

Presence to  
the world and  
presence to God  
are integrated  
in Julie's life.

To my good *SOEUR BLIN* (in Namur)

May our good Jesus live in all our hearts!

JMJ

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Bordeaux, September 25, 1807

*My dear good friend,*

*Y*ou write very rarely. I should like you not to wait till you have very important things to tell me. Well, my dear good sister, have we not all kinds of things to speak about? I have only had one letter from you since I have been in Bordeaux. Do not be lazy; write as soon as you receive my letter, unless our letters cross.

So dear Soeur Elizabeth has arrived in Namur! They wrote from Amiens that she had left on the 11th of this month. I hope the good God granted her the grace of arriving safely. She is going to help you in the Lord's work. I am confident that the good God will bless your care for our little girls; that you are going to teach them to know, love and serve the good God. Oh! my friend, what a great privilege it is that the good God has cast his eyes on poor creatures like us; we have the happiness of being the servants of Jesus Christ in the person of our poor little ones. Let us ask for one another that we may fulfill, according to our little capacity, the adorable designs of his love for us, and let us be convinced that his great goodness will help us. Who knows better than he does, of what we are capable with all this help? He who grants us the grace of using us in his work promises to grant us all we ask, in order to glorify him and make him known and loved.

Soon, in a few days' time, you will take up again your holy work! I ask with all my heart, for you and for all my good sisters, that spirit of charity, gentleness and patience, and of love for our Lord in his members, whom you will always have with you. Come, my dear good friend, let us work for a happy eternity! You know, we used to say that we had only a short time left to labor for our Lord. The evening of our life is approaching; let us ask for each other in a special way to do all our actions only for the greater glory of the good God, whom we have the happiness of serving.

*Letter 58*

I must tell you that I am at present receiving letters from Amiens; Soeur Therese Bou(trainghan) tells me in her last one, which I have great difficulty in reading, for she writes extremely badly – she no longer practices, and that is very bad for her – she tells me that Père de Sambucy has ordered her to write to me once a week. It seems that the holy blessing of the good God is with the little family, that all is going well. We must thank the good God with all our hearts. Good Soeur Elizabeth will have given you the most recent news from Amiens. I hope you will be pleased with her; the good God has granted that dear child many graces. I like her deep gratitude to the good God; that will merit many graces for her.

If kind Providence gives us a good number of boarders, I think she will be better suited to them than Soeur Xavier. However, let this remain between us; she is much better at giving explanations than good Soeur Xavier – though I hope the latter will do well in class. Moreover, you will examine this in the presence of the good God. I do not tell you anything definite about it; the good God gives grace and light in need.

Never fear tiring me by your requests when you write. It has seemed long to me, hearing from you only once. The good God has permitted it, so that I should be deprived of contact on all sides for a very long time; it has seemed very long to me. I knew why you were not writing to me. I repeat that it is not necessary for us to have very important things to say before writing to each other. I assure you, you cannot give me a greater pleasure than by sending me a letter.

Tell me something about your two or three postulants – how are they? How is the one who is still with her parents? And good Soeur Elizabeth of Namur? Will Soeur Rosalie be with you for the reopening of classes? This would be a good thing.

I shall tell you something about our two little houses in Bordeaux. For the last fortnight of this month I have been in the second of these with four sisters whom we have taken to this new house. I have been staying with them for the opening of school. We have 100 children for the first week; a month from now we shall have 300 or more, they say. There are fifty more on the register for the beginning of school. We are giving a short holiday until October 15. Many boarders are promised.

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There are some already in the house and there will be more at the reopening of school. The parish priest of the place is a very sensible and well-liked man: he may perhaps find us more than we can house. The good sisters who are here are very reasonable, and we placed in this house those with more knowledge. As soon as it is running smoothly I shall see what the good God asks of me. The first house is going all right, the rule is being well kept; they all have a very good will.

They had the happiness of receiving the holy religious habit, with the veil, from the hands of the archbishop on the feast of the Blessed Virgin's Nativity. It was a very solemn day for all the sisters. There were seventeen of them. You can judge how consoling it was to see this band of virgins! His Grace, being at the house when he was kind enough to come and bless those who were going to the other house, told us that he had been greatly consoled on the day he gave the habit to the sisters. What a saintly prelate, my good sister, what a saintly prelate! I cannot convey to you his great charity, simplicity and apostolic spirit. How good is the good God! He is so approachable. I cannot tell you how many times I have had to speak to him about all our concerns; and he has always received me with the same kindness. You see, I am telling you all kinds of news, my good friend, so now it your turn to tell me everything.

If you will be so kind, offer my deep respects to the bishop. I hope that his great activity no longer bothers you so much; one gets used to anything. I pray to the good God for you with all my heart, my dear good friend, and for all the sisters. Remember me in a special way to good Soeur Xavier. I ask her to have a heart aflame with charity for the reopening of school. May the divine Heart of our good Jesus be her refuge in the midst of her class. She must love her little girls very much, especially those who are most disagreeable and externally most repulsive. May she be full of kindness and gentleness for them, and ask our Lord when she ought to use some firmness. Firmness is good but, as St. Francis de Sales says, flies are caught not with vinegar but with honey.

I cannot end this letter! I seize the moment to converse with you, heart of heart, my dear good sisters, whom I love very much in our Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, may he live always in our hearts; may his Holy Spirit animate our whole being, our thoughts, our actions, our whole conduct! I recommend myself earnestly to all your little community. The superior of Bordeaux and all her sisters embrace you with their whole hearts as their true sisters in the Lord. I particularly recommend to your prayers one of them, who is going to be at the head of an important school.

May our good Jesus and his blessed Mother live in our hearts. I shall notify you when I leave Bordeaux for Amiens. I do not yet know the exact date. I embrace all of you once more; I am all yours in our Lord.

My deep respects to Père Minsart; I ask him to remember me in the holy Sacrifice.

*Julie Billard*