

## Letters from Africa: The Testament of Brother André Mottais

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Most Holy Cross members when they think about Brother André Mottais, if they think about him at all, may consider him a kind of “secretary” to Father Dujarié (Smith 167) and dismiss him as a somewhat important, if marginal and shadowy, cog in the early wheel of the Brothers of St. Joseph. They probably know that of the three men earliest to arrive at Ruillé in 1820, he was the only one to persevere, answering Dujarié’s call to rescue children from the ignorance left in the aftermath of the French Revolution, but when André arrived, the Revolution was a generation behind in France, and Napoleon’s Concordat, which reconciled Church and State in a form still pretty much extant today, was seventeen years old. André is often lost in the patter of history and survives only in a paragraph of Holy Cross history here and there as a man of some importance to the fledgling community at Ruillé. It took a brave archivist, however, to proclaim André the “second founder of Holy Cross,” the epithet that Philéas Vanier bestowed on André half a century ago. Yet here we are today as wary and incredulous as ever that a layman could wear the title of “second founder of Holy Cross.” Some smile at the title and accept it as a pious metaphor, a kind of testament to the man who lived with Dujarié and worked beside him for seventeen years. Others are content to skip over the title as a historical gesture of no religious or political significance because, after all, André worked in a clerical society and his vocation was based on the humility and obscurity of St. Joseph himself. But metaphor or not, the title reflects the actuality of André’s work. In the words of Vanier:

Four directors had been established to head the Institute [at Ruillé]: but the last three are more assistants than equals. Brother André directs everything: he rules on everything and is the judge of last resort. He is responsible for formation of subjects; he is master of novices; he presides over all exercises including meals; he gives all permissions; he resolves all difficulties between religious; he harries the lukewarm; he encourages the zealous; he gives direction. (Vanier 46)

It is obvious that André was the visible head of the Brothers of St. Joseph, Dujarié being distracted by his parish duties and his increasingly problematic supervision of the Sisters of Providence. It is André who makes the annual visits on foot to the scores of little schools run by the brothers in towns around the diocese. It is André who supervises day by day and year by year the ups and downs of the community. He is the front man for most decisions, even as Dujarié remains titular head of the brothers.

The man who made Dujarié's vision work was born to Jean Mottais and Jeanne Blot in 1800, the second of four children (three boys and one girl). The well established family lived at Pontperrin, an estate-farm near Larchamp in Mayenne. It was a rather large farm, totaling some 250 acres before the Revolution, and had been in the family for hundreds of years. The manor house still stands today as does one of the large barns, just off the intersection of Route 799 and Route 523. The home has two levels with a stone stairway leading to the second level. Presently it is owned by the de Blic family. The church where André was baptized remains much the same as he would have know it, the tallest building in Larchamp. Long days on the farm and whatever schooling he could get along with careful tutoring in virtue by his parents and the town priest made André into

the fine candidate who traveled in 1820 to Ruillé to meet Dujarié and join the new community of brothers. He immediately became indispensable to the aging priest.

In three major crises, it is André who weathers the storms with Dujarié: one political, one economic, and one organizational. The petit revolution of 1830 threatened to destroy the Brothers of St. Joseph by reintroducing unrest reminiscent of the 1789 horrors. The brothers survived. Then one year later Mother Marie Lecor engineered, with the help of the bishop, the financial separation of the Sisters of Providence from the brothers, a separation particularly hard on Dujarié because he had used his own patrimony to float the sisters and had counted on their success to float the brothers. Lecor wanted no part of such a plan and forced the separation. She was the only mother superior of the sisters that André had known: the saintly Mother Marie Madelaine had died two years before André arrived at Ruillé so André had to watch first hand the machinations of Marie Lecor, a hard-nosed Breton woman, as she gradually maneuvered the sisters into independence. Although today we can praise her courage as a laywoman facing off clerical control, at the time she must have seemed almost cruel and ungrateful to the brothers who, after all, had done much of the carpentry work at the Grande Providence.

The third storm weathered by André was the deteriorating of the brothers as Dujarié himself deteriorated. Three years after financial disengagement from the Sisters of Providence, it was obvious to André that Dujarié was no longer physically or emotionally capable of directing the brothers. Confined to his bed for weeks at a time, Dujarié lost more and more sense of what was happening to his Brothers of St. Joseph. Thus André in autumn of 1834 contacted the bishop about forming a tri-partite

community of brothers, priests, and lay teachers. Then in the following spring, he again contacted the bishop about a private meeting with the four brother-directors, the chief of whom is, of course, André. Within four months, the bishop would transfer the Brothers of St. Joseph to the care of Basil Moreau, and Ruillé would begin to crumble as a headquarters for the Josephites. André himself moved to Le Mans to take up his duties as novice master for the brothers at Sainte Croix.

The community began to thrive under Moreau's strong leadership, but André was not destined to stay in Le Mans very long. In the spring of 1840, Moreau announced that missionaries would be sent to Algeria, and André was being sent along to supervise the brothers in the schools to be established there. In addition to André, named to go were Brother Louis (Victor Marchand), Brother Alphonsus (Francis-Mary Tulou), Brother Ignatius (Theodore Feron), Father Julian Le Boucher, and Father Victor Drouelle. Later added to the group were Brother Eulogius (Antoine Boisard), Brother Liguori (Louis Guyard), and Father Hautebourg. André at age forty was not the oldest brother in the group. Alphonsus was forty-two. Victor was twenty-eight, as was Louis. Liguori was twenty-one and Louis twenty. Le Boucher had been assistant to Dom Gueranger at Solemnes before he joined Moreau's group of auxiliary priests so he came with excellent credentials and seemed perfect to run the seminary in Algeria. He had been with Moreau's community only six months and would leave the community in 1843, within two years of the Algerian mission's collapse. It was an ill-fated mission from the moment the brothers and priests set foot in Africa, but André persevered for two years until Moreau recalled everyone in June, 1842. André's health was broken by then and he would live only two more years, but in one respect his assignment was a blessing: freed

for the first time in twenty years from major administrative duties, with only one brother and two novices to supervise in the classroom, he was able to spend long months with himself, analyzing the state of his soul, a retreat-like luxury he had never been afforded in Ruillé or Le Mans. He remains captured forever for us in three very long letters penned from Africa: two from Moustapha and one from Phillippeville.

André's first extant African letter was written to his parents at Larchamp in July, 1840. He asked them to send copies of the letter to various brothers in and around Le Mans. He explains that he lives in an orphanage attached to the seminary about a mile outside of town. The orphans eat and attend Mass with the seminarians, now under the direction of Father Le Boucher. We learn from the letter that crossing the Mediterranean Sea from Toulon to Aleria had been rough. Catta (1.471) notes the group left from Marseilles, but André's letter specifies the port of departure was actually Toulon, somewhat southeast of Marseilles. Three hundred soldiers and civilians made the trip in a government steamship. Of the six Holy Cross men on board, only André escaped seasickness. Confined to a small cabin with only four beds, the men lay ill for three days. André himself slept up on deck wrapped in a cloak among the soldiers so that his sick confreres would have more room below. They passed the Spanish islands of Minorca and Majorca, noting porpoises at play and various sea birds. They finally touched the shores of Africa at Algiers 8:30 one evening and disembarked the following morning. Entering the city, they meet two sons of the French king Louis-Phillippe. The sons are in the French military and had helped put down a local revolt against the French colonists. André jokes that the city's Angelus is cannon shot, one at 4 AM to begin the day and one at 8 PM to end the day. The missionaries are offered weapons to protect themselves, but

they decline: "God keep us from putting our hope in earthly shields when we can put it in Divine Providence which led us here in so admirable a manner" (Hunt 26). It is noteworthy that in so hostile an environment, the men eschewed arms, a sign not so much of bravado but rather of the deep faith that impelled them to accept assignment to a hostile territory. The French did not enter Algeria with any more grandiose ideas beyond colonization, tinged, of course, with the usual good if misguided intentions of bringing civilization and Christianity to "infidels," so Holy Cross missionaries were adjuncts from Day One to an unhealthy expansion of French hegemony and a conqueror mentality that would not erode in Algeria until the political realities of Africa in the 1960's.

Algeria is a melting pot, as André soon discovers when he worships in the cathedral, the only church in town. It was built from a former mosque (Catta 1.460) and affords the French half a dozen Masses each Sunday. The Muslims worship in their remaining mosques on Friday, and the Jews hold worship services on Saturdays. Moreover, the city is a gathering place for Africans from various tribes. André marvels at the variety in skin color from yellow to deep black. Languages abound, but French, of course, predominates. André's first impression for Holy Cross in Africa is positive:

Our Congregation has found for itself a very important work for the establishment of religion in Africa, because the young ecclesiastics being formed in the seminary are learning Arabic and will be able to preach in that language. The orphans confided to us will stay in the establishment up to the age of twenty and will learn how to cultivate a garden and farmland under master gardeners. We should be able to make good

gardeners, a very necessary thing here when the best land is not worked.

