter. **Respond** to what you're receiving.