

Letters from Léon HARMEL

*to his Children*

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JOURNEY TO ROME

FEBRUARY 1899



CHAMBÉRY

IMPRIMERIE GÉNÉRALE DE SAVOIE

38-40, Place Caffé, 38-40

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1899

## THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website [leonharmel.com](http://leonharmel.com) in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

The text is given in full, translated from the 1899 edition. It has been typeset in the spirit of the original: title pages and headings follow the layout of the book; the illustration has been cut out of the digitised document and restored.

The table of contents refers to the pages of this edition; each entry is a link.

The numbered notes are those of the original work; here they are numbered continuously from beginning to end. The notes marked with an asterisk \* have been added for this edition, to shed light on the historical context.

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**Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois**

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# Letters from Léon HARMEL

*to his Children.*



## JOURNEY TO ROME

FEBRUARY 1899



1<sup>st</sup> Letter, from Alessandria, Tuesday 14 February 1899.

### **Departure. — Stops in Paris and Turin.**

My dearly beloved Children,

It is never without a certain emotion that I undertake the journey to Rome. So many times I have brought back from it light, strength and courage.

It was in Rome that the direction of my life was confirmed. It was there that the uncertainties were dispelled which might have troubled my mind amid the contradictions that came to me from people I respected and loved.

I left the Val on Monday 13 February with my dearly beloved grandson Pierre Saucourt, who represented the family at my side.

In Paris I had talked with my dear Gabriel Ardant. He spoke to me of the situation: how hell, unleashed, has launched a formidable assault against the Church and against Jesus Christ, and therefore against France. In the face of this onslaught, far too many of our friends content themselves with words, when the hour for deeds has struck.

Freemasonry, governed by the Jews<sup>\*</sup>, supported by the Protestants out of hatred for Rome, and allied with the socialists and the anarchists, has begun the war, not only in the newspapers and at public meetings, but also in the street, which it claims to seize so as to impose its odious yoke on France.

Alas! If our country is thrown into such adventures, if it seems to be sinking into the abyss, is it not above all because the voice of Leo XIII is no longer heeded by his children? No longer obeying our Leader, we are divided among ourselves, we fight one another, and we are trampled underfoot by the sectarians.

That is why our pilgrimages to Rome are of such great importance for the future of our country.

That is why I myself need to steep my mind anew at the source of all truth and my heart at the source of all devotedness.

The Pope is the visible presence of Jesus on earth. His voice is the prolongation of the voice of Jesus. To whom shall we go? For it is he who has the words of life; it is he who sows justice and freedom in the world.

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I was meditating on these thoughts when we arrived in Turin. On the platform we found a small band of young men who had come to greet me as I passed through, in the name of the Christian democrats of Turin. Among them was the editor of the democratic newspaper *Il Popolo Italiano*, via Botero, 8.

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**\* NOTE** This letter was written on 14 February 1899, at the height of the Dreyfus affair, which deeply divided France after the unjust conviction for treason of a Jewish officer, Captain Alfred Dreyfus, in 1894. The idea of a Freemasonry “governed by the Jews” was then widespread in a large part of the French press and of French Catholic circles. We reproduce these lines out of fidelity to the document: they belong to their time, and this edition does not make them its own.

We spoke of Dom Albertario, the noble victim of the Caesarists and the slavers, of Abbé Vercesi, of the valiant Murri, and also of France, of the likeable Abbé Lemire and of Abbé Gayraud. There was talk of the harassment inflicted on the Christian democrats by the conservatives, who, in Italy as in France, persist in failing to understand events. They are the same men who, in Belgium, have compromised the Catholics in power: they have not understood that Christian democracy was the means of securing the sympathy of the people. Frankly, let us put ourselves in the workers' place: would we have confidence in men who seem afraid of furthering the interests of the people, who dread the legitimate social rise of the little ones and the humble? Are the workers not of age and capable of managing their own affairs? Like them, we should be tired of always being kept under guardianship.

In Turin our visitors expressed the wish for an International Congress of Christian democracy, at Fribourg for instance. We promised to confer with our friends about it on our return to France.

I could not leave them without promising to stop on my way back from Rome.

We leave accompanied by the good wishes of our young friends. At half past five we got off the train at Alessandria.

We walked through the streets and squares overrun by the follies of the carnival, which were really very mild. In the cathedral the Blessed Sacrament was exposed; a great crowd of the faithful, of penitents, men and women, were getting ready to go in procession. Is it not an essentially democratic institution, that of the penitents, whose uniform dress hides social differences so as to unite everyone in an equal fraternity such as the Church alone can establish?

Goodbye, my dearly beloved children. We shall write to you again soon.

Pierre and I are both in excellent health.  
A thousand embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

2<sup>nd</sup> Letter, from Rome, Friday 17 February 1899.

**71<sup>st</sup> year. — Sister Thérèse. — St Joachim's. — Workers' gardens. — Brother Pierre. — At the Vatican. — Colosseum. — Rev. Fr d'Alzon. — Lenten sermon in the Sistine Chapel.**

My dearly beloved Children.

Today I enter my seventy-first year. My gratitude goes out to my dearly beloved parents, to the good and most venerable father whom you knew, and to my saintly mother, whose tenderness made me understand the love of God. It was they who put the faith into my blood. Then I send my tenderly affectionate remembrance to your mother, to my children and to my grandchildren, who have begun to rebuild the family in eternity.

And now, O my dearly beloved Master and King Jesus Christ, everything in me belongs to you: the strength of my health, the energies of my soul, the beating of my heart.

If I am here, it is to fulfil my duty as a son tenderly submissive in mind and heart to Your Vicar, to Leo XIII. He has showered our family with honours and affection. He has shown us a true predilection, which would make us doubly guilty if any one of us ever proved unresponsive to the voice of our Leader. Together with our family in heaven, we earnestly ask God that all the members of our tribe may remain faithful to the twofold mission that has been given to us: the extension of the reign of Jesus Christ through absolute submission to the directions of the Holy See, and the Christian emancipation of the working classes through the institutions that favour their social rise.

It was with sweet emotion that I received your telegram, worded as follows: "Your children, united in the same feeling of filial piety, hail 70<sup>th</sup> birthday with pride and tenderness and wish you long life."

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Let us come to the account of our journey. We arrived late, in the night from Wednesday to Thursday, at one o'clock in the morning, but truly without fatigue. Our stop at Alessandria had rested us well. The good Father Barthélemy was waiting for us on the platform, and we drove in an open carriage, on a fine starry night, to the via di Monte Tarpeo, where we found the affectionate, family welcome that you know.

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At three o'clock in the afternoon the faithful coachman Scolastri comes to fetch us and take us to St Martha's. We meet Mgr A... in the square and get down to greet him, then Mgr U..., who very kindly takes us to the lazzaretto and goes himself to look for Sister Thérèse. She welcomes us very kindly and asks for news of each one of you. We talk about our next pilgrimage and the improvements to be desired. The main one would be to fit a sounding board or some other system enabling the speakers to make themselves heard throughout the hall. The Sister will see her architect and give us an appointment. She is having coat pegs put up all along the refectory, and curtains that can be drawn without preventing the windows from being opened.

Sister Thérèse is of the opinion that we should encourage as far as we can the lodging of the pilgrims with the inhabitants. She thinks it is a good measure for making the pilgrimages popular. She is convinced that there is no danger to be feared, provided the lodgings are visited and chosen by someone reliable. The Spaniards, 600 of them, lodged in private rooms, and there was nothing to regret. The grateful population cheered them. Mgr R... T..., who saw some drawbacks in these lodgings, was consulted by Mgr T... and declared himself in favour of the measure, provided the Sisters take care of it themselves.

(Very clean beds, rooms with two beds and with one, at 1 fr. and 1.50 fr. a bed.)

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We set out for St Joachim's. On the way we meet Abbé Vallega and Mr Mongo, the lawyer, near the workers' gardens (a creation of Mgr T..., as the Abbé revealed to us). These gardens are quite close to the Vatican. They are plots intended for buildings which the financial crisis does not allow to be put up. A worthy man showed us round his very well-kept garden. Intensive cultivation, which gives a considerable yield for the space.

We visit the church of St Joachim: it is almost finished, of incomparable richness, with magnificent mosaics.

We go to the Brothers of the Piazza di Spagna (Carissimi). Brother Pierre (from Saint-Jean-de-Maurienne), one of our best and most devoted guides, took note of the wishes for improving the pilgrimage. He will come and bring us his information on Tuesday morning. He insists above all on the agreement with the coachmen. They hurry through the printed itinerary handed to them and claim to be quit of the pilgrims. The agreement ought to oblige them to keep the pilgrims until six or seven o'clock in the evening, according to the time fixed.

We go to the Dominicans. The Father General is away; the Rev. Fr Baudouin gives us a masterly lecture on contemporary history. It is extremely interesting. He notes that Gallicanism and liberalism have made real progress among French Catholics in recent times. He keenly deplores the aberration of good men who, by withdrawing from the submission due to the Sovereign Pontiff, deprive themselves of the means of fighting Freemasonry and anticlericalism.

We make our way to the Vatican; Cardinal R... receives us at once with the perfect courtesy that you know. We talk about the affairs of France. He confirms to us that the Holy Father still holds the same

ideas from the social and political point of view. He deplores the division of the French Catholics, which may be called criminal in the present circumstances. Unity is needed at all costs: but it can exist only in submission to the head of the Church.

In the evening, at nine o'clock, we go with two young Fathers to the illumination of the Colosseum. Twice the Bengal lights showed the immense building lit up with lights of different colours. The sight is magical: but it must be admitted that we were kept waiting too long, in spite of the military band, whose music is ill-suited to the poignant memories awakened in the mind and the heart by these immense heaps of stone, from which a sweat of tears and blood seems to ooze.

*Friday 17 February.* — At half past eight our faithful Automedon is waiting for us: we go to ..... A most interesting conversation on the Pope's instructions from the political point of view, and on the popular movement. The Rev. Fr d'Alzon, founder of the Assumptionists, was a saint; he had an intuition of the future. He says in his testament that the advent of Democracy is near, that we must prepare for it *and take the lead of it in order to make it Christian*. That is advice which would have saved us if it had been followed with intelligence and with love.

We go to the Vatican. As we climb the stairs we meet the Ministers General of the Capuchins, the Dominicans and the Franciscans. We greet them one after another and promise to visit them. We pay our respects to Cardinal Jacobini and Cardinal Vannutelli. All these people were coming out of the Lenten sermon, preached by a Capuchin in the presence of the Pope every Friday in Lent.

After a great number of visits, we return at one o'clock for lunch. We learn of the sudden death of the President of the Republic. The news makes a deep impression in Rome.

Goodbye, my dear children, a thousand embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

3<sup>rd</sup> Letter, from Rome, Sunday 19 February 1899.

**American bishop. — Interview with My Lord St Peter. — Herod and Nero, Scribes and Pharisees. — Pacelli. — Trappists and the Roman Campagna. — Belvedere. — Cardinal Parocchi.**

My dearly beloved Children.

We are so busy from morning till night that we have no time to write, or even to dictate the account of our most interesting outings. We take up again the afternoon of Friday 17 February.

We go for a walk in the Forum to talk a little, and we visit the church of St Frances of Rome, where the print of St Peter's knees is venerated.

Mgr X..., an American, receives us at the Hotel Bristol, where he is staying. He shows himself very glad to see me. I tell him of the good he has done in France by his addresses to young people. He finds that we are too timid in the matter of private initiative. There is still in France a fetishism of authority which crushes personality. He is to go to Paris on the occasion of his journey to Orléans, and he will perhaps come to Val-des-Bois, which he wishes to see.

The Superior of the White Fathers shows us his joy at seeing us again: we talk a little about the affairs of France, and he promises us the help of his Fathers for the next pilgrimage.