(Hunt 27)

Everything is looking rosy for the new men in Africa. The arrival of five Jesuit priests will soon insure that proselytizing proceeds apace. The French have brought roads and transportation to Africa, André notes. Civilization progresses.

As one might expect, André is vitally interested in African farming techniques. Although he himself has not farmed in twenty years, the many details in his letter about African diet and planting habits indicate that the boy who was raised on a Larchamp farm still exists in the heart of the missionary André Mottais. We are given a rich picture of trees: citrus, fig, almond. Cows are thin, horses swift, and camels bizarre. But André himself is already afflicted with a disease that debilitates him so much that at times he can barely hold a pen to write. It is the beginning of his end, though he does not yet realize it, lost as he is in his wonderment and fascination with Africa.

Two weeks after his first letter, André writes from Moustapha again to Moreau. He comments on the orphans that he and Brother Louis are taking care of, one as young as three years old. Although there are but half a dozen presently, André anticipates that the number of orphans will grow to sixty or eighty soon. Unfortunately, he is very sick. Father Le Boucher took him to a doctor who prescribed baths for his rectal hemorrhaging. In spite of his weakness, he keeps up with his spiritual responsibilities:

I do all my spiritual exercises faithfully and in the spirit of the Rule, I believe, except that I do not regularly recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin; I henceforth wish to be faithful to it. I don't watch over the conduct of my three confreres, and I don't speak to you about them since

my confessor told me that I was dispensed from supervising them. That makes me happy because I no longer have any responsibility on that matter, and anyway I already have too much to watch over myself. I have an inclination to recollection which I've missed for a long time. In spite of myself since the retreat the thought that my death is imminent is no longer bothering me. (Hunt 31)

Naturally in these comments is not only André's quiet acceptance of the possibility of death, but also his evident relief at no longer being responsible for the spiritual direction of the other Brothers. For a man who had worried for a generation over the development of hundreds of young men, he is now relieved to find himself unburdened with the care of others. Sickness has apparently so concerned Le Boucher that he gives André more time to convalesce. Although his first six weeks in Africa found him in good health, André attributes his present diseased state to a sea bath which induced, possibly from bacteria, intense diarrhea. He apparently never considers that diet may be more the culprit than sea water. When one of the brothers tells André that he may be sent home, André is surprised for three reasons:

- 1) All who come to Africa are customarily sick for three to six months or gravely ill.
- 2) The doctor made no decision when consulted only one time about me six weeks ago.
- 3) Numerous people have the same sickness which will continue, they say, until the end of September. (Hunt 32)



These remarks are not so much the remarks of a man quietly assessing his situation as they are the remarks of a man plagued by sickness inducing spiritual trauma. In fact, André claims that nothing he has ever done has borne apostolic fruit:

I beg you on my knees, recognize God's plans which are evidently to cure my folly and my pride, as well as to convince me of my lack of ability in everything and everywhere, because God out of His goodness allows every job, like every country, to vomit me out as soon as it gets a taste of me. So I beg you, if you recall me to France, in the name of charity give me the last and the lowest job in the Congregation. Dressed in a shirt, if necessary, rather than the religious habit, which I now believe I am unworthy of, I will clean shoes, wash dishes, etc. I have but little time to repair my unworthy life. (Hunt 32)

This descent into a dark night of the soul is temporary and fortunately passes before André mails the letter because a postscript two weeks later notes the diarrhea is gone, as well as part of his weakness.

On May 1, 1841, André leaves Moustapha to open a school in Philipeville. He writes to Moreau that he is happy to hear that Father Chappé, who succeeded André as novice master at Le Mans, is doing successful work with the novices. André wishes that he could have a year among them, little knowing that he would soon have his wish when the following June he and all the Holy Cross missionaries would return to France. Meanwhile, he works arduously, teaching six hours a day in conditions that would try a saint. His students do not work hard, and the classroom is poorly lit with one entrance which unfortunately opens into a noisy street frequented by soldiers and passersby who

often stop to listen in on the day's lesson or to inquire after the pastor. Dust and water fall daily on André's head from the priest's room above, and he cannot sing hymns because the singing disturbs the pastor. He takes one day off per week: Thursdays. On Sunday he is busy cleaning the church, setting up hundreds of chairs for Mass, preparing the altar. He has no bathroom and must use the local hills for relief. In the morning he eats a piece of bread. The first real meal is around noon and consists of a bowl of soup, generally cold. The pastor has not paid him and refuses him new clothes. André wears the same shirt for three weeks.

In spite of deprivations, André is content with his work, but his health continues to deteriorate. Ringworm plagues him, and hemorrhoids cause him to lose much blood three or four times a month. He stops the bleeding with improvised paper compresses. Reporting to Moreau the sad state of life in Algeria, he does not evince in this final letter from Africa any of the dark despair that had driven his letter three months previous. A man who found strength in his apostolic work, André seems revitalized in just knowing that he is fulfilling the wishes of Moreau to establish Holy Cross in Africa.

Unfortunately, his spirit was insufficient to float the Algerian foundation. Six months after André's final letter, all the Holy Cross men return to Le Mans, with the exception of Brother Louis who had drowned while swimming with the orphans at Moustapha. The Cattas note the recall was effected in June (1.485), but André in a letter dated May 26, 1843, gives the recall date as August 5 (Hunt 37).

When we evaluate today Moreau's vision for Holy Cross abroad, we should always rely on the first person testimony of those he sent to foreign shores. In no other way can we validly assess the strengths and weaknesses of the early Holy Cross

**The Letters from Africa**

**Written by Brother André Mottais, CSC**

**1840-1841**

## 1. Brother André Mottais to Brother Vincent Pieau

House of St. John of God near Lyons

My very dear Brother,

Having learned that you are destined to go to America with Father Sorin, I can't neglect the occasion to write to you to recommend to you something which seems interesting to me about the Congregation: to beg our honored Father [Moreau] to write up the chronicles of the Institute of the Brothers of St. Joseph before your departure. I don't know anyone more capable than you to give authentic witness about what has happened since our beginnings. Point out and give back to our worthy Father all the items relative to this work, which I implore him to undertake and finish for the next retreat. Give him what I myself wrote up to 1826, taking care to erase my name anywhere it is found, because I don't wish to be named anywhere. Someone can also remove the names of subjects who no longer remain and establishments which have ceased to exist, as one judges proper. You should see in your notes that I left at the end of 1825 to visit all our establishments for the first time.

I did not claim to dwell on the life of our Father Founder [Dujarié], who should be covered separately up to a certain point.

Examine the other notes that I gave you; you'll find there under each year the foundations or establishments that began and closed. But beware, because in 1830 you'll find some thirty . . . The opening date of the foundation is found to the right, the closing date to the left—it's easy to be fooled. I did that for myself along, thinking that I'd have the time to continue on longer than the first six years.

You'll also find the purchase, reconstruction, and approval of the Ruillé boarding school. This was at the time that our benefactresses the Adams girls died and when our father founder took on the Bouchetière farm, on which the immense jobs absorbed a great deal of time that our subjects needed for schooling and that became a matter of controversy for all of us . . . From 1828 to 1829 we had from 47 to 49 establishments and more than 100 members. Up to 1835 we followed the Rule of the Brothers of

Brittany. Father founder [Dujarié] up till then had no rule for governing the Institute, something which really displeased the Brothers who wanted to see stability. Nor should we forget that the change in government in 1830 caused us to lose a third of our members, our establishments, and our monetary reserves that the minister and the king got for us each year.

