

## To the Sisters of Lérida and Aytona

Barcelona, May 17, 1851

J.M.J.



My dear sisters<sup>1</sup>: This is to inform you that Sr. Juana, by God's ordinance, has been entrusted of the management of the house at Lérida and Sister M<sup>a</sup> Dolores<sup>2</sup> of that of Aytona.

It is not necessary to recommend obedience because I think that you are practicing it with all perfection. Obedience will conserve you in peace and union. A house could not be without somebody who would manage it and those who live in it must obey.

I wish so much I would be able to open the grill of the confessional to you so that I could listen to your sorrows and difficulties and to discuss with you the perfection of your soul; you can think that this is not a loss on my part; it would be my pleasure to travel even if I would be on foot; it is proper that I would certainly make this sacrifice because you have sacrificed in obedience. But all things at its proper time are good and outside of time are acrid, sour and unripe. Certain serious considerations withhold me. I do not know if I could make this trip before September without serious detriment of my occupations.

Commend me, dear daughters in J.C., commend me very much to God, so that he may direct my ways and bless my projects. I am not yet determined to engage in preaching. I entrust myself to God and ask him to give me light so that I will know his will. ***If I have come down from Carmel's holy mountain, it is not to rest in the world's rough and turbulent waves. This no. I am in the city, not to approve the iniquities and vanities of the world, but to attack it and to fight against it.***

With regards to writing me, you can do so with full liberty. I will read your letters with attention and receive them always with special satisfaction. You can write as long as you like, reading does not tire me. I will make good use of certain moments that I am free; I will read and in prayer I will know what you are telling me. If rumors spread among you that I do not keep your secret, and that everybody knows your letters, [I tell you that be tranquil, for I know my duty well in this matter and I have no remorse]<sup>3</sup> for having committed the fault of revealing the secret of a direction. This would be a grave sin. You may write to me with full liberty, as daughters of Jesus Christ to a father who looks after your perfection with care and solicitude. Sr. Dolores and Sr. Juana will write to me once a

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<sup>1</sup> Although they were not religious in the strict sense, they lived community life and were known as Sisters of the Cross (Les Germanes de la Creu). The Lerida group lived in Gairoles Street, nr 16; that of Aitona, on Fraginal Street.

<sup>2</sup> Dolores Llorens, 28 years old, was one of the new members that formed the Aytona group in 1852.

<sup>3</sup> In the autograph, because of the tearing of the manuscript it lacks lines that although Fr. Alejo could read, it was then translated without making some observations. As in the other places the [...] include texts that complete the original lacunae.

month, enclosing all the letters in one envelope. They would tell me in detailed circumstances everything that could serve me for your direction.

I will answer exactly once a month, and if you do not receive letter, it could be due to a delay or the letters may have gone astray and lost, in this case you write to me again. The other sisters, if they have the necessity, they could also write me. Within the same letter you could also write other recommendations if they are not very bulky. Sr. Juana will enclose all in one envelope. Even though I will not respond immediately to all that you have presented, do not be surprised because in many matters I need to consult God and meditate in his presence for what is proper. This is almost always the reason of my delay in responding.

I recommend to you manual work. Outside the time scheduled for spiritual exercises, work with all your strength because God commands it and wants it in this manner. Manual work is one of the rules that you have to observe inviolably. With it the doors will be closed to the devils for certain temptations that could not be mastered and conquered. Work, eat, sleep and pray; I do the same. You can always count on the solicitous vigilance and love of a father who loves you in Jesus Christ.

Francisco

PD Regarding all the rules that I [will give you, hang on to prudence] and discretion of the sister [who governs to dispense of] them in particular cases. I do not know if in my previous letter<sup>4</sup> I mentioned about the chapter. You should have it every evening after supper.

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#### FIRST CMT ALREADY IN 1851?



Not exactly. There were groups of women under spiritual direction of Francisco Palau, but without plans of forming religious congregation. They lived in community with the object of having more “tranquil” life, instructing each other and making their subsistence more economic. They wanted to live together as a family and practice certain acts of piety and devotion. They made no vows nor promises, they just made a choice about their style of life. Unfortunately, they fell victims of government policy prohibiting any new foundations (even though they were not religious congregation), and of not so good will of the people from France and Barcelona who aimed against Francisco Palau. They were accused of nothing less than prostitution, only because one of their apostolates was to work with women in danger and those already dedicated to prostitution, helping them to get out of it. In spite of expressed ecclesial and civil order to dissolve, they remained more or less organized, hidden, until such a time that the idea of a new foundation was ready.

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<sup>4</sup> Not known.

## THEME OF LETTER

Father Palau felt responsible for the fate and spiritual condition of all who were putting themselves under his direction. We can see in the letter how much he is encouraging to continuous and transparent communication, assuring his trustfulness and promising that he would always keep it secret. He was giving guidelines for the first group of directees at Lerida and Aytona, especially in all regarding the importance of obedience, community timetable, work and established exercises.



## IN REALITY...

During the time of pandemic we could realize how important it is to get everyone's collaboration. It's true we were asked to keep social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus, but still we needed that our frontliners would be in their place, that our authorities would do their part, and that all the people would obey the rules. We also learned of the importance of staying at home together with our family/community to save other's life. And I hope that this lesson will remain with us forever. We really need others. We need to take care of each other. Through simple gestures. Like, who would have known



that we were going to save lives by only staying at home? We can say lives in so many ways, by paying attention to the needs of those who are close to us, but obeying the simple rules of everyday life, simply saying "hello! How are you today?" If all of us will continue doing our job, our world will become a better place, and this will be really something new.