*Saturday 18 February.* — Visit to My Lord St Peter, whose bronze foot we go to kiss and whose relics we go to venerate. After a few moments, here is how we questioned St Peter:

## Interview with My Lord St Peter.

*The Pilgrims.* — Last year you were good enough to instruct us and to remind us of the democratic character of the Church in its beginnings, of the choice of its apostles from among working men, of the Saviour's preference for the little ones, and of the Church's first organisations for the relief and uplifting of the humble through the diaconies. We come again to greet you and to listen to you, but we seem to see your great bronze eyebrows frowning.

*My Lord St Peter.* — Why, yes, I am not pleased with some of my children. They are renewing the miseries that Nero, Herod, the Pharisees and the Scribes inflicted on me.

*The Pilgrims.* — How so!

*My Lord St Peter.* — Herod and Nero were jealous of the power that Christ, the Son of God, had entrusted to me. They believed that I wanted to destroy their authority, whereas I wanted only to ennoble and purify it by giving it divine justice as its rule and its model. They feared my influence and threw me into prison, each in turn.

The Pharisees idolised their fortune acquired by usury. My preference for the poor drove them into a rage, and they slyly approved the persecutions of Nero and Herod.

The Scribes saw their petty learning eclipsed by the dazzling light of the Gospel, and they preferred their smoky lanterns to the radiance of the divine Sun.

*The Pilgrims.* — But where, then, are the Neros, the Pharisees and the Scribes today!

*My Lord St Peter.* — The Herods and the Neros! Why, it is your civil power, with those who flatter it. Weary of the fine times of St Louis, of the prosperity and artistic splendour of the Christian ages in which the spirit of the Gospel inspired and directed social life, they invented Gallicanism and its substitutes, Josephism, Leopoldism, and so on. They said: The State will manage its affairs very well on its

own (*fara da se*), and they bound me hand and foot in Rome, in Paris, everywhere. They sent me off to the sacristy and would no longer hear my counsels. They believed that they would drive the chariot well without their authority being supported by that of God, without their administration being directed by the strict justice of the Gospel. But now the poor chariot sways and tilts into the rut. There is no more authority, no more respect, almost no more government: it is anarchy.

*The Pilgrims.* — We fully recognise the Caesarist pretensions of the State, whether it calls itself monarchy or republic: but your children at least, the Catholics, are faithful to you.

*My Lord St Peter.* — No, many of them make terms with Caesar, either by their open action or by their apathy. Through my successor I have told them what must be done to restore concord with the State and to renew the reign of justice in it: they will not listen to me, and they count more on their petty schemes than on the counsels that come from the Chair of St Peter. How many hesitate, draw back and prevent the solution from advancing! They had a few moments of good will, but in recent times everything seems to have been called into question again.

*The Pilgrims.* — But where are the modern Pharisees?

*My Lord St Peter.* — The Pharisees are your so-called conservatives. The democratic spirit of the Gospel horrifies them. They unconsciously worship the golden calf. They must have the pagan right of property (*jus abutendi*), and the free practice of every usurious oppression in the labour contract and in all financial dealings. They too have been raising their heads since last year. They dread like fire the democratic propaganda, its apostles, its organs, its works. All that disturbs their peaceful Pharisees' enjoyment.

*The Pilgrims.* — And the Scribes, where are they, then?

*My Lord St Peter.* — They are emancipated science, from atheistic science, whose bankruptcy has rightly been proclaimed, to the vain

science of certain Catholic doctors, who would think they were wallowing in ignorance if they did not accept the unproven hypotheses of Darwinism, if they did not destroy, together with Protestant exegesis, three quarters of the authority of the sacred books, by disputing their historical value, by regarding certain ancient books as romances, by diminishing the character of inspiration.

*The Pilgrims.* — But all these errors are no doubt the doing of a few thoughtless young men!

*My Lord St Peter.* — If only that were all! But even in the elite bodies I do not find the unanimous obedience that I ought to meet there. There too there is something like a revival of Gallicanism. My political and social directions are held to be a dead letter, or are even regarded as dangerous. The doctrinal traditions of the Church are sacrificed to the love of novelty. I have given St Thomas as a guide; he is neglected. In a word, these keys that Christ gave me, and whose symbol you see in my bronze hands, people would like to wrest from me.

*The Pilgrims.* — We protest with all our strength against these revolts. We know that Christ is with you. We kiss your blessed foot. We ask your pardon for our generation. This bronze hand which holds the keys once held, it is said, the thunderbolts on the Capitol<sup>1</sup>. Those thunderbolts were vain, but the power of your keys is real; we acclaim it and venerate it. We shall work, under the direction of your illustrious successor, to extend your reign over minds and hearts.

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We meet Mr Pacelli, the municipal councillor who came to speak to the pilgrims last year. He speaks to us of the Triple Alliance, now in complete disarray, of Italy's sincerely affectionate sympathy for France, and of the unanimous demonstrations that took place in the

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1. The present statue was made from the bronze of Capitoline Jupiter.

elected bodies on the death of the President. He has just come back from Paris, where he spent a few weeks: he observed with pain the disorganisation of the French Catholics, the cause of their being crushed by the Freemasons.

In the afternoon we go to Monsignor the Master of the Chamber, where we meet Father Aurèle, prior of Tre Fontane. He tells us of an attempt to cultivate the Roman Campagna. The Trappists rent to families a certain portion of land at a very modest price: they train these families in farming, and after a certain time, when their training is judged sufficient, they make them owners of their land. It is the work of the “Old Rags” that has undertaken to support the enterprise.

We go to the Belvedere, where we had an appointment with Sister Thérèse and an architect of the city. He thinks he will succeed in making the speakers heard by stretching a large awning above the platform at the height of the beams: four bays arranged in this way will be enough. Sister Thérèse will take the necessary steps so that everything is in place before the arrival of the Belgian pilgrimage (about 18 April); it will then be possible to judge how effective the means is.

Next we see Cardinal Parocchi, protector of the Association of Catholic Workers’ Circles, for which he tells us of his affection. He speaks to us of the affairs of France, of the state of Italy, then of Dom Perosi and his music, all with astonishing competence, for he is as much a musician as a man of letters, a linguist, and so on.

We end with a visit to the French Ambassador to the Holy See: the new Ambassador, Mr Nisard, is at the Grand Hotel, and Mr de Navenne is away. We sign the register placed there on the occasion of the death of the President of the Republic.

4<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Tuesday 21 February 1899.

**The Guilds at the Capitol. — Democracy and the “Osservatore”. — Visits to several cardinals. — Bonanni. — Lantern-slide show. — The Holy Shroud. — The Catholic press.**

My dearly beloved Children.

*Sunday 19 February.* — As we come out, the Rev. Fr Dehon points out to us the titles carved over the doors of the palace on the right of the Capitol square. Over one: college of the perfumers; over the others: college of the fishmongers, university of the butchers, university of the restaurant-keepers (taverners), university of the carpenters, of the blacksmiths, of the innkeepers, of the masons, of the shoemakers. It was the syndics of these universities who formed the municipality of Rome. Thus, in Christian times, the workers were honoured and could safeguard their own interests.

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Cardinal A... receives us most kindly. He speaks to us of Count Paganuzzi, general president of the Permanent Council of the Italian Congresses and Committees. In the second half of December, at Bologna, the Count gave an address in which he declared his adherence to Christian democracy, after explaining his former reluctance, overcome by the Pope's address. We speak of the *Osservatore Romano*, obliged today to publish the letter of a priest of Milan in which the paper is convicted of having quoted entirely inaccurate texts. This paper persists in opposing Democracy, in contradiction with the directions of the Holy Father. We were told at the Vatican that the paper is in no way semi-official and that it alone is responsible for its actions; but in France importance is attached to it, and that is the source of the evil.

Cardinal V... is very affectionate towards us; he is glad about our next pilgrimage. He spoke very highly of Abbé Pottier. He was pleased with his visit to France on his way back from Belgium, to the Nord, where the employers are so generous, and to Paris, where there is so much good alongside so much evil. He congratulates us on the French popular movement, which must be energetically pushed forward and organised.

On Sunday afternoon we stay at home, where we receive the following visits:

Abbé Murri (via dei Schiavari, 3), editor of *Cultura sociale*, a fortnightly publication, the organ of the Christian democrats of Rome. This priest, still young and very ardent, is keen to organise workers' institutions:

This Sunday evening we were receiving guests at via Tarpeo.

At half past six our guests arrive: three prelates, three Fathers and a priest who is a friend.

The dinner and the evening pass in most interesting conversation, particularly on social questions. The most complete unanimity reigns in minds and hearts in favour of Christian democracy.

*Monday 20 February.* — We receive a visit from Mr Bonanni, who is introduced to us by Fr Tenaillon of the Blessed Sacrament. Fr Tenaillon acts as our interpreter, for our visitor does not know a word of French. He has begun to organise lectures for workers in a hall near the Piazza del Popolo. I strongly urged him to form a small study circle and to consult the craftsmen he wishes to influence, so as to have their opinion. We spoke of the importance of a popular newspaper, of a Catholic *Messaggero* to be founded. It was agreed that an appointment would be made to discuss the question. The Salesians seem the right people to produce this newspaper: we shall see them.

We go to see Cardinal F... He keeps us a long time. You know that it is the etiquette in Rome that the visitor may not leave before the

cardinal has dismissed him, so that one is in a way his prisoner: he alone, as he pleases, keeps you or lets you go.

As for the Pope's instructions from the political point of view, it is quite wrongly that certain French Catholics are astonished at the attitude of Leo XIII. The Sovereign Pontiff has only recalled the constant teaching of the Church. Christians have never been seditious. The apostles enjoined obedience to the sovereign, whether he was called Tiberius or Nero, with the sole exception of laws or orders contrary to the commandments of God. You are living in a Republic, that is an undeniable fact: therefore, as Christians, you cannot be seditious and you must accept the established authority. — There was talk also of Belgium, of the dangers facing the Catholics there, a certain number of whom have not been able to understand the aspirations of the people so as to give them legitimate satisfaction.

On returning home we find Mgr X... (an archbishop *in partibus*). He had come to visit Canon Dehon and to see us at the same time.

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On Monday afternoon we go to a lantern-slide show at the French Seminary (the Superior had invited us the day before). For two hours the most varied views of India pass before our eyes: they are explained to us by the traveller himself. It is with real emotion that we see the photograph of the Holy Shroud of Turin, first the positive and then the negative. One can clearly make out the imprint of the sacred Body of Our Lord, his head, his chest, his legs, with the horrible wounds that covered them. One sees there what Catherine Emmerich relates of that sorrowful passion, which would make saints of us if we thought about it.

After the show we greeted the cardinals present and Mgr Laborde, Bishop of Blois, who is expecting me at his workers' congress on Easter Monday and Tuesday.

Cardinal R... receives us at 7 o'clock, as soon as we arrive in the antechamber. We speak to him of the questions we are to raise at the audience with the Holy Father. We always find in him the same great affection for France, which makes him particularly detested by the Germans. We speak of the *Osservatore Romano*, which by its incoherent editorial line helps the enemies of the Holy See in France and bewilders its friends. He answers that the paper is not semi-official. It does receive communications from the Vatican, it is true: but apart from these, the Vatican inspires none of its articles; they have no value other than that of the person who signs them.

*Tuesday 21 February.* — Cardinal C... receives us with the most affectionate warmth. We have never been showered with more kindness than by this good cardinal. He tells us that the Sacred College shares the sentiments of the Sovereign Pontiff towards France. It is from France that the salvation of the Church is expected. That is why the union of the French Catholics is so desirable. He regrets that the Catholic press seems too set on opposition: the republican concentration is the cause of all the bad laws, past and future. By confining themselves to an opposition that looks systematic, our newspapers give a reason or a pretext for this concentration, which will bring fresh misfortunes. The right tactic would have been to show a conciliatory spirit. Abbé Lemire has set a great example, which made a very good impression in Rome.

Mgr d'A... receives us: we find again these apartments so full of memories for us, since we lived there in 1889. He tells us that the service for Félix Faure will take place on Thursday at St Louis of the French.

