


Letters of
Father Charles
of
Mount Argus





Letters of Father Charles
of Mount Argus
to his family

Edited by
Paul Francis Spencer, C.P.

Translated by
Sister Mary Gemma, F.I.C.

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FATHER CHARLES OF MOUNT ARGUS, C.P.
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INTRODUCTION

In his own lifetime, Father Charles of Mount Argus was revered as a saint and loved as a friend by many, especially by those whose lives were touched by suffering or pain. He was widely known as a holy priest who had often brought peace and forgiveness to the sinner, comfort to the broken-hearted, and health and strength to the sick. In our own time many people come daily to pray at his tomb at Mount Argus, bringing before God their own needs and the needs of those they love.

Father Charles was a man who cared about people. He was always ready to listen to those who were burdened by trouble or sorrow. He was not a great preacher or a theologian, but the very simplicity of his words was able to touch the hearts of his hearers. His sincerity was to be seen in everything he did. In one of his little sermons he had written: "From morning till night we perform so many actions; let us endeavour to do them for the love of God." Throughout his life Father Charles tried to grow daily in the love of God, and to bring that love to the people who came to him at Mount Argus.

There is another side to Father Charles which is less well known. Born in Limburg (Holland) in 1821, he left home when he was twenty-four to become a Passionist. Although he never returned to his birthplace at Munstergeleen, he remained close to his family throughout nearly fifty years of separation. While Charles was a student in Belgium, his brother wrote to him: "Time destroys monuments, but your memory will never be erased from our hearts."

This selection from the letters written by Father Charles to members of his family gives us a glimpse at some of his inner thoughts, and even at times his sorrows and fears. It gives us an awareness of his love for his family, a love which only increased as his years in England and Ireland went on. His prayer for them is perhaps best expressed in these words he wrote to his brother:

“May the Lord keep you safe from every evil of soul and body, and, when this life is over, may he lead you to that blessed place where the years do not end and happiness and peace are eternal. These are my wishes for you.” (L. 13, p.26).

I wish to thank Sister Mary Gemma, of the Franciscans of the Immaculate Conception (Glasgow), for her work on the translation of these letters; also Hugh McGuire, who typed the manuscript.

Father Paul Francis, C.P.,
St. Mungo's Retreat, Glasgow.
5th January, 1985.

My dear Brother,

All of you will be wanting to know how I am keeping, how I am finding England and how my journey went. My journey from Belgium to England went very well. A Belgian priest accompanied me as far as Dover² and after this I travelled alone, for the most part by train. At times I travelled along under the ground and so I found myself in complete darkness. Everything went quite well during the sailing; I did, in fact, feel a little uncomfortable, but the fact that it was raining and was quite windy has to be taken into account, and soon after the crossing I recovered completely. We have a monastery near London and I stayed there for two days.³ From there I left for Aston Hall, staying five days in that house⁴ I then headed for St. Wilfrid's with our Rev. Father Provincial,⁵ and it is in this beautiful monastery that I am to stay.⁶ I have already grown used to the English climate and am beginning to speak a little English; but pray also for the poor Protestants of England that one day they will be converted to the true faith. I pray often for you all.

If you want to write to me, you will have to address the letter as follows:

Reverend Father Charles,
St. Wilfrid's n. Cheadle,
Staffordshire,
England.

Give my regards to all my other brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, the parish priest Pompers, Father Duzzings the curate, etc.

from your ever-loving brother,
Father Charles of St. Andrew, Passionist.

LETTER 1—NOTES

1. *Positio super virtutibus*, Summarium, p. 323, L.I. (Rome, 1955). This letter was probably written to his brother Peter Joseph, who was at this time studying for the diocesan priesthood at Roermond.
2. His companion was Father Turrenius c.p. They left Holy Cross Retreat, Ere, on 16th February 1852, arriving at Dover on the 17th;

3. This was the house known as the Hyde in Cool Oak Lane (or Wood Lane), Kilburn, where the Passionists lived before moving to Highgate.
4. St. Michael's Retreat, Aston Hall, Stone, Staffordshire: this was the first Passionist house in England, founded by Blessed Dominic Barberi on 2nd February, 1842.
5. Father Eugene (Martorelli) c.p.
6. St. Wilfrid's, known today as Cotton College, was previously the home of Father Faber and his "Company of the Will of God." The monastery church was described by its architect, Pugin, as "the only perfect church in England, with an east window he could die for."

LETTER 2—To all his family.¹

Aston Hall.
16th September. 1853.

My dear brothers and sisters, aunt and uncle,

From your last letter, dated 8th May 1853, I learnt that you are all in good health and that everything is going well, thank: be to God. I am still very well and am happy here in England. Everything is fine; I am in this country of my own free will. Although we may never see each other again in this world, we must never lose hope of meeting once more in Heaven,² if we have lived good lives. It is for this that I pray during Holy Mass, which I celebrate every day.

My dear brothers and sisters, aunt and uncle, let us pray often; from the bottom of my heart I beg you to pray frequently for my dear brother Peter Joseph, that God, in his loving mercy, may fill him with every grace so that he may become a holy priest after God's own heart, a priest full of zeal for his glory.

And you my dear brother, Peter Joseph, prepare yourself for this great sacrament of the holy priesthood by long and frequent prayer, since the more you prepare yourself, the greater will be the graces you receive from God.

At present I am no longer at St. Wilfrid's. I have been sent by our provincial to the Aston Hall Monastery.³ Formerly there was a chapel in this house; we, the Passionists, have had a new church built, having been given the money by benefactors.

We are two miles away from the town of Stone. There is also a new Catholic church being built there.

Pray for the Protestants of England and Holland, that God may grant them the grace of a sincere conversion. Our blessed founder, Father Paul of the Cross, prayed for fifty years for the conversion of England.⁴ The life of our founder has been translated from Italian into English⁵ and in time there will also be a Dutch translation. It is a wonderful life to read. I ask you to invoke our blessed founder; pray to him with faith and you will obtain many graces through his intercession.⁶

I have been here at Aston Hall for some time now. There are seven of us here: three Italian priests and myself, a lay

brother from the province of Limburg near Venlo, a lay brother from Bois-le-Duc, and another from Ireland.