It was then that our father founder fell into strange pains, because of all the setbacks in the matter of material interests of the Brothers and Sisters, whose interests up till then had been combined and rather confused. He could not convince himself that the separation should take place. He kept to his original idea, that his two communities should have at their head a society of priests so that there would be but a single administration for spiritual and temporal matters. Look at the minutes from Bishop Carron's visit on this matter: you'll also find the act of resignation of the father founder in the second of the old books at Ruillé, the one with the yellow edge and the parchment back. Look at this book carefully. There is an alphabetical table at the end. I beg Brother Leopold to show it to you. Inside is a loose page on which father founder's will can be found: give it to our very honorable Father Moreau, as well as the flat book containing all the circular letters calling the Brothers to the retreat. You'll find one of the Brother directors in it. On the same occasion while our father founder was in Brittany, on his return he had a bad attack of gout . . . He had already felt attacks of paralysis or apoplexy when in 1833 he wanted for the first time to visit the establishments of our Brothers. We both left toward the end of September. After having seen those we have on the road through Sablé, Châteaugontier, and Craon, we arrived at Mrs. Desgenetes at Laval where gout hit him, and where we were forced to stay for two months. He counted on going from there by way of St. Marie Dubois, his home area, but we had to return to Ruillé by a direct route. You'll find in the matricule register of boarders the time when I had to go look for him in Ruillé to live with us in Mr. Barré's house in Le Mans. Please put down also the narrative of his final sickness and death as I had given it to a person who asked me for it . . . I had given it to you before I left for Africa . . . Go back over all that . . . Put in some character and

compensate so this little work may be written up and put in order before you leave. I'm holding to this in my final wishes. Let it be read to the Brothers at the retreat and let them have the liberty to speak their feelings and make their observations with total honesty, prudence, civility, and submissiveness . . . In all that there's nothing but propriety, and I believe that no one can find fault with it . . . If I were not obligated to leave Le Mans before the retreat, I would not leave without putting this affair in order. For a year I haven't had a moment to myself.

The Lord sent us into the holy Community where we are finally to make a kind of novitiate for the religious life for which we have two completed models in front of our eyes . . . Above all devotion to the holy Virgin, practiced to the highest degree of perfection throughout the Community: one sees marks here that are not empty. Thus pictures, images, even greetings (between religious), prayers, etc.—Mary is the object—so that fervor, modesty, and devotion of the religious are great. They practice the devotion of the living rosary, adding ten to the ordinary chaplet. This devotion is now all over. It is to be desired that it were also at Holy Cross which ought to be ever Mary's domain. Our very honored father truly knows what is suitable, he whom God has chosen specially to lead this work. Oh! That his mission is great and that the Lord has already done great things by him in our Institute. I know he intends to introduce as soon as possible what is yet essentially missing—the forms and the religious spirit. For some time we already noticed a change for the good in the novitiate, and with the help of St. Joseph, we can succeed. Our venerable Father de Marseul, having finished the course of our Father Boucher—thus he told us he wished to be called, never otherwise. I'm happy about this—we should also so call Mr. Cottreau, Mr. Demarseul, Mr. Hiron, and Mr. Chappé, etc.—to do to the boarding school, what could he do now to the novitiate? Ah! Let us pray, my very dear Brother, to the Holy Family to provide for the needs of this poor novitiate which has suffered for twenty years.

I don't have much more to do to finish this overly long letter. Please offer my homage to our very honored father, my respect to all our priests, my good wishes to all our dear Brothers

and postulants, my compliments to the very good Sisters, recommending me to the prayers of everyone. Our Father Boucher, Brothers Alfonse, Ignatius, and I are content and happy at the choice God has made of us. We thank him with all our heart . . . We just learned from Mr. Suchet that the Arabs several days ago besieged the house that the bishop had chosen for us half a league from Algiers. That means nothing to us. That won't stop us, with God's help, as well as that of St. Joseph and the holy Virgin, from going up to Algiers by sea on Sunday, the 24th of the current month [May] around 4 o'clock in the evening.

Good-by then my very dear Brother Vincent. Good-by for eternity undoubtedly, because you are for America, we for Africa. Good-by—I embrace you with all my heart.

Your unworthy Brother,

André

My very dear Brother Vincent,

I beg you to dispose of the things you will find by my bed where I slept in the dormitory. There are some shoes and slippers near the montaubanc [?]. Excellent Brother Hilary will show them to you. There is also an old habit, etc. I add to this letter four letters from Brother Mary Joseph. He handed them over to me to insert something in the life of father founder [Dujarié]. Give them to Father Moreau. Read my letter included here for my parents . . . It has the time when we embark.

[In the margin of the second page] Brother John Mary's death created a gap and put our father founder in a pickle to find a successor. I beg dear Brother Leopold to send to Father Moreau the list of dead Brothers—such as I drew up for him last year.

The insane people behave admirably here. We go among them—they say nothing to us. On the contrary we laugh with them. Somebody leads them to Mass—they behave well for insane people: at work and walking in the park. They move like a flock of sheep, always giving signs of the most insignificant instability, always accompanied by some of the religious. They are divided into four rooms, four courts, four dormitories, and three infirmaries . . . There are

young and old, from all classes . . . They are as well nourished as the least that you have in Le Mans . . . Each has his own peculiarity: for one crying, for another incessant chatter, another laughing, making faces, another being meditative—incessant [chapper?], singing, orating, etc. The rich have a dining room to themselves: they pay board. They are well taken care of.

## 2. Brother André Mottais to his family

Moustapha, near Algiers

July 11, 1840

My very dear parents,

What I told you when in Auvergne has been realized: I've been in Africa since May 27 with three of our Brothers and two of our Holy Cross priests, Fr. Le Boucher and Fr. Drouelle; you saw the letter at the Larchamp mission. Fr. Le Boucher is superior and heads the Algiers seminary. This seminary is three quarters of a league from the town. We others, with our orphans, are lodged in buildings adjacent to the seminary. A single kitchen furnishes food for the two establishments, which is very practical; the same chapel and the same Mass also suffice for everyone.

Your letter, which just found me 400 leagues away in a corner of the earth, brings me a joy I can hardly express. Opening it eagerly, I read in it that you all enjoy good health. That put me among the angels.

To give you pleasure, I'm going to give you a complete description of my trip and of the country of Africa. Then I'll return to your letter to give you my heartfelt sentiments.

You were undoubtedly a little surprised, my dear parents, at my long silence. It's not entirely my fault. The bishop of Algiers waited for us in this big town, and when we came close to him on May 4, his business was not yet over in order to leave France. He put us, while awaiting him, in a charity house where we were busy caring for 250 insane and sick people. The said religious of St. John of God, who head the place, did much for us and we were edified by their conduct and devotion so we could speak of it only with admiration: we are in a community of prayers with

them; we gained much there for our African mission. One sees in Lyons all sorts of establishments, enterprises, and good works for the glory of God, the salvation of souls, and the good of humanity in toto; all needs are attended to and all miseries relieved. One finds there a crowd of pious and holy souls in the best sense of the term, who spare themselves in no other way and who sacrifice everything for God.

I'd like to have the leisure to talk to you in detail about the towns and vast rural areas that we've encountered on our trip from Le Mans to Toulon, the differences that exist in people's language and clothing, their way of life and cultivating the earth, building of houses, etc. I would tell you about the vestiges we have seen with our eyes that history attributes to ancient pagans, some Romans, some holy martyrs, councils and popes, etc. And which are moreover authentic proofs of the truth of religious traditions. We left Lyons on Thursday, May 21 [1840] and arrived at Toulon on Saturday.

Sunday morning we made our devotions as best we could, then we mounted the sea in a steamship (of the government), and at ten o'clock we left. There were about 300 people, both military and civilian.

Sea sickness, which consists of head and heart aches accompanied by vomiting, soon hit many, among others our three Brothers and our two priests; you can judge how sad I was when I found myself alone in the evenings for supper. All six of us slept in a small cabin or room; the four beds like boards from an armoire were not large; I gave up my part to my dear sick comrades who could not stand up. I slept in the open air on the bridge wrapped in a cloak among the soldiers. Eventually, the sick were restored on the third day.

During the crossing, which was calm and happy, we saw a school of porpoises, fish as big as calves, leaping and running together on the surface of the water. We also saw sea birds of various species. The islands of Minorca and Majorca, belonging to Spain, being on our route, we passed by the city of Mahon, which sent out a small boat to take dispatches to our building. We stopped only for an instant. Tuesday at noon we perceived in the distance Mount Atlas of the African territory; we arrived at the port of Algiers

in the evening at 8:30, and we debarked the following morning. Entering the city, we met the princes (two sons of Louis Philippe) who were going back to France after the expedition which had just taken place against the enemies. I will not speak here about the business of the African war; I'll be able to say a few words later. Our French troops, the number of which grows daily, guard the country. We were surrounded by camps of war; cannons had open mouths on all sides, ready to crack the enemy Arabs, but they aren't about to strike them. We are at the door of the large camp of Moustapha, half a league from the camp of Conba; between the two we see near us the great fort of the emperor, Fort Babazon near Algiers, on the sea, and the fort of the square house on the plain; besides that, there are barracks and endless guard corps; everywhere it's just troops. A cannon shot at 4 AM announces the beginning of the day; another at 8 PM announces the end—that's the sound of the Angelus in Africa. At the seminary if we wished, we'd lack neither arms nor ammunition: the military from the camp have often offered us some. God keep us from putting our hope in earthly shields when we can put it in Divine Providence which led us here in so admirable a manner.