Cardinal ..... spoke to us of the great benefits of the French workers' pilgrimages, not only for France, but for Rome and above all for the sacred cause of the Holy Father.

We see in turn the editors of the *Voce della Verità* and of the *Osservatore Romano*. They will announce the lecture I am to give next

Friday at the house of the Assumptionist Fathers.

At half past one we receive a visit from Mrs G..., a widow, who asks to be received by the Holy Father at the same time as us (we were fortunate enough to obtain it. I was glad of it for the sake of my excellent friend Mr G..., who died still young after being so devoted to the Association of Circles).

The Ambassador, Mr Nisard, receives us. He is a friend of B..., and through him he had known of me for a long time. He was most kind. In the antechamber we paid our respects to Mgr Isoard.

We return home and find the ticket for an audience tomorrow!!  
Goodbye, a thousand embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

5<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Wednesday 22 February 1899, feast of the  
Chair of St Peter at Antioch.

### **Audience with the Holy Father**

**His activity. — His perseverance in his line of conduct. — Social movement. — Fraternal Union. — Congress of Blois. — Rev. Fr Fontan. — Abbé Pottier. — Third Order. — Association of Circles. — Minimés in Lyon. — Fr Faber, devotion to the Pope.**

My dearly beloved Children.

We arrive in the antechamber at half past eleven. We chat a little with the chamberlain on duty. The Holy Father was born in 1810: he is therefore fully 89 years old. He still works 14 hours a day, 5 of them in audiences. He has kept a prodigious memory.

He never takes a decision without having reflected on it for a long time. He said to the Most Rev. Fr S...: "I have reflected, I have consulted, I have meditated much, I have prayed much and had others pray, and only after that was my decision taken." That is why He does not change it. Those who say that the Pope has changed do not

know him. From the social point of view he was already a democrat at Perugia, and if He did not speak so plainly at the beginning of his Pontificate, it was because he was waiting for minds to be ready. As for submission to the established government, that is a simple theological principle which neither He nor his successors can change.

Today more than ever, the kings and the powerful of the earth are distrustful of the Church: their authority is diminishing day by day because of the influence of the masses, which is gradually making itself felt in every nation: and so the Pope addresses the peoples directly, going over the heads of governments.

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Noon strikes; we are shown in, just the two of us, Pierre and I. You know with what touching tenderness Leo XIII welcomes me. I spoke to him of the matters I had to deal with, about which I cannot write to you.

Then there is talk of the popular social and economic movement. The Holy Father regards it as the great means of filling the ditch of misunderstandings that has been dug between the Church and the People.

I tell him of the immense good done by the attitude of the Holy See in declaring itself clearly for the little ones and the humble, thus dispelling the modern prejudice that the Church is concerned above all with the rich.

The Holy Father receives with pleasure the Yearbook of the Fraternal Union which I offer him. He looks through it. He grants a special blessing to all the members and authorises me to ask the Cardinal Secretary of State for a letter in his Name blessing our undertaking.

As for the Congress of the Christian Workers of the Centre and the West (Easter Monday and Tuesday at Blois): Leo XIII wishes these good workers to be encouraged on his behalf.

The Pope warmly praises Abbé Fontan and Abbé Boyreau, who have established the common life of priests devoted to works for workers. He had the fruitful work of the Chaplains of Labour of Tarbes, founded by Abbé Fontan, explained to him in particular. We asked for a letter of encouragement addressed to the venerable Bishop of Tarbes, praising this priestly work which is so dear to him.

We announce the work of Abbé Pottier — his course on justice, in Latin. — It is he who is the doctor of the democrats: the movement must be kept within the bounds of truth by a sound theologian, since doctrine is of such great importance in action. The Holy Father answers kindly: He recognises that Abbé Pottier is very submissive to his bishop and to the Holy See. We tell the Holy Father that the Bishop of Liège has just made the famous professor a canon of his cathedral.

We did not fail to speak of the Third Order and of the progress being made in France, thanks to the help of the Rev. Fr Jules, commissary general, and of the Rev. Friars Minor. The Holy Father reminded us of the pleasure He had had in seeing Fr Jules, and he praised his zeal. He earnestly wishes a general action to be established, so that the fraternities may know one another and correspond with one another to render mutual services, and also so that there may be a general direction in which the successes of some encourage the others and which can unite their efforts. The Friars Minor have a magnificent mission there if they are willing to respond to the ardent desire of the Holy Father. Leo XIII never ceases to repeat that He expects social renewal from this flowering of the Third Order. He particularly recommends that *social* action be joined to Christian action. I mentioned to him fraternities of men that have founded institutions of every kind for the education and well-being of the workers. In particular I recalled the Roubaix Fraternity and its organisation: the Holy Father remembered it, and especially the charts of the divi-

sion into sections that we had shown him before. The Pope expressed to me his keen satisfaction with it.

The Association of Circles and its general secretary, Count de Mun, are not forgotten. The Holy Father blesses our fellow members and shows his fatherly affection for Mr de Mun.

Finally, I ask for a special blessing for my children, my grandchildren and each member of my large family.

I also request it for the Institution of Notre-Dame-des-Minimes in Lyon (teachers and pupils). It has given Papal Zouaves to the Papacy, among others Colonel de Bec de Lièvre, Captain Jacquemont, des Garets and André Burel, the last killed at the *Porta Pia*. These are titles of glory appreciated by His Holiness, who gives his blessing effusively.

We brought in Mrs Henry Gréau during the second part of the audience. The Holy Father was kind to her. Pointing to me, he said: “Do you not think that we should need many Harmels? I have only one; if I had two, I should have great influence in France. (Then turning to Pierre): Happily there are sons and grandsons. I very much hope that they will carry on the work of my dear Harmel, the Good Father.” These words were spoken in a tenderly affectionate voice.

At last he blessed us and we withdrew; it was a little after half past twelve.

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As I came out, deeply moved by this meeting, I remembered the lines of Father Faber: “What is done to the Pope is done to Jesus himself. All that is royal, all that is priestly in Our Lord is gathered together in the person of His Vicar, to receive our homage and our veneration. One might as well try to be a good Christian without devotion to the Blessed Virgin as without devotion to the Pope, and for the same reason in both cases. The Mother of Jesus Christ and his Vicar are equally part of the Gospel.”

When I hear anyone speak ill of the Pope or criticise him, I am seized with fear for that imprudent person. Fr Faber expresses this thought: “One is astonished to discover how closely a noble fidelity to the Pope is bound up with our generosity towards God, as well as with God’s liberality towards us. We must share warmly in the Church’s sympathy for her visible head, or else God will show us no more sympathy.”

The fourth commandment, which promises temporal rewards to those who honour father and mother, does it not hold true for the Pope? “We must not,” says Fr Faber again, “allow ourselves the irreverent disloyalty of distinguishing in him, and in his ministry, between what we may consider human and what we may recognise as divine. We must defend him with all the constancy, all the energy, all the devotedness, all the range of action that love knows how to use in defending the things that are sacred to it.”

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Yes, my dearly beloved Children, look upon the Pope as a Father tenderly loved and filially respected!

After the audience we go to leave our cards with Cardinals Rampolla and Mocenni, who are away.

In the evening we go to the Vatican to see Cardinal Rampolla. In the antechamber we meet the Bishop of Blois, whom we greet, as well as the Rev. Fr B... and Mgr I..., with whom we talk. We are shown in after an hour’s wait. We relate our audience, make our arrangements and hand over the petitions for the letters granted by the Holy Father.

Good night, my dearly beloved Children; receive my most tender embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

6<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Friday 24 February 1899.

**Service for Félix Faure. — Cardinal Rampolla. Lecture at the Ara Cœli.**

My dearly beloved Children,

Thursday 23 February, service for the President of the Republic, Félix Faure, at St Louis of the French. The Ambassador had sent us cards. A great many people. The whole official world of the Quirinal was there: the ministers and generals. There was very fine music. Cardinal Rampolla came *all the same*, to show his love for France, but as he did not greet the ministers, he angered the *Tribuna* and the liberal newspapers. The Cardinal solemnly performed the absolution. On his way back he passed close to us. He was trembling all over with emotion at having met all those people for the first time. The German Ambassador walked out ostentatiously at the moment when Cardinal Rampolla was arriving in procession (in the church) for the absolution. The Germans here detest the Cardinal, whom they accuse of having sold himself to France. I wish this were known everywhere in France, so that people might be more grateful.

In the afternoon, preparation of my lecture.

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*Friday 24 February.* — Feast of St Matthias, apostle of reparation, since he was chosen in the place of Judas and had to make reparation for the betrayal.

At half past three, lecture at the house of the Assumptionist Fathers, Piazza dell'Ara Cœli. Let us name among those present: Cardinal Cretoni, Cardinal Ferrata and Cardinal Macchi; Mgr Passerini, archbishop, vice-camerlengo; Mgr Mourey, Mgr Celli; Mgr d'Hautpoul (who spoke to me of Félix's campaign); Mgr T'Serclaës; Dom Benoît, abbot of the Trappist monastery of Tre Fontane; Dom

Sébastien, general of the Trappists; Mgr Daniel; Mgr Tiberghien, the Father procurator of the Capuchins; Fr Burtin, superior of the White Fathers; two Franciscans; Fr Tenaillon, superior of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers; Mr Debruigne, superior of the house of the Lazarists; the Rev. Fr General of the Sacred Heart; the Rev. Fr Lemius, etc., etc.

Laymen: Pacelli senior; the Prince of Piombino; Count Agliardi; Edouard Jaroszynski (Hotel de Rome).

As a report, I am sending you a copy of the article from the *Univers*.

### **Mr Harmel in Rome.**

“As every year, the Good Father has come to Rome to prepare the pilgrimage of the French workers, which will take place at the end of September.

“He had scarcely arrived when he had the great joy of being received by the Sovereign Pontiff, who expressed to him his full satisfaction and lavished encouragement on him for the pilgrimage and for the development of his social action. ‘Ah! If only there were two “Good Fathers” in France!’ exclaimed Leo XIII.

“Mr Harmel met with the same kindly and encouraging welcome from their Eminences the Cardinals. Everywhere he was able to observe the deepest sympathy for France, and the ever more widespread conviction that it is from popular action that the recovery of Society must be expected.

“The lecture which the Good Father has just given at the house of the Augustinians of the Assumption had drawn a large audience, above all of the young clergy of the Roman universities. Several cardinals and many prelates and superiors of communities had made a point of bringing, by their presence, the testimony of their confidence and their encouragement.

“The ‘Good Father’ spoke of social action. It must be exercised, he said, for the benefit of the workers condemned to undeserved poverty by their isolation, the instability of work, or their economic and social inferiority.

“This action will produce quicker and more widespread effects if care is taken to appeal to the workers’ own initiative: the mutual apostolate of the worker by the worker achieves the best results; moreover, it forms the worker himself, raises him in his own esteem, commits him to the good and ensures his perseverance. Today one must be an apostle or an apostate.

“It is above all the clergy who must go to the help of the people and work to make the workers so many apostles of their own uplifting.

“This action of the clergy is exercised first of all through teaching. How much progress has already been made through the preaching of the Encyclical ‘*Rerum Novarum*’! But how much further on we should be if this preaching had been more unceasing, more unanimous, more widespread!

“Besides this teaching, the clergy has proved, by its institutions, what power it would at once recover if it could and would devote itself to this popular action.

“Mr Harmel supports all these ideas with numerous facts he has gathered in his travels through the France du Travail (Labour France). He shows that socialism owes its triumphs only to the skill with which it has taken up the defence of the workers’ interests, calling on the people to work for their own uplifting. Socialism will vanish like an empty phantom on the day when the Catholics, taking up again their age-old traditions, succeed in restoring to labour and to the workers the dignity that God and the Church wish to give them.

“Studded with those forceful expressions that bury doubts in the mind, this lecture earned the Good Father the warmest applause. It is

a new triumph for the cause of Christian democracy, of which Mr Harmel has everywhere made himself the intrepid champion.”

7<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Saturday 25 February 1899.