If you wish to write, here is my address:

Reverend Father Charles,
St. Michael's Retreat,
Aston Hall, near Stone,
Staffordshire,
England.

Give my best wishes to the family, and also to the parish priest and Father Duzzings, etc.

from your ever-loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew.

LETTER 2—NOTES

1. Summ. p.324, L.2.
2. Although not yet two years in England, Charles realises that he will probably never see his family again. His hope of "meeting once more in heaven" never leaves him and will be expressed more intensely towards the end of his life.
3. According to the administration book of St. Wilfrid's Retreat, Charles went from St. Wilfrid's to Aston Hall on 5th February, 1853.
4. As a son of St. Paul of the Cross, Charles is often moved to pray "for England and the neighbouring kingdoms." During his stay at Aston Hall, on 3rd May 1854, the community were visited by John Henry Newman. Newman had come over from Dublin to preach at the opening of the new church in Stone, where, according to the chronicles of St. Michael's Retreat, "he alluded to the labours and zeal of the lamented Father Dominic (Barberi) of the Mother of God, who was sent from Rome to continue or rather reassume the work once so happily accomplished by St. Augustine and his associates in the conversion of England." Newman did not forget his personal debt to Blessed Dominic, who had received him into the Catholic church; the chronicler adds: "Doctor Newman came on the same day with great inconvenience to visit the tomb of Father Dominic, where he prayed for a little while."
5. The life of Blessed Paul of the Cross (3 vols) published by Father Faber of the London Oratory in 1853 was a translation of the biography written by Father (now Saint) Vincent Mary Strambi c.p. The preface to the English edition was written by Blessed Dominic (Barberi) c.p.
6. St. Paul of the Cross was beatified on 28th April, 1853.

LETTER 3—To his uncle.¹

Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin.
1st April, 1858.

Dear Uncle,

From your letter of 16th March I see that you and my brothers and sisters are all keeping well.

I too am enjoying good health, thanks be to God. I received your letter here in Ireland on 22nd March; I came to Dublin, the capital of Ireland on 9th July, 1857.

The people here speak English. Our congregation has only one house in Ireland;² here we have five Passionist priests and five lay-brothers. In spite of the large number of Catholics in Ireland, there are very few priests and I have to say two Masses every Sunday. We have to hear confessions from morning till night nearly every day. If we had twelve priests here, they would all be kept busy preaching and hearing confessions. Much good can be done here in the Lord's vineyard. As you know, Ireland is a Catholic country, its population being about eight million.³ For more than three hundred years the Irish have been cruelly persecuted but have remained loyal to the Catholic faith in spite of everything.

During my crossing from England to Ireland I felt fine.

With regard to the division of my father's property, I now renounce any claim to it;⁴ I want the interest and produce from my share of the inheritance to be given to my brothers and sisters. It would not be contrary to my wishes if one or two of my brothers cultivated my part, leaving the interest to the other brothers and sisters. You may do this if you wish, and if it seems useful to you. All the property my brothers and sisters acquired after my father's death belongs to themselves alone, but this is not the case with anything they acquired before his death. However, I suppose they did not acquire anything before he died.

I wish my brothers John Peter and John Matthew prosperity and happiness in married life;⁵ and I wish you all a happy Easter. Every day I pray for you all during Holy Mass:

being so far away from my own home, I can only hope that we will all meet again in heaven; if I were with you just now, my heart would be very troubled.

Give my best wishes to my brother the priest,⁶ my other brothers and sisters, the parish priest and curate, and all the family.

My address is as follows:

Rev. Fr. Charles,
Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin,
Ireland.

LETTER 3—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 329, L. 7.
2. St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus was founded on 15th August, 1856, by Father Paul Mary (Pakenham) c.p., a convert to Catholicism and nephew of the Duke of Wellington. Father Paul Mary died on 1st March, 1857.
3. By 1858 the population of Ireland had been greatly reduced by the famine and by emigration. Charles probably got this information from some out-of-date reference book.
4. Peter Joseph Houben, Charles' father, had died on 7th August, 1850, and had left his property to his sons and daughters. As a Passionist religious, Charles makes no claim to use or usufruct with regard to his share of the inheritance; by his vow of poverty he has already made the renunciation, which he now explains to his family.
5. John Peter Houben married Mary Catherine Lebens on 6th January 1858. This was his second marriage; his first wife, Anne Catherine Donners, had died on 2nd July 1848. John Matthew Houben married Mary Mechtilde Meertens early in 1858 (exact date unknown).
6. Father Peter Joseph Houben had been ordained on 10th June, 1854.

LETTER 4—To his uncle.¹

J. X. P.

Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin.
10th February, 1859.

Dear Uncle,

From your letter I have learnt of the sudden death of my beloved brother, John Peter, who was so good, kind and loving to our family.² His death must have caused you all great sorrow. Yet I am happy to hear from you that he led a most exemplary life, and that the parish priest and the curate agree with you on this. Let us thus console each other and let us realise that it is the will of God, and that he died as one predestined, having been strengthened by the last sacraments.³ I announced my brother's death in our church here in Dublin and asked the people to pray for him. I told them he was a brother of mine, so the Irish people prayed for the repose of his soul, as did my religious community. I said a Mass for his soul and will say many more for him; I will also pray for him every day while offering Holy Mass. I am glad to hear that my other brothers and sisters are well. Give them my wholehearted good wishes. Best wishes also to my reverend brother, the curate; also to the parish priest and curate of Munstergeleen, and all my family and friends. Thanks be to God, I am in good health and am happy here in Ireland.

Your loving nephew,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 4—NOTES

1. Summ., p. 330, L. 9.
2. John Peter died on 24th January, 1859.
3. For Charles, death is to be understood as part of God's loving plan; he is strengthened in his sorrow by the realisation that death, although unexpected, did not meet his brother unprepared.