There is only one church in the city of Algiers, the cathedral, built from an old mosque. Five or six Masses are celebrated there every Sunday. It is almost always full of the faithful, and there are lots of communions. The faithful are almost all Europeans. They are French, English, Italian, Spanish, Maltese, German, Polish, etc. Thus is formed at least a part of the population at Algiers and in its environs. The other part of the population is composed of Africans from various nations. As far as religion goes, they are Mohametans, Jews, and pagans. The Mohametans have their mosques where they go to pray, or rather make their grimaces. They celebrate on Fridays. The Jews have their synagogues and celebrate on Saturdays; they are almost all rich merchants. The pagans come on certain days to cut the throats of chickens at a fountain near here. Here they're small in number. There are lots of Negroes and Negresses; their skin is blacker than ink. There are also some yellow ones. In general, Africans don't have white skin.

In this country they speak all languages, patois, and jargon, while French dominates and is beginning to extend more or less almost to everyone. Arabic is the language of all Africans, and it's important for us to know it, but it is difficult; students at the seminary receive lessons in it and we are beginning to know it—they sing every evening the litany of the Blessed Virgin in Arabic. The French government protects equally all religions in Algiers; it will be necessary for ours to shine in everything more beautifully so this multitude, which hasn't been baptized and which ignores almost all truth, comes to queue up under the extended arms of Jesus Christ. With this in mind, the bishop spares nothing to make the pomp of our ceremonies shine in their eyes; thus since we arrived, he has laid the first stone of a church at El-hébraïm, a village two leagues from here. He preached and said the Mass in open air and under the burning sun because the walls of the church are barely off the ground. The local authorities and the prefect of Algiers were at this ceremony which became very touching because there were people of all countries there, united under the banner of Jesus Christ. The bishop blessed an organ for the cathedral. It's a marvel for Africa perhaps because they've never had any. A hundred children made their first communion, and he confirmed them eight days later. He carried the Blessed Sacrament in procession to a magnificent repository set up on the plaza. It was protected by a great number of soldiers bearing arms. We had large tapers in our hands. It was magnificent. The bishop came to the seminary about fifteen days ago to preside over communion for children. He preached three times with an eloquence capable of enthraling everyone, because he's truly an apostolic man, full of the Holy Spirit, and whose words are full of fire. Finally to finish the day, in our vast garden we had a procession of the Blessed Sacrament according to custom, at which many people from the area assisted, even soldiers from the camp. Under the olive and fig trees, we made two rather nice repositories. What goodness we felt in our hearts! Singing beautiful French hymns, and seeing the triumph of Our Lord on territory where he had not been carried for a long time. Yes, this one event made up greatly for the sacrifices that we made in leaving our homeland. Our Congregation has

found for itself a very important work for the establishment of religion in Africa, because the young ecclesiastics being formed in the seminary are learning Arabic and will be able to preach in that language. The orphans confided to us will stay in the establishment up to the age of twenty and will learn how to cultivate a garden and farmland under master gardeners. We should be able to make good gardeners, a very necessary thing here where the best land is not worked. That's not all. Our two establishments form the center of a parish the faithful of which come in a great number to all our Sunday services. The religious of the Sacred Heart will arrive around October to establish themselves near us. They will staff an orphanage. There is every indication that they will have as chaplain one of our priests. Without doubt God has wished to use the least of us so that his power will show to more advantage.

The bishop will receive five Jesuit priests in September for the province of Constantine. This part of the diocese is about seventy leagues from Algiers. The people there are well disposed to accept our holy religion. Thus Divine Providence prepares everything favorably for a nation seated in the shadows of death. First there are the Europeans, who came here with neither priests nor sacraments, will profit from the good things of religion. The Arabs lack nothing yet, so they seem affable and well disposed to us. It will be a stroke of grace to lead them into the bosom of the Church. Let's pray God unceasingly, my dear parents, for the conversion of these poor people. I wish I could beg all of France to unite behind us with their prayers and to thus come to the help of Africa. Our holy bishop never stops recommending this holy salvo of frequent and fervent prayers that will give birth and will make the African church faithful.

A tribe of about sixty families came to seek refuge in the plain near the Moustapha camp to flee bad treatment from enemy Arabs. They are living in tents. Each tent is made of three or four pieces of brown cloth joined together, held up in the middle by wood or reeds standing up, and attached to the earth with small stakes so that a tent looks like a dung cart thrown into the camp. They enter them only to sleep. A similar dwelling shows something sad and shows complete poverty, but regardless that's the way all the rural

people live in Africa, except around Algiers which has houses. It takes a tribe only two hours to load up and go live one or two leagues away. They don't know about carts. The backs of camels suffice to transport the movables, which consist of some pitchers and earthenware pots. That's about all we see in the tents, out of which come lots of children, pretty much naked, to ask us for a "soldi," that is a sou. Some of them wear only a shirt. Others wear a big old piece of cloth that wraps them up from the head to the feet, etc. In and around the tents the men and the women stay and sit or sleep on the ground. Horses, camels, sheep, dogs, goats, and cows ramble around if they aren't feeding on the plain. The Arab needs no bed. He sleeps on the ground wrapped in his big drapery that he carries all over. Nor a table; he eats on the ground. He drinks only water. He eats so little that a European eats as much as five Arabs. The Arab is slightly built. He works little. In fact you see these people most often sleeping or sitting along the roads or in their houses.

Before the French conquered Algiers, it had neither roads nor carts. Even building stones were carried on the backs of donkeys. Meanwhile working class Arabs began to take work to heart, above all the blacks. It is they who carry all the burdens, who make the deals, who keep troop numbers in the army, who serve as masons, and in private homes do the most troublesome work, content to earn a few sous. They eat almost nothing, a piece of bread as large as a hand baked over coals, or a little rice, or some fruit is sufficient for them. But in case of scarcity or need Barbary figs suffice for two months out of the year. They grow in hedges. Raw grass, roots of thistles are enough for their plate.

Africans are hearty: their legs are naked up to the knees and their arms to the elbows. Jews wear black. Mohammedans wear white and have their head shaved like their beard, except that they leave a small tuft of hair on the top of the head which is always covered with a skull-cap if the person is a boy and with a turban if he is married; with all that a red or white belt wrapped four or five times around the top of the pants like a pocket. I forgot the shirt, the undershirt, and drapery: the rich carry that on their arm. Working men are bare foot and wear only a shirt, shorts,



and some rags they never wash. Others wear only a shirt. I can't get used to these indecencies.

The city of Algiers is more populated and more commercial than Le Mans. From far away it seems like a pile of sandstone. It sits in the declivity of a mountain, a very steep declivity, and the ocean laps at its back houses. The streets are narrow: you can walk only two at a time. Almost everything is covered overhead. For the last ten years they've worked to embellish the city: the government pulled out roads, whole sections of the city, to build big buildings with high arcades and internal sidewalks. Large plazas are aligned with big streets. The houses here are not like those in France: they are flat roofed, covered with lime cement capable of resisting rain. So houses are all white and you can walk on top.

My Brothers and I went up on top of the house to say our rosary while looking all over. The land here is so good that it produces without dung, if one cultivates it carefully. It grows grass as high as a man, and moreover if they need dung, they could get for nothing from the military two hundred carts of it since they are forced to throw it in the ocean. Crops come in at the end of May. The grains of the country are: wheat, barley, and oats. It doesn't rain from the end of April until October; thus all the days are sunny during this time. The sun is very hot; the heat is not unbearable because we have a little ocean breeze which is refreshing. We had the sirocco wind only once: it's a burning wind which comes from the desert. Potatoes do well: they sow them in December and harvest them in February or March. There is never a winter here, never a frost: thus they get from the earth many vegetables and things in the coldest season.

