

SS. C. J. et M.

Saint Charles on the Missouri, September 12, 1818¹
Commended to St. Anthony of Padua

Very Reverend Mother,

Having walked around several ideas successively about Saint Louis, Sainte Genevieve, Florissant and Saint Charles, we saw that this last carried the day, putting us as far away from you as possible in America because of all the detours and halts necessary to get here. The bishop, who is very far seeing, considers this place very important; it is the best founded establishment on the Missouri, three miles from its confluence with the Mississippi (which has a less strong current at that point). American settlers from the East pour into this area every day. They are restless people but are sustained by the hope that Saint Charles will become a great link for commerce between the United States and China, for in the Upper Missouri region there is a river that flows into the Pacific at a place where crossing the ocean into Asia takes only two weeks.²

Meanwhile everything here is very scarce and costly; one cannot find workers for 10 francs a day; we are renting a house that is too small and too expensive.

The town wants to give the bishop for us a piece of land, 180 feet across by 300 feet deep; but two Presbyterians have refused their signature, and it is possible that will put a stop to the donation. The bishop will consult with them, and then we would build on the land nearer the center and nearer the church. The pastor will be our chaplain and will celebrate Mass twice on Sundays.³ If we are not given Saint Charles, we also have the possibility of a large property in Florissant; as for Saint Louis, I do not see staying there. The bishop has enough trouble there. He was most attentive to us on the trip to Saint Charles, accompanying our carriage on horseback, helping us in and out of the ferry on the river, escorting us to our house where we have had frequent visits. He leaves again today, and I do not know when we will see him again. He spoke to me about writing to you, but he has not yet had time to read our Constitutions; but he said to follow them and that we would have a good penance if we failed to do so without necessity.

There is no difficulty concerning the habit, but cloister is no stricter than at Cuignières or Sainte Pezenne. We have a very small chapel in a room. We hope to open the school for the poor the day after tomorrow. We are assured of only two or three boarders and no Indians; those from here are less well-disposed than the Canadians who are good Catholics; nevertheless, the harvest is being prepared. A company has been established in Saint Louis for trade with Indians along the banks of the Missouri; they are friendly with the whites and come down the river at times. We met a group of them who were going to make a treaty with the representatives of the States in Saint Louis. They followed us as far as the river, touched the sisters' hands and kept us in view until they reached the other side.

The bishop is now sending some priests who are coming from Rome to the missions of Missouri; the Holy Father is showing great interest in this country, which is no longer being called Upper Louisiana but the territory of Missouri and soon the *state*.⁴ Those who ferried us across the river and brought all our baggage by cart to the house would not take a *son*, saying that we represented our Lord Jesus Christ. Protestants, whose daughters the bishop does not want us to refuse, say that when someone is educated by us, she can never leave. The bishop encourages us by his example; he says we are the mustard seed, that great good works are being prepared. He is very happy with our sacristy and even happier with Eugenie and Octavie; seeing them laughing while they were getting our poor house ready, he said, "Look at these young people who could have

¹ Original autograph, C-VII 2) c Duchesne to Barat, Box 2. Postmark: Paris, June 1, 1819. Cf. J. de Charry, II 1, L. 103, pp. 152-156; Hogg, pp. 104-107; Ch. Paisant, pp. 195-197.

² Through the purchase of Louisiana from France, in 1803, the United States acquired all the territory drained by the Missouri. An expedition, ordered by President Jefferson and directed by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, then explored the sources of the Missouri and the way to the Pacific through the Columbia River, from May 1804 to September 1806, when they returned to Saint Louis. The town of Saint Charles, situated on the Missouri, was well located to participate in this project of creating a commercial route.

³ Because of the way enclosure was understood in the Society, the Religious of the Sacred Heart could not go to the parish. Therefore, the pastor came to celebrate Mass in their chapel on Sundays.

⁴ It would become a state in 1821.

shone elsewhere and who are so merry in their situation. Oh, it's splendid, splendid; as for us, we're just old sinners." Another time he added, "Their dispositions are all so good, and some are making great strides." He had been afraid that we would be wasting the priests' time, but in the end, he was the first to mention confession.

I wrote you from Saint Louis. It is really hard for me not to get any letters; it takes six months for them to reach here, three or four for mine to go to you. I asked for books in English; here the prospectus, the newspapers, all the accounts, all the addresses are in English. The bishop is sending us an American postulant; in the meantime, Octavie is doing English.⁵

All our effects were intact, except the corner of one package that was not wrapped with straw and so was damaged.

I am worried about your health and that of Mothers Bigeu, de Gramont [Eugenie], de Charbonnel. One has to be as far away as we are to realize what strong bonds of esteem, of gratitude and of love unite to the best of mothers; my regards to our good fathers.

We have real need of a gardener, because we have a huge garden, and the daily wage is 10 or 12 francs.

I am at your feet.

Philippine

My sisters are well; I still have a sore finger; my handwriting testifies to this.

[On the reverse:]
To Mother
Mother Barat, rue des Postes
n° 40, care of Mr. Roussel
Paris
France

⁵ Teaching the English classes.