LETTER 5—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.¹

Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin.
20th November, 1862.

My dear Reverend Brother,

I was delighted to hear that you and our brothers and sisters are keeping well; also our uncle, the mayor,² and our niece.³ I too am very well, thank God. It seems to me that our niece is a very devout and humble girl and I hope that she remembers to pray for me from time to time (child of Mary, would you be willing to say a little prayer for me?) I want to pray for you that you may come to a complete understanding of your state in life. I have now been away from you for 17 years; this time has passed so quickly that to me it seems but a moment. I am very far away from you all, but what does it matter how far we are from each other in this life, so long as we are united for all eternity with Jesus and Mary. I think of you, my brother, every day during Mass: I think, and think again of you, my good Peter Joseph; also dear Mary Sibyl, Mary Christine, John Matthew, Godfrey, Anne Mary and Mary Helen, my dearest uncle, the mayor, and my good niece Mary Philomena. Remember me sometimes in your prayers. I wish my brother John Matthew and my sister Anne Mary⁴ much happiness in married life; my best wishes to their families. I pray for them, that if God grants them children, they will bring them up to know his peace, have them pray every morning and every night, and teach them to recite the rosary in the evening, and that the welfare of their souls will be the most important thing in life for them.⁵ We should be thankful to God for having given us such good parents, and for our aunts, uncles, etc.

I now find it quite difficult to write and speak in my own native tongue. Here in Dublin we have built a huge monastery which cost about eight thousand pounds. The Irish gave us this money; they are very generous when it comes to their Catholic faith. However, here in the city of Dublin and in the surrounding districts there are also thousands of people who neither go to confession nor make their Easter communion.

With all my heart I implore you to pray for them, to offer your evening rosary for the conversion of so many great sinners; go to Mass and offer your communions for this intention. I shudder when I think of how often our Lord is offended in this large city, crucified by serious sins. Ah, pray that these sinners may turn back to God. In Dublin and the surrounding districts there are about 300 thousand Catholics and 50 thousand Protestants. In our monastery there is a religious, John Joseph Renon from Hoensbroek, who was in London for twelve years; we have a monastery there, too.

I am wondering if my dear godfather John Andrew Luiben is dead, or still alive; also Anthoney Dols, Godfrey Dols, Arnold Dols, Michael, Mary Josephine and William Keulers, and Helen Homers, who married Mr. Peter Kaleem; also Frederick and Andrea Sohurgens, Mr. William Bennelmans, Mr. Hassmahers, Arnold Eermens, Andrea Hancers, Javis and Joubke Achurgens, Peter Hancers, Matthias Freuske, Geltrude Hancers, Domocers in the High Street and his family, William Peters (my late brother John Peter's friend), Leonard and Gerard Doners the tailors, Mr. Caloen, who used to be director of the college at Sittard, Mr. Schryen from Brooksittard, my relatives in Sittard and Ambricht, etc. Are they all still alive? What about master Pierre?

I must finish now. I give my priestly blessing to everyone; let us try to please God in all that we do and suffer, and let us think often of the Passion of Christ and the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

My best wishes to my dear uncle J. N. Luyten, the mayor, and to all my family and friends.

Your affectionate brother,
Fr. Charles Houben,
Passionist.

LETTER 5—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 333, L.13.
2. Mayor Luyten of Munstergeleen was Charles' mother's brother.
3. Mary Philomena Houben, John Peter's daughter, who was fifteen years of age.
4. Anne Mary had married John Peter Lenssen on 14th January, 1862.
5. In putting these values before his brothers and sisters, Charles is reminding them of the upbringing they received from their own "good parents."

LETTER 6—To his uncle.¹

J. X. P.

Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin.
21st December, 1863.

Dear uncle,

During the summer Father Isidore² spent a few days here in Dublin. I gave him a letter for you. I hope that my brother, the curate, is keeping better. How is he now? Has he recovered from his illness? I hope this letter finds you, my brothers and sisters, and my niece in good health. I am well. I ask you all to pray for me and to pray also for the conversion of sinners, since on account of their many sins the world is continually moving further and further away from God. I pray for you every day and I send you my priestly blessing with all my heart. I wish you all a happy Christmas and a holy New Year, filled with every blessing.

Regards to family, to all my friends and to the parish priest and curate.

Your loving nephew,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 6—NOTES

1. Summ. P. 335, L. 15.
2. Father Isidore (Brems), who had been ordained with Charles and Father Michael (Emons) at Tournai on 21st December, 1850; Charles is writing this letter on the thirteenth anniversary of his ordination. In the letter he gave to Isidore on 30th August, Charles had written: "Father Isidore was here in our monastery for a few days; this morning he left for England and from there he will return soon to Holland."

LETTER 7—To his niece, Philomena.¹

Blessed Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Dublin.
15th August, 1865.

My dearest niece,

I am delighted to hear that you want to become a nun. I believe that you are in fact being called to this way of life; do not neglect this matter—it is better not to wait too long. You need to pray, therefore, fervently and without ceasing. Every good and perfect gift comes from God the Most High, the Father of all light. Therefore, live in the fear of the Lord and flee from anything that would give the slightest offence to God; he is the Most Holy One, and he sees everything.

I hope that my dear uncle, J. N. Luyten, my brother the curate, and my other brothers and sisters are all well. I greet you all on this feast of the Virgin Mary. Let us invoke the powerful mother of God during our short lives, so that she will help us at the hour of our death.

Pray too for the conversion of so many sinners.

Give my regards to my family and friends.

Your loving uncle,
Fr. Charles,
Passionist.

LETTER 7—NOTES

1. Summ. P. 336, L. 16.

LETTER 8—To his uncle.¹

J. X. P.

St. Saviour's Retreat,²
Broadway,
Worcestershire,
England.
22nd March, 1867.