Trees here are not the same as in France. You see olive trees in great quantity; the ordinary [giguer] grows better, the palma-christi, the carob tree, which produces beans in great quantity good to eat, the wild cotton tree, the acacia, the elm, the banana tree, the palm, the cypress, the orange tree, the citrus tree, the pomegranate, the Barbary fig which covers the hedges and the fruit of which is rather good and found in large quantities; the leaves are covered with nettles. That covers the fields as well as aloes, a fat plant, also nastily nettled. They say in France that they can flourish only a hundred years; here after only five years

they have a stem like that of a tree. We're still eating grapes. Two months ago they ate fresh almonds. Orange apples, which are as fat here as your fattest apples, will ripen around January and will be worth a farthing. It's difficult to get milk in this country because the Arab cows don't have much; they are too small and often thin. For a good reason they brag that small Arab horses walk swiftly: in fact they go faster than the wind. The camel is an ugly beast that is half as high as a house. It has a great hump in the middle of its back; it can carry the baggage of two or three horses, and when it has had a good meal, you can lead it along for five or six days without drinking or eating. The sea is always under our eyes here: we see all the ships when they leave for France and when they come here. Along the sea shore is a beautiful plain which meets the declivity of the mountain, all along the ocean. On top of this mountain or coast you find a beautiful plain, very fertile, that extends for the length of the chain of Atlas mountains, that we see from here as if they were only six leagues away whereas they are thirty leagues away. That's what they call the [ ] of Algiers. It may have a length of 150 to 200 leagues. After the Atlas mountains is the desert which is immense. It is not French. You ought to be bored by now with all this.

There are many sick people in Algiers and in the army. I myself, my dear parents, found myself suffering so much for several days, sometimes on getting up, sometimes on going to bed, I wrote this letter with a hand so feeble and trembling that I almost dropped the pen from my fingers. At last I have almost recovered, after about two weeks of suffering which Our Lord wished to send me. Your dear letter, which I received as if it were a gift from heaven, gave me a thousand plans to respond: I'm upset with myself therefore for having delayed giving you my news, but what troubled me was having to tell you that I was sick; God finally had pity on my humiliation: he sent me health. Help me to thank Him. I'm happy to learn the happy outcome of your harvest; the fruit should really make you joyful about the economy of the household. Let's always hope that the good God will stop the drought and that your vegetables and summer grain will not be lost. The war makes everything very expensive here: a pound of meat costs 18 or

20 sous, a dozen eggs 3 francs. Only 15 months ago meat cost under a pound, eggs 8 sous a dozen. We hope that things will return to that point. I'm going to pray hard for you, especially my sister. I'm happy that she is pleased with her household duties. Fr. Drouelle was touched at your remembrances: he told me to tell you that and the men at Larchamp the most obliging things. I will always think about the brave inhabitants of that area.

I'm tired of this letter because of its length. Nevertheless I beg you to believe that I intended to revive your spirits by telling you the thousand things it contains. As long as it is, I beg Brother Basil to transcribe it exactly and to send the copy to the very dear Brothers Leonard and Stanislaus as soon as possible. Please bring it to him. As for me, I count on his good wishes and above all on his great charity to do this good thing for his confreres or better yet for religion, to make known its state and needs in this country here. Finally I dare yet beg my dear Brother Basil, to whom I vow an eternal friendship, to also bring a copy of my letter to Brothers Vincent and Leopold when they leave Le Mans for the retreat.

You will then be able to send it to the parish priest, to the vicar, and to Mr. Laury. Offer them please my respects as well as to Mairaine, to Mrs. Laury, and to my whole family: I do not forget a single one of my relatives, hoping that all pray for me and for our African mission. For you, my dear parents— father, mother, brother, sister, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law, nephews and nieces—I hold you in my heart, but it is in Jesus' heart that we need to be united forever. Write to me from time to time. It's the greatest consolation that you can give to your unworthy son. I will also give you news from time to time. Accept all my feelings.

Yours, totally devoted in Our Lord,

Brother André

### 3. Brother André to Father Moreau

[Moustapha, Africa]

August 1, 1840

My very reverend Father,

I have always supposed that our very reverend Father Le Boucher kept you current on everything happening to the brothers here; for that reason I'm writing today to inform you what pertains to my own spiritual and temporal welfare.

We were here more than six weeks before beginning work with the orphans, who yet number only eight, with six external. However, we've put this time to good use for our own instruction. Brother Louis has methods: he's made progress in arithmetic, grammar, and history. Brother Ignatius has none of these talents: he's scarcely advanced. Father le Boucher has put him in charge of the refectory and running errands. Under this assignment, he is valuable to the establishment because in this country there are lots of fortune hunters, few trustworthy men. Brother Alphonsus works in the joiner's trade. Brother Louis and I are in charge of the orphans. We are teaching them prayers, catechism, and reading. I direct their work from 10 AM until 11:45 AM, and from 4 PM until supper. This work schedule had not been followed very well and cannot be the same when we are in the new quarters that are being readied for the seminary and the orphans. When we're there, I intend to direct the children's work better and to work as they will under the direction of the brother or the layman in charge of the garden. We flatter ourselves that we'll cut plenty of vegetables. The ground is very fertile in Africa when it is watered. The onions grow as big as playing balls. There is no lack of water and someone had the good idea to make it go all over with conduits of heavy mastic cement. Brother Louis sleeps in the dormitory with the biggest orphans, and I in the one with the little ones. Rising for the community is at 4:30 AM; they have but fifteen minutes to wash up and get themselves to prayer, followed by meditation and Mass. After Mass the brothers continue their meditation for fifteen minutes to complete it, except for the brother who takes the orphans into their court. This meditation is supervised by one of our priests.

I can't do the good here that I figured I could do. I can attribute that only to my sins and to the nothingness that God finds in me. I fancy very much the job with the orphans, and I thank the Lord a thousand times and your paternal regard in having given it to me. It would seem

appropriate that the school for non-boarding students were a necessity, but the time is not ripe yet for it. The principal of the high school in Algiers cries out against the establishment of the minor seminary. The bishop fears augmenting the clamor. Thus he lets us teach only catechism and prayers to six or seven non-boarders who come to us from the neighborhood, mostly from the camp. The village lacks neither schools or boarding schools, but as is true all over, it is necessary to conform with the law in order to run either an establishment or a school. I would do it if I had a morals certificate for the time I spent in Le Mans recently, that is from January 1 to April 28, 1840.

The non-boarders like the orphans come to us completely ignorant of God and themselves. These are Europeans. However, the bishop on the feast of St. Madeline sent us two Jewish orphans that he had baptized in the morning. One is about four and a half years old, the other three. It's easy to judge how many of such children need bodily care. Everything is still left to do in the establishment. There are not even chamber pots or drinking glasses. When it is up a little more, the bishop won't lack for sixty to eighty children. If he takes in all the youth, then it'll be necessary to augment the personnel of brothers in order to comb, bath, and wipe them all clean.

The Congregation of Holy Cross charged with the seminary at Algiers is at the head of the most important work for religion in Africa because the students study Arabic there in order to preach in this language when they come to be priests. Few converts will be made among the natives without knowledge of their language . . . I fear that the energies of Father Le Boucher and Drouelle are not sufficient to continue their ministry and all the good works that they are doing for the furtherance of religion. Their health is feeble, especially Father Le Boucher's.

I had said to Brother Vincent that a sea bath made me sick: I'm suffering in fact from a hemorrhage stronger than ever, accompanied by loss of appetite, a total distaste for food, a weakness and a feebleness which has led me to faint more than once. Finally Father Le Boucher brought me to the doctor who prescribed sitting baths for me, sweet water and a diet. I found myself healed after several days, and I could work again and got around more worse than better.

Now after a good day I have two bad ones. The doctor told us that in general sea baths are harmful to the health. People are tempted to take them because of the terrific heat and uncountable fleas. Small colic, diarrhea, accompanied by weakness and sometimes fever—these are what a multitude of people experience immediately. For myself, I hope that I'll become accustomed to that, and that I'll get back to my work at the same time: meanwhile the heat will cease and we'll get acclimated.

I ask you, my very reverend Father, to make a retreat of several days. I sense the need of it. I wish also to have part in the delicious union which ought to be the soul of the Congregation of Our Lady of Holy Cross, especially during these holy days of retreat when God pours his blessings with greater abundance on the entire reunited family. I wish the auxiliary priests and my good brothers all the advantages and goodness that grace can bring in like circumstances. I ask a part of their prayers for me and for the poor people of Africa.

Everything is expensive here primarily because of the war: bread is 5 sous a pound, the worst meat 12 sous, eggs 2 francs for a dozen, milk 5 sous per liter, a third of it water, red wine 44 francs. Before the war, a cow cost 25 francs, a chicken 8 or 5 sous. Shoes in Algiers for 7 francs are as good as in Le Mans; clothes are cheaper, cloth the same price as in Le Mans, just about. Office furnishings like paper and pens cost one-third more. Workers are paid more also.

I have learned that you are being asked for two brothers for Algiers: the good brothers will have students who have no notion of God, and they will have the good fortune to put in their soul the first stone of the spiritual edifice.

I'm going to gather some insects for Father de Marseul. I see some from time to time that seem rare species to me. If I had the strength to send some plants to Father Hiron, he would soon have a big bunch of rare and odorous plants unique in form.