**Cardinal Macchi. — Memories of Pius IX. — Perosi’s oratorio.**

My dearly beloved Children,

It is bitterly cold. We had made an appointment with Cardinal Macchi, and we were there at 10 o’clock. He kept us for an hour, lavishing on us the most fatherly affection. He told us touching details about Pius IX, with whom he lived a great deal. In private, Pius IX was full of kindness and delicate attentions towards those around him. His joy was to make others happy. And so he was adored by all who knew him. Cardinal Macchi attended him in his last moments, and it was he, as majordomo, who was charged with announcing his death. The news brought sobs throughout the whole city. From time to time the cardinal makes his pilgrimage to St Lawrence outside the Walls, which we ourselves shall do at the first free moment.

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In the afternoon we received tickets to attend the oratorio on the Passion of Christ by Dom Lorenzo Perosi, a young priest who is at present in Paris. The performance took place in a large glass-roofed hall at the Palace of Fine Arts. The orchestra numbered about 80 players, mostly violins; there were 200 singers, among them children, women singers and many basses. The first part, *The Lord’s Supper*, is remarkable for its many words of Christ, admirably rendered. One feels a real sense of terror on hearing the Saviour’s curse upon one of His disciples whom He had loved so tenderly and cherished so much. He no longer calls him anything but “that man”.

“*Woe to that man by whom the Son of God shall be betrayed. It would be better for that man if he had never been born.*” How terrible

it is, this word from Him who was so gentle towards sinners! The harmony conveys the impression.

After Christ has given His body and made them drink His blood, while the audience is still moved by the words of love, the choir sings the *Lauda Sion salvatorem* with exquisite sweetness. At that moment I felt such deep emotion that tears sprang from my eyes. After a further word of Christ, the final chorus takes up again the *Lauda Sion salvatorem, lauda ducem et pastorem in hymnis et canticis*. The choir bursts into a triumphal hymn that carried away the whole hall. The piece had to be encored. The second part, the *Prayer in the Garden of Olives*, is filled with heartrending sorrow. It ends with a chorus that expresses the violent indignation of the narrator when he relates that the traitor was one of the *twelve*, then the noise of the multitude, and the chorus closes with a sorrowful and moving harmony.

The third part, *The Death of the Redeemer*, lets only a single phrase of Christ be heard. It is the narrators and the choruses who tell the scene, the darkness, the mockery of the Jews and the jeering of the Pharisees. The final chorus expresses the groaning of mankind in words taken from Isaiah.

In short, a very moving performance that leaves a deep and salutary impression.

Ever yours.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

8<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Sunday 26 February 1899.

**The “Univers”. — Americanism. — Pincio. — Ara Cœli.**

My dearly beloved Children,

I have just come in at half past five. It has been bitterly cold all day. This morning there were icicles hanging from the fountains of Rome.

Having gone out this morning at 10 o'clock, we went to see Mgr ..... to speak to him:

1. About the French newspapers. He points to the *Univers* as having the *perfect* tone of the Vatican. I submitted to him a letter to Veuillot, of which he strongly approves;

2. About a draft of a supposed letter setting out the journalist's whole course of conduct in full accordance with the wishes of the Holy See. He will give us his answer tomorrow or on Tuesday.

At half past twelve we lunched with Mgr Keane, former rector of the University of Washington, now archbishop *in partibus* and canon of St Mary Major. There were a number of guests, among them: Canon Buguet, superior of the House of Montligeon, a very gentle and very kind priest, whose work for the souls in purgatory has a procure in Rome, at 263 via Nomentana; the vicar general Gely, of Rodez, who is preaching the Lenten sermons at St Louis of the French (the major seminary of Rodez at present has 320 students; it supplies candidates for the missions, for a great number of religious orders and for many dioceses); the son of the Vice-President of Colombia, etc., etc. Mgr Ireland was to have been with us. He is in Florence, going to meet two American bishops, his suffragans, who are coming to Rome.

I am seated on Mgr Keane's right. We have a very lively conversation. He speaks of how weary he is of the disputes over Americanism that have so stirred public opinion. "We have attacked no one," he tells me, "we have sought to impose our method on no one, a method that is entirely suited to our country. As for the errors that the Pope has rightly condemned, no one in America would wish to teach them. They are errors and exaggerations of the translators, which is very disobliging towards us."

He congratulated me on being a Christian democrat. He cannot understand those who do not feel that Christian democracy is the

future. If we do not achieve it, it will mean the moral and material ruin of our society.

Mgr Ireland, in a letter published in French in the *Osservatore Romano*, thanks the Pope for his letter to the American episcopate. He declares that never has any bishop or any priest fallen into the errors of the translators of the life of Fr Hecker.

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We go for a walk on the Pincio, where music is being played. A great crowd of people and of open carriages, in spite of the cold.

On leaving the promenade, I go to the *Ara Cæli*, where the tertiaries, in their habit, were holding their Benediction. Litany of the Blessed Virgin (never a Benediction without it in Rome), *Tantum ergo* and the *Benedetto*.

On returning home, I find the cards of several visitors.

Ever yours.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

Supplement to the 8<sup>th</sup> Letter from Rome.

### Letter to Mr Eugène Veuillot.

Rome, 28 February.

Dear and venerated Sir,

Here I am back in Rome for some ten days now. I find here once again the good opinion of the *Univers* that I observed in the past.

You are thanked for pursuing in the press the policy of appeasement that Abbé Lemire practises so happily in Parliament.

By praising what deserves praise, and by avoiding passing judgement on men before you have been able to judge their acts, you keep a real authority, even in the eyes of your opponents, when you blame what seems to you reprehensible.

By avoiding useless recriminations and wounding allusions against those who do not share your faith, by placing yourself frankly on constitutional ground, such as it is and not such as we dream of it, you contribute, as far as you are able, to weakening anticlericalism.

The opposite conduct would only strengthen the radical concentration, which has done so much harm to France and may yet bring about so many attacks on liberty. How indeed can we work for peace if we do not begin by disarming? We shall then be on the most favourable ground to repel any attacks that might be attempted.

I rejoice to be able to tell you what I see here, that you are still on the right path. My old friendship for the *Univers*, and for you in particular, dear and venerated Sir, does not allow me to remain silent, and obliges me to add my humble congratulations to the authoritative approval you have already received.

Kindly remember me to your sons and to your colleagues. I am happy to call myself, dear and venerated Sir, your most affectionate servant.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

9<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Tuesday 28 February 1899.

**French Ambassador. — Toniolo. — St Louis. Italian lecture.**

My dearly beloved Children,

It is still bitterly cold. We continue the account of our visits.

Yesterday, Monday, we went to St Peter's to wait for the French Ambassador. Mr Nisard was received in solemn audience by the Pope; Mgr Tiberghien was present at the audience. The Pope took his place on the throne surrounded by his court; the master of ceremonies went to fetch the Ambassador and his suite. On entering, they made the three customary genuflections and kissed the Pope's hand. Mr Nisard, deeply moved, read an address announcing the accession of

the new President, assuring Leo XIII of the goodwill of France and of her wish to respect the promises made in the Concordat.

Leo XIII replied: “No one is unaware of the special affection that We have for France. In the painful circumstances through which she is passing, Our affection is keener still, and all that We can do for her, We shall do.” Then, returning to the Ambassador’s allusion to the Concordat, he added: “These mutual promises that We have made, We must keep, above all the promises of the Concordat. We shall always be ready to do so.”

Then the Holy Father invited the Ambassador into his study, and their conversation lasted about 40 minutes. After the audience, two masters of ceremonies accompanied the Ambassador to St Peter’s. The bronze doors were opened to let the representative of France pass through: we were there at that moment. A canon offered the holy water, then the procession made its way to the Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament, where the Ambassador said his prayer. Prie-dieux with red velvet cushions had been made ready where the party was to stop. The second station was made before the altar of the Gregorian Madonna, then the foot of the bronze statue was kissed; the third station was before the Confession of St Peter and the fourth before the altar of St Petronilla (where the beautiful reliquary offered by the worker pilgrims of 1889 stands). Mr Nisard made these various stations with the bearing of a true Christian. The whole delegation was in full dress uniform with their decorations. About a hundred and twenty French people had gone to St Peter’s to attend this ceremony.

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At half past twelve we were at Mgr T...’s, where we lunched with Toniolo, professor of political economy at the State university of Pisa: he is as learned as he is a good Catholic and a perfect democrat. And so he is highly esteemed by the Holy Father. The illustrious professor

shows all his joy at seeing me again. We had a very lively meal, full of high spirits and of profit to me.

At three o'clock we called on Mgr T'Serclaës, superior of the Belgian College. He is continuing his great life of Leo XIII, of which we have the first volumes. We talk about Belgian affairs. We leave our cards for Cardinal Gossens, Archbishop of Malines, who is staying at the Belgian seminary.

Every Monday, at four o'clock in the afternoon, a meeting of the French colony is held at St Louis of the French. We go there. We meet various people we know, and the traveller to the Indies who is to show his pictures in the evening.

We greet everyone, chat a little with each, then discreetly withdraw at 5 o'clock to go to Toniolo's lecture at the premises of the *Unione cattolica*. We find the hall full of Italian ecclesiastical students; after half an hour the professor appears and begins his lecture by speaking of me and relating what I had told him at lunch about the importance of the idea in institutions. His subject was: The causes of the decline of the Latin races. The chief cause is that these races have abandoned the Catholic religion, at least in its spirit; he speaks of England and of America, and shows how, through great faults, these nations have qualities that come to them from the Gospel. At the end of the lecture he invites me to speak, which I do, apologising for not knowing Italian. The audience gives me the warmest welcome. I take leave of Toniolo, who is setting off that very evening to return to Pisa. We embrace, and he promises me to come to Val-des-Bois next year. Mgr T... puts me in touch with the Marquis del Pezzo, who has organised a cooperative production society with the building workers. I tell him I would like to see his workers; he gives me an appointment for Sunday at 11 o'clock in the morning, so that we can talk with them.

With my most tender embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

10<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, 1 March 1899.

**Illness of the Holy Father. — St Pudentiana. — Lecture at the French Seminary. — Interview with Pius IX. — Tomb of the Zouaves. — O'Connell, our model.**

My dearly beloved Children,

Since yesterday evening the whole city has been in turmoil over the illness of the Holy Father. You now know about the operation that was performed and its results. People are a little reassured this evening, but this morning there was real anguish. One feels what an immense place the Pope holds here, even in the world of the usurpers. The coronation celebrations have been postponed. The ambassadors besiege the Vatican to express their sentiments and ask for news. Telegrams pour in from every part of the world.

*Tuesday 28 February.* — We go into St Pudentiana, a church built on the site of the house of the senator Pudens, who gave hospitality to St Peter. We visit the underground rooms, discovered quite recently, in which are found the remains of the Roman senator's dwelling: the floor of the bathroom, which afterwards served as a baptistery, and the great stone vessel that was used for baptising; on the wall, traces of painting representing the family of Pudens, the senator, his wife and his daughters Pudentiana and Praxedes. An underground passage links the dwelling with that of Praxedes, where the church of the saint now stands. One sees the well into which the blood and bones of martyrs were thrown: with the help of a long pole carrying a light, one can still make out many bones at the bottom.

At 1 o'clock we were at the French Seminary, where I gave the seminarians a lecture on the family (the employer's family and the workers' family). There we met several young men who had already been to the Val.



We visit the tomb of Pius IX at St Lawrence outside the Walls. It is with emotion that I see again the tomb of that marvellous pope who stirred the world during a pontificate of 31 years. He knew how to kindle in every heart a real passion of love and loyalty towards him. He had asked for a very simple tomb. The Catholic world took it upon itself to adorn this chapel with magnificent mosaics, which recall all the nations and many generous donors.

### **Interview with Pius IX at his tomb by a few pilgrims.**

*The Pilgrims.* — Holy Pontiff, like all your children, we love you exceedingly. You were always a stealer of hearts. We are deeply moved beside your tomb, and we come here to seek some light in the present difficulties. Help us and enlighten us.