Dear uncle,

I am happy to let you know that I am still in good health and that, by God's grace, everything is going well. Your last letter, written on 22nd January, 1867, arrived here on the 24th, and I offered Mass on the 25th for my dear sister, Mary Christine. I have remembered her during my Masses, and the community have prayed for her. I hope she is keeping better now. I am glad to hear that you are well, uncle, and that my brothers and sisters and our niece Philomena are all enjoying good health. I hope God grants Philomena the grace to persevere in the Redemptoristine monastery. Now a few words for my sister Mary Christine: I hope she will bear her illness with resignation, because this is God's will, and with devotion, since this will be to her advantage. She must not lose heart in her sufferings and should think of the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Paul says: "The Lord chastises those whom he loves." May my sister grow used to saying these words: "Blessed be God! Thy will be done! I adore your holy will! My God, I thank you for this illness, for crosses, etc."³

God tried Saint Lylwina with sickness for thirty years; her patience made her a great saint.

My dear uncle, I am indebted to you not just financially but in so many other ways too; I hope you will forgive me if I have failed to pay you back.⁴ My kindest regards to you, uncle, and to all my brothers and sisters, and my niece Philomena.

I remember you all in my prayers; please pray for me.

My best wishes to the rest of the family, to Father Gobbels and the curate, and to our other friends and acquaintances. My superiors send you their good wishes.

Your loving nephew,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 8—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 336, L. 17.
2. Charles arrived in Broadway from Mount Argus on 4th July, 1866.
3. The words Charles writes to his sister remind us of the teaching of St. Paul of the Cross who, in a letter to his brothers and sisters, taught them this prayer of abandonment to God's will: "Your holy will be done! Welcome be our troubles! Sweet suffering, I embrace you. I press you to my heart! May you be the delights that my Lord sends me! How beautiful to suffer! Dear hand of God, I kiss you! Blessed be the scourge which so gently strikes me! Dear Father, you humble me for my own good. Dear God, your scourges are the joy of my heart; yes, yes, dear Jesus, to suffer or die!" (St. Paul of the Cross, *Words from the Heart*, Dublin, 1976 p. 53).
4. He had lived with his uncle, mayor Luyten, during his last years at school.

LETTER 9—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.¹

J. X. P.

St. Anne's Retreat,²
Sutton, near St. Helen's,
Lancashire,
England.
20th August, 1869.

My dear reverend brother,

I am very well, thanks be to God. I hope that you and my dear sister Helen are both well. About three months ago I posted a short letter to you; I hope you received it. I must let you know a few things about our Passionist congregation, which has grown considerably. We now have a monastery in Belfast in the north of Ireland,³ one in Scotland (in the city of Glasgow),⁴ and four in America.⁵

Our uncle, the mayor, wrote to me on 13th April. I was delighted to hear that he and all our dear brothers and sisters are keeping well.

I am pleased to know that our dear niece is happy and content in the enclosed monastery at Wittem. I hope our sister Christine is feeling a bit better. I hope this letter finds you in good health. I send my heartfelt good wishes to you and to my dear sister Helen. Remember me in your prayers and good works. I pray also for both of you and I remember you every day during the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I ask the same favour of you.

Regards to my relatives and friend.

God be with you, dear brother; I leave you in the hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your unworthy brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

P.S. My superiors send their best wishes.

LETTER 9—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 338, L. 19.
2. Charles was transferred to St. Anne's Retreat on 27th November, 1867, from St. Saviour's Retreat, Broadway, Worcestershire. He had been moved to Broadway from Mount Argus on 4th July, 1866.
3. Holy Cross Retreat, Ardoyne was opened in 1868.
4. St. Mungo's Retreat, Glasgow was founded in 1865.
5. The American foundations were Pittsburgh (1852), Dunkirk, N.Y. (1860), West Hoboken, N.J. (1861) and Baltimore, Maryland (1865).

LETTER 10—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.

St. Anne's Retreat,
Sutton,
St. Helen's,
Lancashire,
England.
2nd May, 1871.

My dear brother,

I was deeply saddened by the news of my dear sister Christine's death.² I celebrated Holy Mass for her this morning. I am glad to know that she led a good life, one that was truly exemplary.

We are very grateful for the twenty-five florins which you sent on for five Masses, which were said immediately.

We had to pay thirty cents for your letter, because you put the wrong stamps on it and the Post Office did not frank them; in England an unfranked letter costs double the normal postage. I am sending the stamps back to you since they can be used again.

I wish my sister Helen and Constantine Hancers every blessing.³

Please forgive me for writing in a hurry.⁴

I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 10—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 340, L. 21.
2. Mary Christine Houben died on 26th April, 1871, aged 51.
3. His sister Mary Helen married Arnold Constantine Hamers (not Hancers) on 24th April, 1871.
4. Charles describes himself as "writing in a hurry." His pastoral duties at this time were very demanding. The rector at Sutton at that time, Father Salvian c.p., gives the following description of how Charles spent his time: "Night and day, he was called to the sick: he administered the Holy Sacraments, remained until a late hour in the confessional, catechised, preached: in a word, the burden of the work fell upon the shoulders of Father Charles."

LETTER 11—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.¹

J. X. P.

St. Anne's Retreat,
Sutton—St. Helen's,
Lancashire,
England.
24th May, 1871.

My dear reverend brother,

I was pleased to receive your letter this morning with 200 francs and a Dutch twenty-five florin banknote enclosed. I have said five Masses for Christine, and Masses have also been said by the other priests of the community. Regarding the other Masses, we will gladly do as you have asked; these will be offered as soon as possible. The Sisters of the Holy Family² assisted at Mass for the repose of Christine's soul, and all of us, with our friends and other religious, have prayed for her. If you wish, you can send other offerings for Masses to be celebrated here. If in future any of our relatives falls ill, please write to me immediately or send a telegram so that Mass can be said and prayers be offered for a happy death.

My best wishes to you, dear brother, and to my other brothers and sisters and my dear uncle, the mayor. Remember me in your prayers. I pray for you all, and think of you each day during Holy Mass. Give my regards to the parish priest Father Gobbels, to the curate, and our other friends. My superiors send their best wishes.