I learned with joy that you just bought a house for the novitiate of the auxiliary priests. I thank God with all my heart. Father Le Boucher told me to tell you that we will begin on August 5, the day of the opening of your retreat, to recite in common prayers so that the Lord will assist you in

a particular manner, especially you, my worthy Father, in the great plans that you will make for the His glory and the salvation of souls.

Account of the spiritual state that I no longer regard as secret, in as much as you, my very honored Father, judge appropriate:

My confessor is Father Le Boucher: I confess every week; I have the good luck to go to communion as often as I did in Le Mans, that is twice during the week and once on Sunday. Since I left Le Mans, I seem torn by the fear of God's judgements, and I sense myself putting more faith and fervor in my actions. My great consolation is keeping myself day and night soulfully in the heart of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament, in order to do what is necessary for the glory of God, my salvation and the salvation of souls. Emptying and loathing my own heart, I send incessantly to God the contents of Jesus' heart which encloses also those of the Blessed Virgin, all the saints and angels. I do all my spiritual exercises faithfully and in the spirit of the Rule, I believe, except that I do not regularly recite the Office of the Blessed Virgin; I henceforth wish to be faithful to it. I don't watch over the conduct of my three confreres, and I don't speak to you about them since my confessor told me that I was dispensed from supervising them. That makes me happy because I no longer have any responsibility on that matter, and anyway I already have too much to watch over myself. I have an inclination to recollection which I've missed for a long time. In spite of myself since the retreat the thought that my death is imminent is no longer bothering me. I find in the Sacred Heart, as I've told you, sweetness of union with my God and resignation. With my hand on my heart, I'm happier here than in Europe.

The Administrative Council of Holy Cross acted very wisely in deciding to deny nothing to Africa before advanced countries and orderly conditions. I believe that the bishop of Algiers is as rich as Our Lady of Holy Cross, after a year as harsh as we've had here. You know that the bishop is not inflexible in what he once began. Our spiritual exercises are often pushed ahead or back for not knowing the time, because we have neither clock nor watch. The apostles lacked everything and took no notice of it. I think that we can do the same.

My temptations are those of impatience, attachment to self, and the following . . . I like the necessity in which Divine Providence puts me of not satisfying myself . . . I dare yet to hope that you will pray for me and favor me with your holy advice.

I wrote my parents a narrative about Africa, asking them to make a copy for Brother Basil for Brothers Leonard, Stanislaus, and Leopold. I hoped to edify with it and to engage in prayer whereas it might have resulted in the loss of letters contrary to poverty. Will you please, my very honored Father, pardon me this fault?

Finally, I beg you to give me your paternal blessing, and I ask you to accept the profound respect with which I have the honor of being, my very reverend Father, you very humble and very obedient servant,

Brother André

Algiers

August 1, 1840

P.S. We are praying for your health.

I included many things in my narrative on Africa written to my parents and which Brother Basil may send a copy of to Holy Cross.

I love and esteem the worthy Father Le Boucher for his kindness and his great piety.

My very reverend Father,

As our priests seemed in doubt if they could send me back to Holy Cross because of my health, and since I don't know what will come of it, I believe it necessary to explain my state of being. At first I had very good health the first five or six weeks which followed our arrival in Africa. Then I suffered a grave indisposition after a sea bath: it lasted about eighteen days including the convalescent time; for a few days after, diarrhea took hold of me with the weakness rather usual here; I countered it with diet and rice water which cured me. I was in good health. Diarrhea by itself returned again the fourth of this month; I wasn't able to have rice to eat nor rice water to drink; seeing that Father Drouelle and Brother Ignatius continued to eat though having diarrhea and Father Le Boucher pushed me to do the same, I continued to eat a little. In two days I had twenty bowel movements, the last closer together than the

first. I decided then that I had to diet; I put myself immediately on rice water three days after the diarrhea diminished, but weakness and fatigue, increased by the bed which is only a mattress on the floor, made me so fragile and sick that I was forced to stay in bed for two-thirds of the day last Sunday. Finally I acknowledged that I was suffering much. Brother Ignatius came to tell me that our priests spoke about sending me home. This news surprised me because 1) All who come to Africa are customarily sick for three to six months or gravely ill 2) The doctor made no decision when consulted only one time about me six weeks ago 3) Numerous people have the same sickness which will continue, they say, until the end of September. Bleeding hasn't happened for three or four weeks.

I really wanted to end my career in this land of Africa that I cherish. If it rejects me from its breast, it is because I am more unworthy than the least of its inhabitants. Then please, my very reverend Father, have the kindness to send me to America, if you have the least task (temporarily or not, it doesn't matter) that I can fill. Otherwise if you call me back to France, I beg you on my knees, get into God's plans which are evidently to cure my folly and my pride, as well as to convince me of my lack of ability in everything and everywhere, because this God out of His goodness allows every job like every country to vomit me out as soon as it gets a taste of me. So I beg you, if you recall me to France, in the name of charity, give me the last and the lowest job in the Congregation. Dressed in a shirt if necessary rather than the religious habit which I now believe I am unworthy of, I will clean shoes, wash dishes, etc. I have but little time to repair my unworthy life. It is time for me to think about it.

I am with a profound respect, my very reverend Father, your very unworthy and very obedient servant,

Brother André  
Moustapha

August 14, 1840

P.S. Finally I'm cured again of diarrhea. I'm encouraged. It happened suddenly and I attribute it to the prayers of some people at Holy Cross. Part of my weakness has even disappeared: I'm now going to fulfill all my duties as I'm feeling

good. Spring begins here when the rain starts at the end of September and lasts until the month of May so that we have beans and head lettuce in the garden in January: thus after only six weeks of the earth being stripped by drought it is covered with greenness, and as all suffer, even cattle dying in great numbers, all will return to health, and we will prosper, I hope.

We'll need vegetable seeds here. If Brother Anthony had some that he can send, he would help us out by sending them well packaged because of the sea transport. . . Fortune hunters cheat everyone here with their seeds. We have ten orphans who speak French or Italian or German. We can't understand one of these last ones except by an interpreter. If our brothers come here well furnished with standard things, we'll get the better of them because the little that one finds in Algiers is very expensive. Their ordinary clothes will not be hot in season; we ourselves wear habits with stockings and summer pants. From my point of view, out of their first one hundred students, twenty will know how to read, ten will be able to write, and eighty will know the alphabet.

I ask everyone's prayers for me.

#### 4. Brother André to Father Moreau

[Moustapha]

[December 1, 1841]

My Reverend Father,

Such sad news you've sent by your circular letter of September 29: I was unaware of the death of the excellent Brother Louis. The circumstances which accompanied it, and that Father Drouelle has since set out to me, hit me in such a way that I can hardly believe it. My God! Our existence is fragile here below! I am not delaying to have Mass said for the repose of the soul of this dear confrere and to carry out myself the other prescribed things.

I received with great joy your very wonderful letters of August 24 and September 23. I admired your goodness which does not disdain the least and the most miserable of brothers. Oh! How I follow you realizing that I bless the Lord for having saved our poor falling Institute. And the result is the children of Our Lady of Holy Cross are established in America. May the Lord

preserve them and make them successful in their work in that faraway place.

I envy the good fortune of those who helped at the ceremony of the exhumation of our venerable founder. Also, happy are our novices to whom is given the chance to be formed in the religious life under the holy Father Chappé, so full of light, after a similar kindness. I would think myself happy if I were allowed to go spend a year with them. This would not be without need for myself who knows nothing and who never knew anything about virtue but the name. They have only to put roots down deeply into goodness because the chances to fall abound, especially in this country where there is so little morality, where so many people came, it is said, to amass riches and were not concerned about their health. We're in Africa. This is the usual response they give to those who push them to live as Christians.

Nevertheless, although the outward appearance at Philippeville may be difficult to regulate, there is no lack of doing good work there; and religion, which is not yet practiced there, is at least honored generally by the military and civil authorities. A dead captain was accompanied by those of his own rank to church. Each of the great inferiors, customs-house officers, Italians, do likewise for their dead. The parish priest ordinarily gives them a little speech in this circumstance. Almost no one refuses the succor of religion to the finest point for the dead. The mob and the fortune hunters who make up the major part of the population for the most part are merging little by little into the people of better means and reputation who are coming every day to settle in this country.