But first, why this strange tomb? Why did you prefer this cemetery of the people and of the poor to the splendid necropolis of the Pontiffs?

*Pius IX.* — I love the necropolis of the Vatican too: I left my heart and my entrails there; but I wished my body to rest in the midst of the people whom I loved so much and who loved me so much, beside my dear soldiers who defended me with the valour of the Crusaders and who gave their lives for me.

*The Pilgrims.* — Oh yes, Holy Pontiff, your people of Rome and all your children, the Catholics, loved you with a holy passion, because you were goodness itself. The memory remains of the enthusiasm of the people on the day of your election, on the day of your enthronement at St John Lateran. Your return from Gaeta recalled the triumphal entry of the great generals of ancient Rome. We saw it renewed several times, on 11 April each year. It was always a triumph, but the triumph of love and tenderness. And was not your priestly ju-

bilee of 1869 a frenzy of enthusiasm? It exhausted for you the flowers of poetry and those of the gardens, with all the brilliance of bonfires and illuminations. The gifts of the Catholic world filled Rome and recalled the exhibitions of our great capitals. Your triumph, moreover, was an everyday one: when you came down from the Vatican to visit your good city, its shrines, its works of charity, its streets and its promenades, all your people acclaimed you and took a double joy in seeing your fatherly face and receiving your holy blessing.

*Pius IX.* — Did not this good people deserve that I should wish to rest beside them in the field of the dead?

*The Pilgrim.* — Yes, and your noble soldiers, the crusaders of St Peter, also had a particular claim to your remaining beside them. How generously they shed their blood at Castelfidardo in 1860, at Mentana in 1867, at the Porta Pia in 1870! But what is this mosaic tapestry of brightly coloured coats of arms?

*Pius IX.* — It is the plebiscite of the whole world; these are the signatures of the churches, the dioceses and the cities that bear witness to my fatherly kindness and to my devotedness to the good of all.

*The Pilgrims.* — That is only just, O Holy Pontiff! Like the tomb of Peter, your tomb is glorious because you lived doing good.

But while we are at your feet, speak to us again, as you spoke to us when we went to your audience at the Vatican. Tell us what should be done in the present difficulties. What, first of all, should we think of the painful situation of Italy?

*Pius IX.* — Ah, that dear Italy, how I loved her! I too wanted her free and I wanted her one, as far as that may befit her genius and her history. I approved the sentiments of the great patriots of this beautiful Italy, of men like Silvio Pellico, Gioberti, Massimo d'Azeglio, Rossi and Ventura. I relished the traditions of the school of Pisa, that

city of thinkers (*Pisa cogitabunda*) where the true Guelph traditions are still preserved today.

I detested the foreign yoke; with the true patriots, I cried: *fuori i barbari*. I showed my feelings by dismissing the 4,000 Swiss who guarded Rome, by organising the national army, the civic guard. I formed a national league with Piedmont and Tuscany against Austrian oppression. I drew the Kingdom of Naples into it. And if Naples had not betrayed that noble cause, from 1848 the whole of Italy would have been free and constituted as a federation under the presidency of the Pope. That was still my plan after the Treaty of Villafranca in 1859, and I had had it written into the preliminaries of the peace treaty; but Piedmontese ambition caused everything to fail. Piedmont sought to create a tyrannical unity by force. Its work will perish in ruin and in the disaffection of the peoples. The true Italian patriots will see their ideal realised: national unity in a federation presided over by the Pope.

*The Pilgrims.* — May your prayers in heaven hasten the realisation of that ideal! But what do you think of the civil liberties and the social progress for which the peoples are hungering?

*Pius IX.* — On these questions I prepared the action of my successor. In the Syllabus I condemned Caesarist and Gallican tyranny. I declared that the Church had no need to be reconciled with true progress, because she herself is its constant friend and inexhaustible source. In my States I established equality of taxation, created the civil ministries, organised the Council of State, the Finance Council, and provincial and communal representation; I helped in the revival of the guilds. I thought, like Ventura, that “if the Church does not march with the peoples, the peoples will not stop, but they will march without the Church, outside the Church, against the Church”. But I was not sufficiently supported. I felt from the very beginning that those around me and my people were not ripe for this action. I said one day: “We need ten years to instil the political spirit and the na-

tional spirit into the masses.” I did not say enough. The backward-looking spirit of some and the rash haste of others caused everything to fail.

Set to work again, under the direction of my successor. Love the people, work for their political liberation and their social uplifting. Help them, serve them; they will help you in turn and will bring about the triumph of the Church.

*The Pilgrims.* — Thank you, beloved Father. We kiss the stone of your tomb and, strengthened by your teachings, we shall set to work again for God, for the Church and for the people.

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We go to the cemetery to pray at the tomb of the Papal Zouaves, and once again we admire that magnificent monument.

We return home, where we receive bad news about the Holy Father, which fills us with dismay.

*Wednesday 1 March.* — We write all morning, and at ten o'clock we go to Father D...’s, where we stay until a quarter to twelve. Father D... finds that the French talk too much and do not act enough. Action is the only important thing in life. The French begin by making theories, which immediately give rise to divisions. With their forces scattered before action begins, the action is carried out without unity and produces no serious results.

Catholics must go gently, taking whatever they can get as they go along; the theory of *all or nothing* is madness.

The great O’Connell began by gathering together the forces that were to support him in his public action: the bishops, the priests and the people. When he spoke publicly before England, he had a whole army behind him, prepared and organised. In spite of that strength, he did not ask for more than he could obtain; and yet the people were ready for every sacrifice to support him. Voting in Ireland was public. A lord had declared that he would drive from his lands all who voted

for O'Connell. An intimidated farmer was carrying to the ballot box the ballot paper his landlord had given him. His wife followed him and, in the square, in the midst of the crowd, she cried out to him: "Remember God and liberty." The farmer tore up his ballot paper and voted for O'Connell. All the electors present did the same. Many farmers were driven out, but the people held firm. Is that not admirable? It is because the great agitator had the spirit of organisation, and before launching out his troops were formed and he was sure of their loyalty. There is a fine example for French Catholics.

Freemasonry found that it had gone too fast in 1789–1793; its movement suffered a setback. Taught by experience, it advances slowly but surely towards its infernal goal. And meanwhile Catholics fight among themselves. The sectarians take advantage of it. They have prepared their army and organised their battalions: every day they destroy some part of the Christian social edifice. What folly, in such circumstances, to quarrel over words! Jansenism was a mask for Freemasonry. Under its hypocritical air, it aimed at driving Jesus Christ out of society.

The American democrats are favourable to the people; they are bi-metallists and in favour of moderate customs duties. The Father recommends the pamphlet "*La Conversion Huysmann*" by Abbé Belleville, of Bourges.

Hecker was not a theologian; he was a man of feeling. — Lamennais, who had a vision of the future, came to ruin because he was content to write. He remained in theory, without any organisation, without any action. His word was too far ahead of its time to be understood, and as he had no one behind him, he fell alone, without troops, without support.

At last we leave Father D... and go to lunch with the Most Rev. Fr S...

A very lively conversation. The Father proposes a very kind toast to me. He had placed me opposite him. I put forward the idea that the

Republic, in spite of its great faults, is at present the form of government most favourable to the freedom of the Church, as also to the awakening of private initiative.

Goodbye, my dear children, with my best embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

11<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Thursday 2 March 1899.

**Abbé Pottier. — Poubelle. — A wind of errors.**

My dear Children,

I have just come from Rev. Fr .....’s. He is a member of the Holy Office and was charged by the Holy Father with studying Belgian democracy, Abbé Daens and Abbé Pottier. He professes the greatest esteem for the latter. “He is a complete man,” he says, “he has all the qualities of the social priest and all the learning of a true theologian; and with that, he is as obedient as a religious. And so he is esteemed here by those who have been able to appreciate him. You may tell him that he has friends, of whom I am one.” I promised him that he would receive directly the professor’s new work, for which we desire a fine approval from the Holy See. This Father is a Spaniard. He advises us to get in touch with Cardinal Sancha, Archbishop of Toledo, and with the Bishop of Minorca, both very socially minded. In Barcelona there is a friend of Toniolo’s who is much concerned with social questions and would be glad to meet us: this gentleman is a professor at the State University. Mgr Sarda y Salvany has been in the Hierarchia for six years: out of modesty he has always concealed that he is a Monsignor. The Rev. Father regards him as the Mgr Ségur of Spain.

He mentions to us factories where the people are very Christian, but there is no organisation. The employers would be well disposed; they ought to be visited. The Rev. Father would like an employer’s catechism in Italian.

Rev. Fr ....., a Capuchin, who presided over the congress of the Third Order at Reims, will preside again at Toulouse, from 16 to 20 August, and in Belgium, at Brussels, in July. He is always most kindly disposed towards everyone.

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The Minister General ..... receives us and talks with us in the most interesting way. He had been speaking to Mr Poubelle about the protectorate of France in the East and asking him to maintain it vigorously. The other nations that dispute it have never done anything to protect Catholics, even those of their own nation, whereas France has never ceased to act. In the massacre of the Armenians, not a single Catholic was murdered, thanks to the energy of the French consul, who, together with the Fathers, fed 3,000 to 4,000 people whom they saved. Mr Poubelle replied: we are wayward sons, but we are still sons.

We spoke of the Holy Father's letter on Americanism. He answered us: "We are only at the beginning. Let us expect far more. The wind of error blows far more strongly in Germany than in America. Doctor Schell, dean of theology at the University of Augsburg, formally condemned by the Index, has led astray the young ecclesiastical students. In France, the sceptical criticism inaugurated by Abbé Duchêne calls everything into doubt. Abbé ....., without going so far, skirts the edge of that school. Everywhere, under the pretext of historical criticism, Holy Scripture is called into question. Recently a student, taking his doctoral examination in Germany, at the Faculty of ....., declared, to the great astonishment of the examiners, that the Fathers of the Church did not know Holy Scripture. Only today, he said, is it known, because we now have a proper critical spirit. This young man stood by his bold assertion. There is a pride of mind that is taking hold of certain priests and certain religious and that forebodes the greatest misfortunes. At bottom, it is Protestantism tri-

umphing through doubt and the denial of tradition. Evolutionism is coming in too. This evolution,” the Father tells us, “is leading us to a doctrinal revolution, to the triumph of error. I am so appalled at the progress of these errors, even among certain priests and religious, that I should like to withdraw into solitude to escape the terrible responsibility of a Superior General in such troubled times.”

As I listened to this language, I thought of my children and my grandchildren, thrown into this whirlwind of errors stirred up by pride. I implore my grandchildren to reject with horror all these diabolical novelties and to hold fast to the faith they received in the family, a simple and humble faith, accepting with respect not only the dogmatic decisions but also the counsels of Rome. Only the Vicar of Jesus Christ has infallibility. Whoever raises a doubt, or disputes the word of the Pope, must be avoided like the plague, as an agent of the devil. I remembered two little doctors of theology who arrived at the Val fresh from their studies and spoke, with an altogether Protestant offhandedness, of the revelations of St Gertrude. The Church has approved them, but these little young men, in their greater wisdom, despised them as daydreams.

If learning served only for that, it would be better to have none. But it has been said: a little learning leads away from God, much learning brings one closer to Him. I am happy to talk in Rome with these true scholars, whose humility equals their merit.

As for us, who have not the means to acquire much learning, let us humbly keep ourselves in submission of mind and heart to the infallible authority of the Pope, and let us not argue about whether or not he is speaking *ex cathedra*.

We are certain that obedience to legitimate authority is never mistaken.

Most tenderly yours.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

The Father also spoke to us of the Catholic University of Washington, from which religious have been systematically excluded, and of that of Fribourg, where there is a wish to get rid of the Dominicans. Schell does not love the Blessed Virgin, which gives cause for fear on his account. Canon Dellinger, who once founded the heretical sect of the “Old Catholics”, had likewise rejected devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Héfélé, on the contrary, returned to the fold because he loved our Mother Mary.