When you write again please give me some news about my brother Matthew and his family, my sister Mary Anne, and my sister Mary Helen and her family. Ask them if they are being faithful to their morning and night prayers, to daily Mass, if possible, and to the rosary in the evening. Are my brothers John Godfrey and Peter Arnold, the child of God, and my sister Mary Sibyl still faithful to their prayers?

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless you all and keep you safe. Amen. God bless you, dearest brother.

In the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Your loving brother,

Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

I received the lovely memorial card.

LETTER 11—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 340, L. 22.
2. The Cross and Passion Sisters, founded by Mother Mary Joseph Prout, were known as the Sisters of the Holy Family from their foundation in 1851 until 1875.

LETTER 12—To his uncle.¹

St. Anne's Retreat,
Sutton—St. Helen's,
Lancashire.
13th August, 1872.

Dear uncle,

I have received your last two letters, dated 31st July and 4th August. I was saddened to learn of my brother-in-law's death.² Let us submit ourselves entirely to the divine will. I am happy to hear that he always lived as a good Christian, staying at home with his family, teaching his children and living a holy life. I said Mass for the repose of his soul on the 4th and 7th of this month. The other religious prayed with me for him and also for his little girl who is sick. I have also said Mass for her. I have received the beautiful memorial card. My deepest sympathy to my dear sister Anne Mary. Greet all the others for me. My superiors send you their regards.

Everything is going fine here. I hope you are well. May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all. God bless you, uncle.

In the hearts of Jesus and Mary,
your obedient and loving nephew,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.
P.S. Best wishes for the feast of the Assumption.

LETTER 12—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 343, L. 25 bis.
2. Anne Mary's husband, John Peter Lenssen, who died on 1st August, 1872.

LETTER 13—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.¹

J. X. P.

St. Joseph's Retreat,
Highgate,
London W.
15th January, 1873.

My dearest reverend brother,

I was delighted to see from your letter of 4th January that you, and our brothers and sisters and uncle, are all well. Thank God, I am keeping well too. I wish you all a happy and holy New Year, one full of happiness and peace: may the skies open up and shower down on you an abundance of graces; may the Lord keep you safe from every evil of soul and body, and, when this life is over, may he lead you to that blessed place where the years do not end and happiness and peace are eternal. These are my wishes for you.

The Provincial has moved me from St. Anne's Retréat, Sutton, Lancashire to St. Joseph's Retreat, Highgate, London,² as you will have seen from the address above. We first took possession of this house in 1858 and built a beautiful church here in 1862; almost six hundred Protestants have been received into the true faith in it. I am delighted to hear that you are saying three Hail Marys every day for the conversion of England.³ I have also prayed for Father Peter Salimans, parish priest of Geleen. Since persecutions against our Church are becoming more and more cruel and violent, let us all pray fervently that God will soon bring peace to the world, that peace which is the desire of all Christians.

My best wishes to our brothers and sisters, to our uncle the mayor, and to yourself, my dearest brother. I ask you all to remember me in your prayers: please pray for me; I pray for each one of you and think of you every day during the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Regards to all the rest of the family, Father Gobbels and the curate, and any other friends. I wish them all a happy and holy New Year, filled with joy and blessings. My superiors send you their good wishes and wish you a happy New Year. I hope you are keeping well.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all.

God bless you, dearest brother.

In the hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Your loving brother,

Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,

Passionist.

LETTER 13—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 345, L. 28.
2. Charles arrived in S'. Joseph's Retreat, Highgate on 25th September, 1872.
3. The practice of saying three Hail Marys every day for the conversion of England originated with Father Ignatius (Spencer) c.p. A former Anglican clergyman Father Ignatius travelled throughout Britain and Ireland asking for prayers for Christian unity and for the conversion of England. He also made several journeys across Europe for the same purpose; during one of these journeys (in August, 1849) Father Ignatius had visited Munstergeleen and met Father Charles' family.

LETTER 14, to his brother, Peter Joseph Houben.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's College,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.
26th January, 1874.

Dear reverend brother,

I have taken so long to answer your letter of the 6th that you must have thought I was ill or even dead. I hope you will forgive me. On the 9th of this month the provincial sent me to Dublin, Ireland, to the same house I was in before.²

I arrived here on the 10th. The sea was calm and the weather fine, so I had a smooth crossing and was only a little seasick, thank God. I was ill for about twelve days or so here in St. Paul's College, but it was nothing serious and did not prevent me from saying Mass. Thanks be to God, I have now recovered completely and am feeling quite well.

I wish you, dear brother, a happy and holy New Year; also our brothers and sisters, and our uncle, the retired mayor: may this year bring them many graces and blessings. I am glad to hear that you are all enjoying good health. I was delighted to hear that my brother Matthew's two oldest daughters have made their first communion, and also my sister Anne Mary's oldest son. He has had more time to prepare himself for holy communion. I don't forget to pray for all of Matthew's children, and for Mary Anne and Mary Helen's children too; I pray too for those priests who have died.

Almost all our houses in Rome and in Italy have been suppressed. Let us pray fervently to God, that he will free his holy Church from these persecutions.

I send sincere good wishes to you, dear brother, to my other brothers and sisters, and to my uncle. I commend myself to your prayers: please pray for me. I pray often for you, and every day I remember you all during holy Mass. Best

wishes to all the family, to Father Gobbels and the curate, and all our friends. My superiors send their regards. I hope you are well.

God bless you, dear brother.

I remain in the sweet Hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 14—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 347, L. 30.
2. The Chronicler of Mount Argus, Father Salvian (Nardocci) c.p., wrote: "January 10th Saturday. This morning Father Charles (Houben) arrived here from Highgate, having been appointed to this community. Father Charles is well-known in this city of Dublin as well as throughout Ireland for the many miraculous cures which people say they have received from his blessing them with the relics of St. Paul of the Cross, and by using holy water, blessed with the same relic. Father Charles was one of the first Fathers who came to Dublin after its foundation; and left in 1867, when he was removed because of his having become too remarkable for his extraordinary cures. People came from every part of Ireland and crowds of them were continually about the place, and the poor man had not a moment to himself."