You ask, my reverend Father, what I think about the African brothers: God has elevated for us it seems the best, except Brother Alphonsus, for the good life. The others appear to me to be what they were in France; little trained and having character faults still rather obvious. I would have to remark first of all on myself, then on the lack of propriety by Brother Victor, on the negligence of Brother Ignatius in his refectory work, and on the mobility of Brother Ligor. I don't think he'll be in Africa for a long time. About the rest, each of us had his work and answered for it to our priests. I have noticed some misunderstandings among some. My work does not allow me to spend time

with the brothers. They just found me in recreation sometimes. Brother Eulogius seemed to me lazy, talking much, fearful of his health . . . Father Le Boucher ought to have reproached me for giving some dissatisfaction to the brothers on the subject of the letters which were addressed to me; he wants me to show them to them: for those which concern them, yes; but I vow that I am repugnant about a similar constraint when it is a matter of those which I receive from my family or friends. I would hope, my reverend Father, to be instructed about your wish on this matter. I will submit myself without difficulty because I wish peace at whatever the price.

All my adventures will end up teaching me. I realize now that my mood and a certain depth of vanity which I've let myself carry along, without pretext of zeal and to conserve my honor, have permeated all my ways. I have come back, thanks be to God, like everyone came back to the prophecies of 1840.

I am very grateful to your Reverence for the part that it took in my deprivation which continues apace. About six weeks ago I informed Father Drouelle that the parish priest didn't change our clothes; he wrote to him and made him agree to give 200 francs as salary to the brother in place of keeping him; then he left me there without giving even a word of response to two or three letters that I had the honor to write to him. I believe he is sick. I'm ashamed to go out with our habit: if news doesn't reach me by the next post, I'll buy one and make do with it as I can; then I'll wait for all the other things I need except for shoes.

My ring-worm is healed. Sharpness of blood continues to give me pimples, even sores when I'm not careful in removing wool from my skin. Hemorrhoids, which have developed in me for ten years, have greatly increased this year. I have had them three or four times the past month: thus for three or four days one after another each time that I go to the toilet, blood flows like after a blow from a needle put in the arm of a sick person. When relieving myself, I have to apply a sheet of paper in my crack to stop the blood which would run down my legs. My headaches are as frequent as they were in France, but less sharp.

My soul is languishing more than my body. I have to tell you, my reverend Father, that

I often miss my regular spiritual exercises. The sacristy is the usual cause; through my own fault I do them without fervor. I have above all neglected to read and prepare the subject for prayer. I've badly observed Grand Silence. I have neither meditation book nor particular examination. Most often I do these exercises while walking to avoid the torment of the sores.

I confess to the parish priest every week. I'm very happy with my confessor: he knows how to drive scruples away. My confessions are short and precise. He doesn't want me to fast. Up to now I've had the good fortune to take Holy Communion twice a week. The same temptations that I had in France I still fight : and I'm not better than before. Please pray for me, my reverend Father, because I'm not winning the game of life and I fear death.

A sickness which the parish priest experienced because of arguments with several people put him in a bad humor against me; he reproached me on the subject of the sacristy. He didn't want to furnish classroom furniture. He complained to me without giving me reasons . . . He has not yet given recompense for the children: thus I have nothing to give them but additional tasks.

It's also a misery to obtain underwear: he refused me and left me with me the same ones for more than three months. I've worn a shirt three weeks. There are no agreements about towels. I was repugnant about this lapse in cleanliness. Water was purchased for a week: it was muddy. I saw some in which there were little critters . . . Meanwhile I drink only colored water because of sharpness in my blood.

I teach three hours of class before noon and three hours after. I have about thirty-six inscrutable students. I meet with from twenty-two to twenty-eight of them for each class. Here the major defect among students especially in the summer is the lack of hard work. I believe the teacher should meet with only eight to ten of them. It's not that he'll leave his place: it's charming for him and worth 1500 francs. I have twenty writers. I give a half hour to learn prayers and catechism each day. Almost all know their prayers. I teach reaching the same way. The most advanced in computation are beginning long division. I give dictation each day for which they

correct the spelling; no other way of teaching penmanship because we have no beginning book, not even catechisms. I'm happy with progress in general. The school is free.

The church, the rectory, and the school relocated on July 15 and are in one building as before. The church is much bigger and more beautiful. The classroom is small, poorly lighted, having only a mediocre opening on a street much frequented by soldiers and civilians, who look in on us incessantly, stopping often to consider and listen to the teacher and the students by this opening. We keep it open to have some air: the door opens onto the corridor, inside; one or another come to the classroom many times during the day, to ask for the parish priest and to make me deliver their messages to him. Everything is spoiled in this classroom by the dust and water which falls from the parish priest's bedroom by boards poorly joined together in the floor. Thus in falling on me, dust falls on dust. More and more I'm obliged to sleep in it, to make and unmake my bed evening and morning and to rise from it. What is disagreeable are the public women who come and go during the evening by my window. I can't sing a verse of a hymn because the parish priest is bothered by it in his bedroom as well as the people in church. There is no bathroom: for my calls of nature I have to leave town and go into the mountains. The parish priest has a bedpan that the maid empties at night. I make Thursdays a holiday. I have only that day in the week, because Sunday, especially, I don't lack for work in preparing the church and the altar, carrying and straightening two to three hundred chairs for the two masses and vespers. I sweep the church and the pulpit two or three times a week, then we have burials, baptisms, marriages, the clock to wind, Holy Mass to prepare for each day. I assist with the students, even on Sundays.

I taught catechism in church to both boys and girls when the parish priest was sick; I've done home baptism . . . I've taken first steps for a sick servant, and took him to the hospital where we count on going, the parish priest and I, when we get sick. Father Drouelle tells me to aim at becoming a public teacher. I'm going to tell him that I no longer think about it for two reasons: the first, because there is no indication that the present teacher will quit, and secondly, even if he

were to quit, I would be in no state to sit for the exam which the inspector told me about in his visit here. I know little and I forget this little because I don't have a minute to study.

We have two meals per day. Since I arrived, the lunch hour has varied from ten o'clock to one o'clock. The dinner hour from five to eight PM.

In the morning I take a piece of bread and what I can grab to eat . . . Some dried fruit or a small piece of sugar. The parish priest has his coffee or his chocolate. Now our first meal is in the afternoon. For a long time we ate everything cold, and we had scarcely a glass of soup each day. These details make me ashamed, but I believe it is up to your Reverence to judge the position of his subjects in Africa. The parish priest has the spirit of his state to the highest degree. His daily occupations are visiting the sick, especially the soldiers, at the hospital and in town, visiting families and in particular the poor. He gives what he can: everyone comes to him, and he succeeds from what I can tell in procuring places for the newly arrived and other who have need, in getting bread for families, in legitimizing a great number of marriages, etc. He is simple and the spirit of Jesus Christ lives in him.

Our vacation lasted from July 15 to August 19. During this time I took several days to recoup myself and visit Hippo. Among the ruins of the basilica of peace I tasted goodness, I read, I meditated and prayed alternately. I have not forgotten you nor very honorable Father Le Boucher in my feeble prayers. Thoughts came to me about Saint Augustine who so often preached in that cathedral and who meditated on the mystery of the very Holy Trinity on the seashore not far away. It now serves as a park for cattle. So the place that the town occupied is a flat plain covered with olive trees, fig trees, and carob trees. Immense Roman wells are some hundreds of meter from there, in the Mainelon River and several meters below is the monument erected to the glory of the Doctor of grace. But this monument in the form of a rotunda is poor and going nowhere. The walls were only to the height of my chest.

Now, before finishing, please let me, my reverend Father, let you in on the prayers that I offer incessantly to the Lord for you on the

occasion of the New Year and your feast. These days are near that your large family will come joyfully to pay homage to you out of their gratitude and devotion. Yes, you are the true father of the Society of Holy Cross. We are happy to be your children and to obey you, hoping the Lord will keep you forever among us.

The memory of your holy priests, brothers, etc., that I know and who edified me at Holy Cross is precious to me. May the Lord give them an increase of spiritual goods which will make them more and more worthy of the names they carry. For me, my reverend d Father, I beg you to obtain for me from God the grace of dying in his love.

Please accept the profound respect and perfect gratitude which I have the honor of being, my reverend Father, your very humble and very obedient servant,

Brother André

Philippeville

December 1, 1841

P.S. The mailman just came: I receive with gratitude your New Year's spiritual gifts. You had the greatest goodness, my reverend Father, to send a copy of a book to my parents last year: would I dare ask you to do them the same favor this year? My mother above all will be very grateful to this attention from your reverence, and I would be obliged to you.