12<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Friday 3 March 1899.

**Anniversary of Leo XIII. — Joan of Arc. — The Index. — Catherine Emmerich. — Brazil. — England. — Inferiority of the Negroes.**

My dearly beloved Children,

Today is the first Friday of the month; we are closely united with you in adoring the Blessed Sacrament exposed in our dear little chapel. It is also the 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the coronation of Leo XIII, and yesterday was the anniversary of his birth. He was entering his 90<sup>th</sup> year. The coronation celebrations have been postponed, but his health no longer gives any cause for anxiety, and we are all rejoicing to see him take on a new lease of life. May God keep him for us for a long time!

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Rev. Fr P..., a member of the Holy Office and of the Index, deals especially with canonisations. We found him with a pile of enormous volumes that he was searching through for the solutions given by the Councils to the questions he is studying.

The cause of Joan of Arc is advancing slowly, for lack of sufficient miracles. If the faithful invoked her more, they would certainly obtain the signal favours that could hasten the canonisation.

He speaks to us of the errors of the day condemned under the name of Americanism. Vague, ill-defined errors, as Jansenism once was. Only the other day he was reading again the Jansenist Arnaud's book on frequent Communion. It is done with such skill that one really understands how many were led astray. We speak to him of the revelations of Catherine Emmerich: he says that nothing has been found to condemn, and that the book is considered fit to foster piety. The additions or interpretations made by Brentano, who wrote down the revelations, have taken from them the full character of divine inspiration, because he added his own remarks to them.

Yesterday we lunched with Father B..., who received us very cordially. I was opposite the Father. Mgr G..., former apostolic delegate to Brazil, Ecuador and Colombia, told us the most interesting things about those countries. He is particularly fond of Brazil, where religion has been reviving since the fall of the empire. The Republic has always been well disposed towards the bishops and the clergy. It has given back to the Benedictines the properties that had been confiscated from them. Rev. Fr Van Caloen, a Belgian Benedictine, is reorganising the monasteries so that through them parish ministry, a seminary and a college may be provided. It is a complete renewal.

Why did the Republic of Brazil act in this way? It had nevertheless been made by anticlericals, who intended to confiscate the property of the Church and to pass laws of persecution against the clergy and the Catholics, regarded in advance as enemies of the Republic and supporters of the fallen Empire. The Empire, indeed, loaded the clergy with honours and money, but at the same time it held them in bondage, as happens all too often with sovereigns, even Christian ones. The bishops thwarted the plan of the sectarians by giving a very clear adherence to the Republic. From then on the plans were set aside and the confiscations revoked. The greatest liberty is left to the Church, which takes advantage of it to repair the evils caused by the corruption of the previous regime.

I then recalled what I had read in Mr Alfred Nettement's preface to the translation of Cardinal Wiseman's lectures. Protestantism in England, after being successively a matter of royal arbitrariness and of parliamentary arbitrariness, became, so to speak, a national interest. English and Irish Catholicism, having remained largely faithful to James II, appeared as the enemy of the fatherland. Catholics were regarded as foreigners, as the vanquished. And so they were treated with ferocity. What was persecuted in them was less a religion than a party. When the house of Stuart lost all hope, the Roman Catholics of Great Britain gradually attached themselves to the reigning princes and sought to win their confidence by their demonstrations of loyalty. They kept aloof from all the parties that divided Parliament. When the Whigs worked for the emancipation of the papists, these gave their cause a chance of success by the care they took to refrain from any violent demonstration and from any part in demagogic agitation.

That is a very long digression. You will forgive me for making it, because it supports the facts of Mexico and our position in France.

There was talk of Negro priests. They have no authority, even over those of their own race. The white priest who looks after the Negroes alone needs to have relations with white people at the same time, in order to keep the respect of his flock. The Negroes are despised by the whites, and they accept this humiliating situation. This shows how hard it is for the Gospel to transform mankind. We are all brothers, and it is very painful to see Catholics fall into such errors. Recently a regiment of Negroes threatened to mutiny if the inhabitants continued to show them contempt. They said, rightly, that they alone did military service, and they did not want to defend the whites who treated them in this way. The whites had to agree to show themselves more Christian. At the end of the lunch, an exchange of toasts full of cordiality.

Goodbye, my dear Children, with my best embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

13<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Rome, Sunday 5 March 1899.

**The Pope. — Cardinal Rampolla. — Mgr Angeli. — St Cecilia. — Singing at St Peter's. — False learning. — Influence of France in the world. — "Revista Internazionale". — Social works in Rome.**

My dearly beloved Children,

Here we are on the eve of our departure. We came to see Peter. We have seen him, and we leave comforted. We have found once again that nothing has changed. The decisions taken by the Holy Father are too carefully considered, too well matured and too supernatural to be subject, as some in France may have thought, to the fluctuations of opinion or of events.

We saw Cardinal Rampolla several times. I took my leave of him on Friday evening. I found him as perfectly affectionate as ever towards France. The humiliations that some tried to heap on him in Rome these last days because he is too French are a public testimony to his loyalty. Yet the Vatican has little cause to be pleased with France, and with the Catholics in particular, among whom submission is far from complete. We took our leave of Mgr Angeli, as charming as ever, as you know him. He spoke to us of the Pope, who is much better. He had to say Mass during the operation. So he said Mass twice that day. He could hear the moans of Leo XIII, which moved him greatly. The doctors say that the Sovereign Pontiff will be better than before. *Fiat! Amen!*

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On *Thursday* evening the station was at St Cecilia's: we went there. The church was lit up and the place of the martyrdom visible to all. We prayed to the holy patroness of Rome, and once again admired

her beautiful white marble statue, lying with her face turned towards the plinth, so that her executioners could not see her beauty.

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On *Friday* the station was at St Peter's. I had gone in to take my leave of the Apostle. Compline was beginning, sung with music (because it was the station). For an hour and a quarter I remained under the spell of this harmonious rendering of the psalms, which I followed in the Abbé's breviary. That same day we saw Rev. Fr ....., Master of the Sacred Palace. We spoke of modern errors, of the vain learning that claims to replace revelation. It puts forward hypotheses that most often have no serious basis. A survey made from 1850 to 1890 recorded 747 hypotheses, of which only 74 still have some supporters; the rest have disappeared. Such are the fragile foundations on which science relies in its criticism of the sacred books. In these delicate matters, one always grieves the Church when one does not hold solely to her decisions, even when one does not go as far as condemned error.

Faith is the first of all goods, and everything that tends to diminish its vigour is a great evil. The Father speaks to us of the letter on Americanism. It was first drawn up according to the Holy Father's plan, then revised by Him to make it gentler and give it that fatherly unction which is the mark of the acts of Leo XIII. The word of this great Pope is always at once a word of light and of love. He has admirable tact and delicacy. See how he praises the public life of the Americans, how he congratulates them on the progress Catholicism has made in the bosom of civil liberty. He does not doubt that the errors he lists will be condemned by all the clergy of the New World. Can a father act in a more delicately affectionate way?

Speaking of the German errors, the Father tells us how they have penetrated publications and teaching in France. Our nation is regarded throughout the world as the apostle nation par excellence. It

spreads truth or error. No idea makes its way without passing through it. It is the hearth of all new ideas, the centre from which everything radiates. The followers of error know this well and seek to penetrate our minds. The German errors spread among us under the pretext of historical criticism, and we then spread them everywhere. Is it not a duty as patriotic as it is Christian to watch over our schools and our publications so as to keep bad doctrines out of them, in order to resume our true mission as soldiers of Christ, as servants of the truth?

We asked him to examine the new work of Abbé X... He spoke well to us of the abbé-deputy; he esteems his learning and his character. He also promised us every care for the work of Abbé Pottier. We left him at half past eight in the evening; he showed me much affection.

On *Saturday 4 March* we went to pay our respects to Mgr Pagis, Bishop of Verdun, at the Lazarists'; we invited him to lunch the next day, Sunday.

Mgr Talamo, editor-in-chief of the *Revista internazionale*, finds that Roman society has progress to make from the social point of view. His review, supported and recommended by the Holy Father, has difficulty finding readers. He notes the progress of socialism and of irreligion in Rome; but here, as in France, the conservatives turn their backs so as not to see what they do not wish to deal with. On the other hand, the activity of the Protestants is an example to Catholics. They are multiplying schools, youth clubs and popular institutions everywhere.

We see the Countess de ..... at the Grand Hotel. She places herself at our disposal, together with her daughter, to promote the Rome pilgrimage in Paris and to help us in every way she can. I shall see them in Paris.

We learnt that Mgr Ireland and Mgr Keane have not come back to Rome: they are in Florence, perhaps to avoid interviews about Amer-

icanism, a question that is still occupying the public.

Today, *Sunday*, we kept our appointment with the Marquis del Pezzo at 10 o'clock. He introduced to us in turn the delegates of three groups:

A cooperative production society for building (masons, carpenters, etc.). They pay in one franc a month so that each may have a share of 30 francs, these forming a guarantee fund for the contracts to be undertaken. I advised them to found alongside it a society of Christian property owners. And as the religious men and women are the only ones building in Rome at the moment, they could ask the Cardinal Vicar to bring together the procurators of the congregations to recommend the society to them. Recently a community needed to buy a plot of land from the city. The Marquis asked the municipal offices whether they would agree. He was told: We have to if we want to sell, since they are the only buyers and the only builders in Rome at the present time.

The delegates of the *Mutual Credit Society* explained their rules to me. Each member acquires, by successive payments, a share of 20 francs. With three signatures (the borrower and two guarantors), a loan of 40 francs is made. Under these conditions there is security. It is true that each of the guarantors can also borrow 40 francs with three signatures. They also have approved suppliers, at 5 or 7 or 10%, of which 2% is kept for expenses.

The third society, *Workers' Fraternity*, includes men of all trades. A study circle would be the best means of occupying and forming these men.

In Rome, as in France, there is a strong spirit of individualism, resulting from the destruction of associations for a century past. The spirit of association and ideas of solidarity must be restored among the people. It is agreed that in September we shall have many meetings. I saw intelligent workers; there are resources, and they must be put to work.

At midday we received His Lordship the Bishop of Verdun, with other guests.

The weather was mild; we ate downstairs with the windows open. Then we took a turn in the garden, and afterwards we went for a walk in the town.

Lastly, we are packing our trunks for our departure tomorrow morning.

A thousand embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

The Rev. Fr Barthélemy has handed me the translation of a decree of the Congregation of Rites dated 20 January 1899. I enclose it with this letter because of its interest for chapels.

### **Decree concerning semi-public oratories.**

The Sacred Congregation of Rites is often asked which oratories may be regarded as semi-public. First of all, those oratories are recognised as public which are dedicated to the public worship of God by the bishop of the place, and blessed or even solemnly consecrated by him: they open onto the street, or else the faithful can generally enter them from the public way. On the contrary, an oratory is considered private, in the strict sense of the word, when it is set up in a private dwelling for the use of one person or one family by an Indult of the Holy See. Midway between these two kinds of oratories come, as their name indicates, semi-public oratories. So that all ambiguity concerning these oratories may cease, Our Most Holy Father Pope Leo XIII, by a rescript of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, has established and declared the following: semi-public oratories are those set up by episcopal authority in a place that is in some way private or not entirely public. They are, however, neither for the use of all the faithful nor for that of a single person or family, but serve a community or a gathering of persons. Among these oratories, all those in which the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is offered are valid for fulfilling the obliga-

tion of hearing it. To this kind of oratory belong those of seminaries and ecclesiastical colleges; those of pious institutes and of societies taking simple vows; those of other communities living under a rule or statutes approved by the bishop; those of houses set aside for spiritual exercises, those of boarding houses and hostels intended for young people studying letters, science or the arts; those of hospitals and orphanages, as well as those of barracks and prisons; and lastly similar oratories in which groups of the faithful are accustomed to gather to hear Mass. To these must be added the chapels duly set up in cemeteries, provided that during the celebration of Mass the entrance is open not only to those to whom the chapel belongs but also to the other faithful. His Holiness nevertheless wishes to keep safe and intact the rights and privileges of oratories enjoyed by their Eminences the Cardinals, by the Bishops and also by the regular Orders and Congregations. Moreover, He has deigned to confirm the decree given for Nevers on 8 March 1879, there being nothing to the contrary.