LETTER 15—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin.
29th December, 1875.

My dear reverend brother,

Thank you very much for your letter which I received a few days ago. I also received the twenty-five florin note; we will be glad to offer three Masses for the intentions given in your letter.

I am deeply grateful to you, dear brother, for your kind wishes on the 25th anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood;² also to our brothers and sisters, our uncle the old mayor, our nephews and nieces and all the family for their good wishes.

My sincere thanks for the Mass you said for me, and my thanks to everyone for making the Novena in honour of St. Paul of the Cross.³ I also received the lovely holy picture and the letter from your friend, who has suffered so much. Over the next few days I will say a little prayer that he may be healed, if it is God's will.

I am delighted that you are all keeping well. Thanks be to God, I too am enjoying good health. During these holy days of Christmas, my thoughts were constantly on the priestly state; I thought, too, of the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the ardent wishes and desires with which the saints of the old law awaited the coming of the Messiah, since God in his mercy had promised to send a redeemer to man, fallen and condemned to hell. These saints of the old testament prayed without ceasing to hasten his coming. Had they the happiness of seeing him, what would they not have done to please our Saviour? How fervent they would have been in showing their love for him, how zealous in showing gratitude for all the graces and blessings he had come to bring them. The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ in the stable at Bethlehem is a mystery, it is a miracle so great, abounding so much in humility and love, that it will be wondered at by the angels

and saints in heaven for all eternity. What can I, a mere man, give the Divine Redeemer in return for such great and innumerable blessings—so great that they cannot be explained—which, for so many years, I have received from his mercy? When I consider this, I feel urged to thank God with greater fervour, to please him more, and to do and suffer everything willingly for his love and for his greater glory. I said a free Mass for all the family on Christmas morning; I will be offering some free Masses for yourself, and one for our uncle, the old mayor; I do not have to receive a stipend for any of these Masses.

I wish you all a happy Christmas and a holy New Year, one filled with happiness and peace.

Our superiors send you their best wishes. The community know of you and they remember you all in their prayers. I hope this letter finds you in good health. Greetings to you, dear brother, to my other brothers and sisters, my uncle the former mayor, my aunt Elizabeth Luyten, my dear nephews, and all the family.

Remember me in your prayers. I pray for each of you every day and remember you at Mass. Give my regards to Father Gobbels and the curate, and to our other friends.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all. Amen.

God be with you, dearest brother.
In the hearts of Jesus and Mary, I am and remain
Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

P.S. Take this little memento, and pray for me.

LETTER 15—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 352, L. 34.
2. Charles was ordained on 21st December, 1850.
3. St. Paul of the Cross had been canonized in 1867.

LETTER 16—To his brother, Father Peter Joseph Houben.

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.
4th July, 1878.

My dear reverend brother,

I was sorry to hear that you have been ill. I offered Mass for you on 27th June and have been remembering you in my Masses and prayers; I have also asked the community to pray for you. I hope you will recover soon. I was very pleased to hear that you have been totally resigned to God's will. Oh, holy will of God! May his will be always obeyed, honoured and blessed by men! Oh holy will, oh blessed will! Our happiness in this life and in the life to come lies in carrying out God's will; as Jesus said, "Here I am, Father; I come to do your will."

I send you my sincere good wishes. Please give my regards to our dear brothers and sisters, our uncle, and all the others as usual. Best wishes from my superiors.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all.

In the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 16—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 358, L. 40.

LETTER 17—To his nephew.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin, Ireland.
21st January, 1882.

My dear nephew,

Thank you for your lovely letter which I received. I am delighted to hear that you and all the family are well. Thank God, I too am very well. Thank you for your kind wishes for a happy and holy New Year. Let us ask the Infant Jesus to give us the virtue of patience and of complete submission to the will of God in all that we do and in all the suffering we have to bear, especially in our last illness and at the hour of our death. Let us ask him not only for the strength to be able to resist temptation and persevere in his divine love, but also for the grace of being able to pray always, since through prayer we acquire divine love and perfection, perseverance and eternal happiness. May our divine saviour share the eternal glory of heaven with us. Amen.

I was delighted to hear that my dear uncle, the old mayor, is still enjoying good health. Give him my kindest regards. May God fill the rest of his days with every grace and blessing. May Jesus and Mary live in his mind, his memory, his will, and, above all, in his heart. Amen. Give everyone my best wishes, especially my dearest brother the parish priest of Amstenvade. I wish to thank everyone for all the prayers they have offered for me. I do not forget to pray for you all; I make a special *memento* for you before the altar at Mass each day.

My superiors send their best wishes. I hope this letter finds you all well.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all.

I remain in the loving hearts of Jesus and Mary,
Your affectionate uncle,
Fr. Charles of St Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 17—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 369, L. 53.

LETTER 18—To his uncle.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.
24th August, 1883.

My dear uncle,

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of my dearest brother Peter Joseph Houben, parish priest of Amstenvade. We must frequently call to mind that it is the holy will of God. From the beautiful letters he wrote to me I can say with certainty that he was a good and holy priest, and so we must hope that he has already tasted the joys of heaven; I have offered some free Masses for him; there is no need to send any stipend. We have prayed for him here in the monastery, and many other people have offered prayers for his eternal happiness.

I am glad to know that you, uncle, and my other brothers and sisters, nephews, and aunt Elizabeth are keeping well. Give them my best wishes. Pray at all times, desiring that God's will be accomplished completely in your regard. From the *Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis, we learn to ask our good, merciful God for these graces: the graces of prayer and perseverance; prayer and a happy death. As Saint Augustine says, be sure that the divine mercy will never abandon you provided that you persevere in prayer.

I hope this letter finds you all in good health. Our superiors send their good wishes. Give my regards to Father Gobbels and the curate, and all our relatives and friends. I pray for all of you; you must pray for me too. May the almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect you all, and may his blessing be always upon you, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. My good wishes to all.