Finally Father Drouelle has responded to my letters: he leaves me but a glimpse of the trouble at the minor seminary caused by the bishop's absence. I had already guessed at that. From many indications, I've thought for some time that our Congregation this year has been put to many tests and that Our Lady of Sorrows is making her children drink from her chalice. He tells me to buy some clothes. I have already bought shoes for five francs (sandals). I have 50 francs for a habit; I'll be asked 25 francs for the tailoring and lining. If the parish priest can't get around to advancing me something, I'll look pitiful. I just bought some cloth at four francs 50 per meter. That's too expensive because it's not worth anything. So what? It's better to appear before God in poor clothes than in rich.



Our poor church in Philippeville was also totally nude: it's going to find itself well furnished: the military engineer just used all his talent to make a magnificent altar which is now being installed. The bridges and highways, a little puffed with self-love, made a pulpit that is said to be of better workmanship than the altar and will soon be in place. Finally the Minister of War sent a painting by the mailman for our church; it is enormous (about five feet by eight). The first communion of our children will take place on Christmas Day. I recommend them to the prayers at Holy Cross.

Here in the space of two months many scenes and sad events have occurred. Duels, suicides, assassinations, communications with Constantine disrupted by the enemy, two unsuccessful expeditions. Moreover, from October 2, the feast of the Guardian Angels, there was for several days a hot desert wind so strong that I had to let the class go. The children couldn't work because of the heat. Fire that started on our mountains on both sides at once in twenty-four hours ate up myrtle trees, cork trees, green oaks, and bushes that covered the immense region. The fire came up to the walls of the town. The smoke covered the land and sea. We thought we had come perhaps to the end of the world.

##### **5. Brother André Mottais to Brother Vincent and the other Brothers established in America**

Notre Dame de Ste. Croix, Le Mans

The Brothers of St. Joseph from the establishment of Notre Dame de Sainte-Croix at Le Mans to their very honorable, very dear and much loved confreres from Notre Dame du Lac in America, greetings in the sacred hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

My very dear and well loved Brothers,

The departure of the new colony of ours, which is going to join you, to help in the work to which you are devoting yourselves with such generosity and good will in your working mission finally gives us the occasion so much wished for to send you part of the sentiments which animate our hearts for each of you. Yes, we long, our very

dear Brothers, to give you witness of our sincere and reciprocal affection and especially giving homage to the unity of intent and zeal that you have with the family of Notre Dame de Ste. Croix. We pray endlessly to our Lord to fortify you in the midst of danger on your mission, the needs that will test you. Courage, our very dear and well loved Brothers: the more your trials are multiplied, the more will your rewards be magnificent. The flame of faith that you carry will enlighten entire nations, will make up your crown in heavenly glory. The many youths that you instruct in truth and that you form in virtue will be a new generation in these faraway countries. Although in the midst of ice, snow, harsh winters, your fate will not leave you from appearing worthy of envy through the eyes of holy faith. May we one day be judged worthy, if not participating in it, at least to be sent to soil where there is no lack of good to do and that Providence seems to give us to work on. A large part of Africa is just being considered for our Institute by a royal edict, so that we may establish schools there. Thus we hope that the many difficulties that our priest and brothers first encountered there will ever succeed in the future, and that Our Lord, His very holy mother, and St. Joseph will return to raise up to their honor a small sanctuary in these burning countries.

We are convinced, our very dear Brothers, that God is with our Reverend Father Moreau by the protection that He gives to these undertakings. Thus the work of the Lord multiplies and is perfected here in the respected ~~May 25 1843~~ Brothers, excellent Sisters, and in the boarding students. A true spirit of family roots rapidly and consolidates itself among them [ ] in the four societies. We do not doubt that you are enjoying the same advantage at Notre Dame du Lac where already by the grace of the Lord there is such a beautiful beginning. Let us be always united in prayers and affections, in Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, our much beloved Brothers, so that God in His mercy may continue among us in our work that He has begun. Let us say to our young people that we love them sincerely in Our Lord and that our greatest joy henceforth will be to teach [ ] we ask for their prayers which we believe very powerful to God. Please give our respectful homage to the very excellent and very dear Father Sorin, your worthy

superior. We pray for his good savages [Native Americans]. We love you in the sacred hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph, our very dear and well loved Brothers.

Brother Thomas Aquinas  
Brother Bonaventure  
Brother Ferdinand  
Brother Patrick  
Brother André  
Brother Ignatius  
Brother Eli  
Brother Alphonsus  
Brother Leander  
Brother Hilarion  
Brother Hilary  
Brother Xavier  
Brother Julian  
Brother Marcellus  
Brother Justin  
Brother Daniel  
Brother John Baptist  
Brother Gerard  
Brother Anthony  
Brother Augustus  
Brother Onesimus  
Brother Felix  
Brother Antoninus  
Brother Hilaire  
Brother Theodulus  
Brother Leopold  
Brother Michael  
Brother John of the Cross  
Brother Benoit  
[Several others]

[Letter signed by forty-two Brothers, including Brother André, who wrote it.]

#### **6. Brother André Mottais to Brother Vincent Picau**

Our Lady of Holy Cross, Le Mans

My very dear and well loved Brother,

At another time I wrote from Africa to you in France; today I'm writing from France to you in America: time changes so much. I'm not deceived: time is a blind man who walks without

stopping. Divine Providence arranges everything. It has sent us to Holy Cross as if it were the heart of a family; it called us home from Africa by royal decree which just gave the schools of the Oran province to the Brothers of St. Joseph. This country is made up of the cities of Oran, Monstagan, Herchel, and five or six other cities, recently taken by the Arabs. With this decree we will go into all of Africa, except perhaps for two or three notable cities, like Algiers, Bane or Philippeville, which will be able to have the Brothers of the Christian Schools. May the Lord Himself be pleased to choose those who will be used in this laborious mission and ready them beforehand for the sacrifices that they will undertake. As for myself, I believe that I had neither the virtue nor the qualities needed to take part in this happy colony. I was far from thinking about leaving Africa last August 5, when we were so soon called back home. Also, I would not have left if my body had let me stay. Coming to Holy Cross, Reverend Father honored me with the title of Assistant and made me a member of all the councils: although much inferior in virtues and merit to you, my very dear Brother, I am replacing you for the time being. Pray for me, please.

The boarding school at Our Lady of Holy Cross enjoys a great reputation. We have about forty-six Brothers and postulants working, not counting those at the Solitude where there are about thirty under the direction of good Father Chappé and many other clerics. I'm teaching courses in bookkeeping, study skills [?], writing and reading. I don't have time for myself. I hardly have necessary moments to write your letters.

I believe that the Holy Spirit has brought about great progress in the Institute and that God truly blesses this work. I'm convinced moreover that the efforts undertaken so zealously by our Reverend Father Moreau will bring it much good. Assured by seeing all that, I cannot grow tired of thanking the Lord and praying that He will maintain forever the union of ~~prayer~~ <sup>prayer</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>with</sup> the brothers.

Our Reverend Father seems much better this year than in former years. He has recently given missions since Christmas. Let's pray that God will keep him well for our sake. He's doing an immense amount of good. You undoubtedly

know of the death of Bishops Lausbron and Gainier, great vicars. My parents are still living, thank God. Your brother came here a few weeks ago. I don't know why, because I was busy and had only a few words with him. The walls of our church are five meters high. Work, stopped for some time, will begin again in two weeks. We're going to be troubled a lot waiting for it to be finished.

There wasn't much winter this year. The likelihood for a bumper crop is good, but the rain which is falling very often causes me to worry. I believe that the Sisters at Our Lady of Holy Cross will contribute a lot to the glory of God in their establishments. The establishment of Brother Leonard is on the best foot possible; he has thirty-three boarders.

You undoubtedly know, my very dear Brother, the death of Brothers Philip and Celestine happened at almost the same time, at the end of our last retreat.

I have to end this long epistle. I ask you to give my profound respects to good Father Sorin, your worthy and zealous superior, and my sincere regards to all your brothers, postulants, and students in America. Let's pray to God, my very dear Brother, to see ourselves and rest together in heaven. Pray to Our Lady of the Lake for me. I pray to our Lady and assure you, my very dear Brother Vincent, of my sincere and eternal affection in the sacred hearts of Jesus, Mary, Joseph.

Your friend and entirely devoted one,

Brother André

[Addendum:] The Brothers of Our Lady of Holy Cross have conducted a search among themselves for images, medals and crosses from rosaries, things they could let go of, with the intent of putting these objects at the disposition of Father Sorin or Brother Vincent, to be given to the savages (Native Americans) or to others as they judge proper, for the greatest glory to God, the Holy Virgin and Saint Joseph. In giving these small objects, the Brothers recommend themselves to the prayers of the inhabitants of America.

Brother André

May 28, 1843