23 January 1899.

Card. Mazella.

14<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Genoa, Monday 6 March 1899.

**Farewells. — Rome, universal centre. — Scala Santa. — Genoa. Lecture.**

My dearly beloved Children.

We left Rome this morning in dry cold and an icy wind. Indeed, apart from yesterday, Sunday, it has been cold the whole time of our journey; my summer overcoat could not be worn even once.

Yesterday evening, for our farewells, we dined with the students of the Sacred Heart, under the chairmanship of the very good Father Dehon, whose health still leaves something to be desired. We were

treated to a little concert, harp, cello and flute, with voices. A most charming and affectionate circle.

In the morning, we rose at half past five; Mass said by the very good Father; breakfast at a quarter to seven: the faithful Scolastri was there; we set off with Father Barthélemy, who had prepared our provisions for the journey. We take possession of a half-compartment in first class, three seats which we occupy with the Abbé..... A charming journey, as a family. We say goodbye to the Rev. Fr Barthélemy, who for 18 days has looked after us with a mother's tenderness. Mgr T... was at the station at half past seven. We thank him for all that he never ceases to do for us. During these 18 days he went everywhere with me, opening every door for me, arranging the most instructive conversations for me, having me give the lectures. It is to him above all that I owe the charm and the usefulness of my journeys to Rome. In Rome itself he is the initiator of the practical social movement: workers' gardens, cooperatives and youth clubs.

One truly sees that Rome is the centre of the world. Everywhere one is in contact with men of every nation. Most of the prelates and cardinals have lived in the various parts of the world. On the other hand, it is in Rome that one finds at its sharpest the struggle between error and truth, the intrigues of muffled revolt and the outbursts of filial and loving submission, the aspirations towards the future glimpsed by the prophetic gaze of Leo XIII, and the resistance of routine and of the spirit of slavery.

Above the struggles, above the petty rivalries, above the noise of the crowds and the unrest of the peoples, soars the great white old man whose intelligence lights up the world like a shining beacon, and whose word carries the truth in its virginal integrity to every corner of the earth.

One man echoes that word and reflects that light faithfully: Cardinal Rampolla. A gentle and energetic nature, able to combine majesty with simplicity, welcoming to all and at the same time a

faithful guardian of the truth. After the figure of the Pope, his is the finest and most attractive in Rome.

Despite the invasion of the Piedmontese, despite the court and the parliament, everything in Rome goes to the Vatican or comes from the Vatican. No one escapes this mysterious pull. One feels that if the Pope went away, Rome would be nothing but a necropolis. And so what emotion there was last week, and in every camp! All the newspapers, from the socialist *Avanti* to the semi-official *Tribuna*, were at one with the Catholic papers, reporting in detail everything concerning the Pope's health, his conversations, his slightest words and deeds, and doing so in a most respectful way. The Vatican was crowded with ambassadors and with men of every shade and every opinion, coming to ask for news, to sign the register, to copy the bulletins. Cardinal Rampolla told us that he had received thousands of telegrams (more than 18,000, it is said). From every point of the globe, tokens of the most touching and respectful concern poured in. Leo XIII dominates the world by the power of his genius as much as by his supreme priesthood.

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The Salesians of Turin have asked us to stay with them, as we have already done several times. I accepted, for I have a particular attraction for these sons of Dom Bosco, on whom their Father left the stamp of his great gentleness and his great charity.

I have not told you about my visit to the Scala Santa. It is always with emotion that one climbs this staircase of Pilate's, stained with the blood of Our Lord. Beneath the great crucifix at the top, one reads these words of the prophet: *Vulneratus est propter iniquitates nostras. — Attritus est propter scelera nostra.* — These words have always been close to my heart.

Now we are approaching Genoa; the cold has ceased; the fine sun makes its entrance into our compartment and is reflected in the beau-

tiful Mediterranean Sea.

On arriving in Genoa, we find Mr Boggiano, the lawyer, president of the Circle of Blessed Carlo Spinola, and Canon Marquis Ludovico Garotti. We go to the Hôtel de France for dinner, and these gentlemen come to fetch us at half past eight. Here is the translation from the *Cittadino* of Tuesday 7 March:

### **The Harmel lecture.**

Yesterday evening, at half past seven, the great hall of the Circle of Blessed Charles Spinola was already packed with a large and select audience, waiting impatiently for the announced lecture by Commander Léon Harmel.

At half past eight he made his entrance, greeted by a great ovation, accompanied by one of his grandsons, by the Very Rev. Canon Garotti, ecclesiastical assistant, by the lawyer and professor A. Calvini, president of the Circle, by the lawyer Antoine Boggiano, president of the University Section, which had organised the meeting, and by Commander Corsanego Merli.

Mr Boggiano, speaking fluently and in very correct French, hailed in the lecturer the venerated father of the workers of Val-des-Bois, wishing that in every important industrial centre generous men might arise after the example of Léon Harmel, able to resolve the thorny labour question in practice.

From the very beginning of his address, Commander Harmel won general sympathy: although past 70, he is still full of vitality and energy. He made a happy allusion to the most illustrious son of the Superb City, Christopher Columbus.

Then, coming more directly to his subject, he began by observing that liberalism has had its day and that in future the great struggles will be between Catholicism and socialism.

He added that there can be no doubt that the final outcome will be fatal to the latter. He pointed out, however, that war must not be

waged only on the field of ideas; on the contrary, Catholics must strive to show their adversaries, with proofs, that Catholic principles, scrupulously carried out in practice, give the most fruitful results.

He also said that the moral and material resurrection of our mass of workers will come only by going to the people and through the people. Give the workers a certain responsibility, and they will work with more love and energy.

He then went on to a practical example, briefly describing the organisation of his flourishing mill, in which many workers find work and bread.

He concluded by saying that he had never had cause to regret having taught the worker a full knowledge of his rights as well as of his duties, having associated him with his work, having called him to take part in his councils, in which the interests of the worker and of the employer are discussed. With these principles he has achieved the ideal of having under his orders a great mass of workers who are attached to him not only by the bond of natural interest but also by a great affection. He does not ask them for servile obedience; consequently he does not fear revolt from them. The splendid lecture was interrupted several times by applause which, at the end, truly knew no bounds.

The Circle's eminent ecclesiastical assistant, Canon Garotti, taking as his theme Commander Léon Harmel's happy phrase, "Let us save the people by the people", thanked the illustrious lecturer in good French, and expressed the hope that the young Catholics of Genoa would treasure the holy and noble counsels so generously given them by the illustrious Good Father of the workers. He concluded by conveying the gratitude of the Spinola Circle to the man who had been able to give so eloquent a practical example of how to improve the sad condition of the workers, by giving them the holy and infallible principles of the Gospel.

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Wednesday 8 March: we leave this morning for Turin. Pierre, a real resourceful fellow, finds us a coupé, as on the day before, where we settle in as a family, occupying the three seats and defying the assaults of the other travellers.

We are happy to feel something like a wind from France reaching us. Now we are approaching our own country!

With my best embraces.

*Signed:* Léon Harmel.

Our health is still excellent.

15<sup>th</sup> Letter, from Turin, Thursday 9 March 1899.

**Turin. — Lecture. — Dom Bosco's Oratory. — A Christian industrialist. — Return to France.**

My dearly beloved Children,

Wednesday 8 March: we arrive in Turin at half past twelve. On the platform we find Abbé Roussin, a Salesian, the Marquis Invrea and the lawyer Adolfo Nicolas. After an exchange of friendly greetings, we arrange to meet them in the afternoon.

We arrive at the Salesian Oratory, via Cottolengo. The community was waiting for us for lunch. We greet the assistants of Dom Rua, who is in Portugal at present. As usual, our excellent Salesians give us a magnificent and most affectionate welcome.

After lunch we go to our rooms to wash and dress. Dom Roussin takes us to see Abbé Piovanno at the major seminary. We are joined by several young men. Together we go to the editorial office of the newspaper *El Popolo Italiano*. The lecture I am to give in the evening is set for half past eight in the chapel of the archbishop's palace. I am sending you the article from the newspaper *El Popolo* about it.

### **Mr Léon Harmel's lecture.**

It was an event that those who were able to take part in it will not forget. On Tuesday evening, in the very church of the archbishop's palace, all that is most distinguished among the Catholic population of Turin had gathered to hear the truly inspired words of the Good Father, back from Rome. The meeting was presided over by our Archbishop.

Léon Harmel is always eloquent when he speaks of Christian democracy, of the workers, his own or others, of the needs of today and the aspirations of tomorrow. The constant approval, the applause which involuntarily interrupted him and which his large and select audience lavished on him, gave this lecture the character of a most important demonstration. It was the collective affirmation of an order of ideas and facts which a great number of minds in Turin happily profess, and which the speaker expressed with power.

Here is the Harmel lecture, reconstructed as faithfully as we have been able:

### **The speaker's two passions.**

I have come back from Rome, the Good Father of the workers told us, where I go every year to seek my direction. I have two great passions in my life: the social reign of Jesus Christ through His Vicar, and the moral and economic uplifting of the working people by means of the teachings of the Gospel. The Pope and the people: those are my two loves.

Leo XIII always encourages Christian democracy, which is truly the "counterweight" and the adversary of socialism. Socialism wants to destroy God, the family, the fatherland, property. The motto of Christian democracy, of the true people, is precisely the reverse: God, family, fatherland, property. It is therefore a great injustice to accuse the Christian democrats of socialism, for it is they who create the

great organisations and the popular meetings against the socialists (who nowhere have more formidable adversaries).

### **Study, and the power of ideas.**

But none of this can be achieved without first defining the idea and spreading it. We must study, gentlemen, and make others study. Freemasonry has seduced the people with the words and ideas of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity; the socialists with those of Justice and Solidarity. But these are all Christian ideas; they belong to us. We must claim them back. Let us study a great deal, gentlemen; the socialists study. I knew a socialist leader who was converted to Christian democracy, and became an ardent apostle of it, by studying the *Vie de Jésus-Christ* by Louis Veuillot.

Liberalism and socialism are errors of the mind, more dangerous than those of the heart and the senses.

Let us set up workers' study circles. In some of their circles the socialists have even the books of K. Marx studied, which are very difficult to understand, and, to get that far, a whole medley of materialist and socialist works. What may one not expect from minds so skillfully led and instructed? In France, in our study circles, each week we begin with the application of the Gospel to social matters: illuminating insights are drawn from it. Then we study organisations and various questions.

### **Method in action.**

But ideas must be embodied in facts. In popular action, method is of great importance. Everywhere we must awaken personal initiative and the sense of responsibility. The social question, in fact, is not so much a question of the stomach as a question of dignity. Every man must have his dignity and, consequently, his responsibility in this world. As in study, give the workers responsibility in action. We achieve this at Val-des-Bois by organising the functions of the mill,

and economic and moral institutions of every kind, on the basis of responsibilities assigned to and assumed by the workers themselves. At meetings we put a worker in the chair, with the employer on his left and the priest on his right; the worker gives the floor to the employer and to the priest. The employer and the priest have a consultative role: the workers have all the more respect and trust for them. Even for the family fund, whose money comes exclusively from the employers, the workers decide the amount and form of the wage supplements, according to the rules laid down.

There are works of compassion and works of resurrection. Works of compassion (almsgiving, for example) are purely passive on the part of the one who receives them, and they are very good. But the best for solving the social question are the works of resurrection, which require of the one who receives them an active cooperation, a small or a great action. Such are cooperative institutions, workers' gardens, study circles, etc., etc. In general, we must support the works that seek justice, the family wage for example.

There must be a continual apostolate, and by everyone. Today whoever is not an apostle is an apostate. The speaker urged his hearers not to be content with studying written books, but above all to study living books, that is to say, men.