I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your loving nephew,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 18—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 373, L. 57.
2. Father Peter Joseph died on 18th August, 1883. Charles had written to him on 30th May: "My dear brother, I was upset to hear that you have been so ill; let us always keep in mind the words of St. Paul: "The Lord chastises those whom he loves and punishes those whom he counts among his chosen ones."

LETTER 19—To his brothers and sisters.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.
13th August, 1886.

My dear brothers and sisters,

Thank you very much for your lovely letter. I received it on 13th July, with ten florins enclosed. I have said six Masses for your intentions.

I am very well and everything is fine; I hope this letter finds you all in good health. I have been praying for our niece, Maria Regina Luyten.

My duties in the monastery are as follows: I say Mass every day; I preach and hear confessions; I say prayers and bless the people who come to the church.²

In one of his letters to me, our dear brother, Father Peter Joseph, parish priest of Amstenvade, wrote the following beautiful words: "Abide and remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary." I recommend this to you all, dear brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces.

Yes, let us abide and remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary, and let us ask the Blessed Virgin every day to obtain for us, through her powerful intercession, a real spirit of prayer and the gift of perseverance in prayer to the end of our days; may she obtain for us a happy death. Amen.

I enclose a blessed scapular for our niece, Anne Mary's daughter, who is suffering from a nervous complaint.

My best wishes to you all. I commend myself to your prayers. I pray for you all every day, and I think of you during the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

Give my regards to the rest of the family, to the parish priest Father Gobbels and the curate, and to our other friends and acquaintances. My superiors send you their good wishes.

Our separation will not last long. We will meet again in heaven; that is what we must hope for. Amen.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you. Amen.

I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 19—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 379, L. 65.
2. At this time as many as three hundred people each day were coming to Mount Argus to be prayed over and blessed by the man one newspaper described as "the renowned and saintly Father Charles." An English newspaper of the time describes his ministry at Mount Argus: there are, says the reporter, "constant pilgrimages of the blind, the lame and the halt to supplicate their cure at the hands of Father Charles Houben."

LETTER 20—To his brothers and sisters, nephew and nieces.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.
15th July, 1887.

My dear brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces,

I am writing to let you and all the family know that I am still keeping well. I am glad to know that you are all well too. The Masses for the Holy Souls in purgatory, for which you sent ten florins, will be said immediately. Please forgive me for taking such a long time to reply to your letters. My reason for not replying sooner is that I am kept very busy here in the monastery; there are other reasons, too, such as the following.

I am an old man now and am afraid of death. I pray daily that through the powerful intercession of his mother, God in his mercy will grant me a happy death. Sixty members of the Passionist order have died in Ireland and England since I came over here from Belgium; I see now just how necessary prayer is in order to practise all the virtues in their perfection. The lives of the saints show us that prayer was always their chief occupation. Yes, King David, a man burdened with the responsibilities of a great kingdom, tells us that it was prayer which inflamed his heart with such great love of God and heavenly things; we can admire this in his psalms.

How greatly has God loved men! He did not spare his only Son but abandoned him to death, even death on the cross. Jesus Christ urges us to pray; but how? Ask, seek and knock. It is for this reason that the Lord has said: "Watch and pray; lest you fall into temptation." Let us listen to the words of Thomas à Kempis: "My son, in this life you will never be completely free or without fear, but as long as you live, make sure you are spiritually armed, because you are living in the midst of enemies who are attacking from every side."

"The struggle is continual," says St. Bonaventure; it is for this reason that we must pray during our whole life.

My congratulations to the parish priest, Father Gobbels, on the golden jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. Please tell him that I send my best wishes for his happiness and I wish him every blessing. I wish to pray, to pray for his intentions; I hope he will pray for mine too.

My love and best wishes to you all, dear brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. I commend myself to the prayers, of all (including my niece, Sister Mary Germana, at Maastricht). I pray for you every day and remember you all during Holy Mass, especially the two young students. Give my regards to the rest of the family, to the curate, and to all our friends. My superiors send you their good wishes.

May the almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, bless and protect you all. Amen.

I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.
Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 20—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 380, L. 67.

LETTER 21—To his sister, Mary Sibyl.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin.
27th July, 1888.

My dear sister, Sibyl,

From your letter of 27th June I see that you my dear sister, my other brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, all our relatives, and Father Gobbels, are all well. I too am keeping fine, thank God. I received the ten marks you sent and have offered Mass for your intentions. I also received a letter from my nephew Godfrey and was delighted to hear that he has joined the Society of Mary, which is a wonderful order.

Please give him my good wishes; also my niece, Sister Mary Germana, my nephew at St. Troud, and my nephew Leopold at St. Joseph's College, Weort.

I hope you have a copy of that lovely book on true devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, written by Blessed Louis Marie de Monfort; he also wrote "The Secret of Mary".² I have both books in English.

In English money ten marks is worth nine shillings and sixpence; we don't know if German money has the same value as Dutch money.

I send my best wishes to you, and to my other brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces. Remember me in your prayers. I pray for you all, and I remember all of you every day at Holy Mass. Give my regards to the rest of our family, to Father Gobbels and the curate, and to our other friends. My superiors send their good wishes. I hope this letter finds you all well.

We will not be separated for long: we will meet again in heaven; that is what we must hope for.

May the almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect you all, and may his blessing be always upon you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray for me. I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 21—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 383, L. 69.
2. Charles encourages his sister to read the works of Blessed (now saint) Louise Marie de Montfort. In his sermons Charles exhorted the people to pray to Mary and also to imitate her example of faith and love: "We should love and serve the Blessed Virgin, and imitate her virtues. She ought to be our book, our model, our mother."

LETTER 22—To his sister, Anne Mary.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin.
29th November, 1889.

My dear sister, Anne Mary,

Thank you for your letter which I received earlier this month, with twenty francs enclosed. I have said Mass for the intentions listed. I am delighted to hear that you are all in the best of health: my brothers and sisters, nephews and nieces, and Father Gobbels and the curate. Thank God, I too am still keeping well.