### **The foundation of our hopes.**

Our action must not be noisy, but firmly founded on the treasure of Christian truth. The dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was prepared by two great pontificates, those of Pius IX and Leo XIII. In our time, truth has been increased by the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and of papal infallibility. The Pope's influence in the world is growing, above all in the world of the workers. His voice makes the peoples thrill. Let us not distrust the people; on the contrary, let us see to it that everything is done for the people and by means of the people. *Everything for the people and by the people.*

Let us encourage the young: the young already sense the future; let us help their ardour to overthrow the obstacles; let us hope with them and as they do. Our hope, to be Christian, must be a certainty, the absolute certainty that the reign of God will be accomplished on earth. We must cooperate in it, but with intelligent and untiring action.

Let us work with courage. God wills the salvation of the peoples; *He will make our action fruitful.*

### **The words of the Archbishop of Turin.**

When Léon Harmel's lecture had ended, amid the keenest emotion of those present, His Most Reverend Excellency Mgr Agostino Richelemy rose and spoke in these terms:

"I almost fear to spoil with my words the impression produced on us all by the words of the Good Father, in which I do not know whether I should admire more the strength of feeling or the vigour of conviction with which he spoke them.

"May the good Lord grant that, having been his admirers, we may become his imitators; that Léon Harmel may see his wishes and aspirations fulfilled in his own country, and that we in our Italy may begin by continuing such happy results."

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After the lecture I was received by the Archbishop, who was most kind to me. The young men were filled with enthusiasm, for the conservative camp was well represented, and my address was the triumph of Christian democracy, a triumph sealed by the words of the Archbishop, who did not utter a single word of reservation. I urged them to act more broadly than they do, and to organise powerful workers' associations. There was recently a strike of tram drivers and employees in Turin. Had there been a Christian workers' organisation, it would have had the glory of bringing peace all round. The

employers as well as the strikers would have been very glad of a Christian intervention, instead of the socialist influence, which meets with no obstacle. Some drivers, former pupils of the Salesians, expressed these ideas to Abbé Roussin; they said: If Catholics do not want to let us become the prey of the socialists, let them create organisations capable of defending our rights within the bounds of justice for all.

At last, towards eleven o'clock in the evening, we returned to the Oratory. This morning I went to Mass in the church of Our Lady Help of Christians. You know that this was Dom Bosco's favourite title. It was to Our Lady Help of Christians that he gave his gratitude for all the benefits received and for all the wonders worked through him. The students, 800 of them, are in the church. The workers, more than 600 of them, have already gone back to the workshops. As for the boys of the youth club, they come only on Sunday and Thursday; there are more than 700 of them. The boys' behaviour in church is truly edifying; at recreation it is charming in its simplicity and its trust towards their masters. One sees the success of an education by purely moral means, *without punishment*. One detail: the young barber of the house came to shave me; a servant came to do our rooms and our shoes; the coachman of the house drove us into the town: it was impossible to get any of them to accept a single coin. That certainly contradicts what is often said of the Italians. For my part, I must confess, I love the men of the people in Italy and in Rome as I love them in France. My affectionate sympathy for them has seemed to me justified everywhere.

Abbé Roussin gave me a packet of medals of Our Lady Help of Christians blessed by Dom Rua; then, after our farewells to the assistants, who had received us so perfectly, we left to pay our visits. We are to have lunch with an industrialist who had come to invite us. We learn that in Italy, as in France, the conservatives harass the Christian democrats a great deal. They show themselves uncomprom-

ising clericals, but at the same time perfect liberals, insubordinate towards the Pope. So that, I was told, clerical means liberal and liberal means reactionary. The only Catholic newspaper in Turin, the *Italia Reale* (which is translated either as Real Italy or as Royal Italy, depending on whom one is talking to), holds these ideas. It does much to estrange the people from Catholics by representing them as the friends of the rich and the selfish, as caring little for the oppressed. The teachings of the Sovereign Pontiff, and the attitude of Dom Albertario, editor of the Milan newspaper (the *Osservatore Cattolico*), who was condemned last May, have given our cause a new surge of popularity. Ricciotti Garibaldi, son of the famous adventurer, has declared publicly that Italy will be saved only by a federation of Republics with the Pope as president. And when he was asked why he was so opposed to his father's ideas, he replied: "My father loved his country passionately; he did not hesitate to ally himself with the demons to save it. I too love my country, and I shall not hesitate to ally myself with the angels to give it back its freedom. The new spirit is blowing in the Peninsula as in France. An alliance with the moderates would ruin every hope, for those who pride themselves on moderation and prudence are at bottom nothing but Pharisees, ready to betray the most sacred causes for their petty interests of the moment.

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At half past eleven we arrive at the house of the Turin industrialist who invited us. He has three silk mills in the neighbourhood. There we found a charming family in which unity, in respect and love for the parents, creates an atmosphere of happiness. Two tall young men, as good democrats as they are ardent Catholics, three girls very interested in our conversation, the father very proud to receive us, and the mother, an invalid for ten years, yet still guiding her family with the tact and nobility that are the mark of the Christian woman. She is adored by all. And so, when I proposed her health, congratulating her

on her children, who are her glory and her reward, the industrialist, moved to tears, embraced me warmly. At two o'clock, two carriages took us, with the young men, Abbé Roussin and the Marquis Invrea, to the station, where we found a messenger from the Salesians who had had our tickets stamped, taken our trunks out of the left-luggage office and put all the luggage in the compartments. The two young men insisted on accompanying us as far as the neighbourhood of Modane, to study what they could do at once. We drew up the plan, and it is agreed that on my return in September we shall go and set up factory councils in the three workshops. In addition, we shall hold a small private meeting of employers who are keen to move forward. At last we reach Modane and greet our beloved country.

Ever yours.

Léon Harmel.

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A day at Val-des-Bois

by Dom VERCESI

*(Translation of an article from the Osservatore Cattolico, a Milan newspaper).*

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**The Christian spirit at the Val. — The joy of homecoming. — A tribute of affection to the Good Father. — How the Pope is loved at the Val. — In the family. — Remembering the imprisoned priests. — Hours too swift.**

For a long time the Good Father had been lavishing cordial invitations on me to come and visit his little kingdom. I had always promised, but for one reason or another I had had to put off my journey. Last Saturday, 5 March, urgently called by my most courteous friend, I took a ticket for Reims, and from there for Val-des-Bois. I shall not describe the place, that would take me too far; I shall only

say that I chose my journey well: the Good Father had just come back from Rome, and his return was to be celebrated.

At seven o'clock in the morning, the mill bell called the men and women workers to the Communion Mass in the mill chapel. On one side all the men, on the other all the women. The chaplain gives a sermon on the Sunday Gospel, listened to with religious attention. Many Communions; the Good Father sets the example.

After the Communion Mass (that is what it is called at Val-des-Bois), I follow Harmel, who shows me the workshops and the steam engines and gives me every explanation I ask of him. We visit the boys' and girls' schools; the Brothers and the Sisters file past us; all greet us with a smile and shake the hand of the Good Father, who is radiant. At ten o'clock comes the High Mass. Val-des-Bois numbers 1,500 souls; I do not know whether people go to Mass as regularly as last Sunday; I seemed to see on every face an unusual joy, as though something new were about to happen.

The Mass is sung by the whole congregation, the men alternating with the women. The effect is very fine. I noticed something that would be very unusual among us. After the Gospel, two children carry on their shoulders a large basket filled with bread cut into small pieces; the priest blesses it, and, thus blessed, it is carried round among the faithful, who eat it without scruple. It is a symbol which, among us, has generally gone out of fashion.

Once Mass is over, the crowd of workers waits for the Good Father in front of the chapel. He arrives, he greets, embraces, smiles, encourages. At least no one will be able to say that this Christian democrat wants class struggle. Those who come to see him at the Val are left astonished. A cheerful brass band strikes up a hymn that sets the whole crowd in motion: boys, girls, men and women, of every condition and every age, make their way, to the sound of the Band, into a large hall where the Good Father is to be welcomed home. The Internal Council comes forward, and one member, in the name of his

colleagues, reads a most touching address. “The crowd of your children of the Val throngs this vast hall, which has become too small to hold it.”

Then follows a hymn to Christian democracy. The illness of Leo XIII is treated in it in a touching and wholly natural way.

The Good Father comes down from the platform and embraces each member of the Council in turn; he goes back to his place and, with charming simplicity, recounts his journey day by day, his hopes and his fears; when he speaks of Leo XIII, he does so with such feeling that the people interrupt him with their applause.

They also applaud Cardinal Rampolla and the director of the *Osservatore Cattolico*, to whom more than five hundred people give a moving and solemn ovation. This telegram is sent to him at once: “The Christian Corporation of Val-des-Bois, gathered to celebrate the return of the Good Father from Rome, sends the apostle of Christian democracy the assurance of all its solidarity and its most sincere esteem.” Léon Harmel, once the vigorous applause for Dom David Albertario has ended, speaks of his friends in Turin, Genoa, Rome and elsewhere, in terms full of kindness and love. I have before me the lithographed notes, notes sent day by day by Harmel to his sons, and in them I find a comparison between Murri, whom the Good Father calls *valiant*, and the abbé-deputy Lemire, and between Valenti, of the *Popolo Italiano*, and certain of the most fervent young men of French Christian democracy.

Once the detailed account of the journey is over, the Band leads us into the great hall of the Circle, where more than three hundred men gather. Dominating the hall, I notice the portrait of Leo XIII and the photographs of Pottier and of the leading democrats of various countries. Léon Harmel spends half an hour there in true intimacy with his workers, whom he calls his adopted children.

Then came the family meal, which brought together 42 guests: the toasts were opened by Harmel’s young grandsons, who early begin to

draw inspiration from the example of their grandfather. To give the readers of the *Osservatore* an idea of it, here is a toast read by little Robert, only 10 years old:

“I drink to the health of the Good Father. It seems to us that every time the beneficent hand of Leo XIII is raised over you, it is to pour youth, strength and hope into your veins.

“After having Christian democracy baptised by the successor of Peter, you present it to the world as the only hope of salvation and reform. In spite of the prudent who blame you and the recalcitrant who fight you, you bring to it, with superb self-denial, your energies and your intelligence, your whole being. Your indomitable faith carries it into the masses of the people, whom it brings to life and fills with enthusiasm. Olive branch in hand, Christian democracy advances upon the world, winning over and uniting all men of good will, preparing the triumph of the French fatherland. It is to this triumph that I drink, as I acclaim our beloved Good Father. Christ and Liberty.”

It is a custom of the family to have the children speak from the age of 8, and to put on their lips the expression of the feelings that must later make their hearts beat.

Mr Félix, little Robert’s father, drinks to the health of our prisoner (Dom Albertario), for whom he found moving words.

The Good Father went further and, taking the opportunity of the presence of a few priests at the banquet, sent a respectful greeting to the Lombard College in Rome, from which Albertario, Zocchi and Radini came, and which he likes to visit in order to draw fresh light and fresh energy from it.

What fine hours, and too swift, alas! At three o’clock I had to leave Val-des-Bois for Paris, arriving towards seven o’clock, where a group of young university men, amateur writers of the *Sillon*, were waiting for me for a friendly evening. You know, Good Father, how much it cost my heart to leave you; you were kind enough to wish to

accompany me in your landau to the station of a neighbouring village, where I was to take the train; you know with what joy I would have stayed with you until Monday, to have the chance of meeting the clergy of the neighbourhood, who were gathering to discuss social questions with you. But the telegrams from Paris were inexorable, and I had to leave. Even in Paris the names of Léon Harmel and Dom Albertario were linked. There, too, Leo XIII was applauded, and the future of the two Latin sisters, France and Italy.

Good Father, I thank you for the sweet emotions you gave me in your little kingdom; when I come again another time, I shall make no engagements elsewhere. I too shall be “one of your children”.

Paris, 14 March 1899.

Dom Vercesi.

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