In the past six weeks, two of the religious in this monastery, St. Paul's Retreat, have died.² I'm afraid that I will die soon; in your kindness, pray for me, that the good God may grant me a happy death and a favourable judgement. I pray for you all continually, that he may grant you that same grace. It is helpful for us to say often the Act of Contrition and also the words of St. Francis de Sales: "My Saviour Jesus Christ, by the merits of your sacred Passion and your most holy Death, give me the grace of perfect contrition for my sins, so that I may never offend or displease you again."

Regards to all, as usual. Our separation will not last much longer. Let us hope that we will meet again in heaven. Amen.

May the almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect you all, and may his blessing remain with you always, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I abide and remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 22—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 385, L. 71.
2. Confrater Edward (Young), a student, died on 11th October. A month later, on 13th November, Father Columban (O'Grady) also died.

LETTER 23—To his sister, Anne Mary.¹

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin, Ireland.
23rd July 1892.

My dear sister, Anne Mary,

I received your letters of 16th June and 7th July with sorrow. On 26 June I said Mass for our dear brother Godfrey.² On 11th July I said another Mass for the repose of his soul, that he may soon be freed from his sins; I will say another Mass for him soon. I do not require a stipend. Let us imitate Jesus Christ and conform our wills to that of our heavenly Father. Amen. My fellow religious and I have prayed for him. All God's blessings are infinite, but the effects of his mercy are more abundant than anything. For that reason Saint Paul calls God rich in mercy. He is called the Father of mercy and grace, but never the Father of justice and severity.

I send my best wishes to you, Anne Mary, to our dear brother Matthew, our dear sisters Mary Helen and Mary Sibyl, our nephews and all our friends. Give my regards to the parish priest Father Gobbels and to the curate.

May the almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect us all, and may his blessing remain over us all, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pray for me, as I pray for you all.

I am and shall remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

Abide and remain always in the dear hearts of Jesus and Mary.

LETTER 23—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 390, L. 77.

2. His brother Godfrey died on 7th July, 1892.

LETTER 24—To his sister, Anne Mary.¹

St. Paul's Retreat,
Harold's Cross,
Mount Argus,
Dublin,
Ireland.²

My dearest sister, Anne Mary,

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your beautiful letters, which I received. The ten marks arrived, and the Holy Masses have been said³ for your intentions and mine. I return to you the document of plenipotentiary. I have no need of anything; pray for me, I pray for you all.

May the almighty and merciful Lord bless and protect us all and may his blessing remain over us, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I remain in the sweet hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Your loving brother,
Fr. Charles of St. Andrew,
Passionist.

LETTER 24—NOTES

1. Summ. p. 391, L. 79.
2. This undated letter seems to have been written in the middle of December, 1892, just a few weeks before Charles' death.
3. He is no longer able to say Mass himself; having received "the Last Rites" on 10th December, he is now waiting for death. In this last letter, he gives his last blessing to his family.

POSTSCRIPT

On 12th January, 1893, a week after Father Charles' death, the Rector of Mount Argus wrote the following letter to Anna Maria Lenssen-Houben, Father Charles' sister:

Madam,

It is with the deepest regret that I write to you, to give you the sad news of the death of good Father Charles.

He passed from this life on the 5th of this month. His death, like his life, was that of a saint. During the whole time that his body lay in the church, crowds of people were filing past constantly, in order to have their rosaries and other objects of devotion touched against his body. There was an enormous multitude at his funeral. Nobody wanted to pray for his soul; on the contrary, all were ready to ask his intercession. It is true to say that in the opinion of the people he is already canonised.

Please accept my condolences, Madam, on this occasion.

Your servant in Jesus Christ,

Dominic O'Neill,
Rector.

APPENDIX

The letter which follows was written the day after Father Charles was buried. The author is Father Wilfrid O'Hagan, who was at that time Provincial Consultor. In this letter we catch something of the atmosphere surrounding Father Charles' funeral:

J. X. P.

St. Paul's Retreat,
Mount Argus,
Dublin.
January 10, 1893.

Dear Ada,

I received your letter too late to apply the medal to the remains of Father Charles but I am sending you something which hundreds of thousands in Ireland would give the world for: the *sign* which the old man had on his breast during the time he was lying in the church. I do not know whether it is the sign he wore while alive but I know it is the one he had while lying dead in the church. It is stained with grease from the candles around the bier and the candles the poor creatures were putting to his heart. But I do not think that you will undervalue it on that account. I all along when alive considered Charles a saint but since his death I am sure of it. He was five days lying in a church strongly heated with hotwater pipes and amid the suffocating atmosphere of the tens of thousands who from morning till night literally crammed the church. And yet there was not the slightest trace of decomposition but his whole appearance was brighter and clearer than when alive. Nay more, the flesh on his forehead and hands remained quite soft, there was as little of the fixedness of death as if the blood were freely coursing in the veins. But more marvellous the arms and hands and fingers were quite flexible when the coffin lid was screwed down. There was entirely absent the least appearance of the rigidity of death. Dr. Murphy who attended him confesses that he could not explain it, for the immediate cause of his death was

of such nature that it would immediately cause rigidity. Such extraordinary crowds were never seen in Mt. Argus. The people were from every corner of Ireland. The roads were blocked and it was absolutely impossible to get into the church without long waiting. Sunday evening was the wettest and most disagreeable here that I have seen for a long time. It was quite a Godsend that it was so else I am afraid some would have been smothered. Even as it was the crowds were outside in the rain still struggling to get in. The cabmen must have made a fortune. I hardly suppose there is a cab in Dublin that was not at Mt. Argus during the last five days. But the cabbies were bent on more than taking fares.

Yesterday after he was buried two cabbies were found at the grave with their horses' nosebags filled with earth. Of course this can not be allowed to go on else we shall have to be making a new grave every day. The day of the funeral was awful. The Rector wrote to the superintendent of the police for men to keep the crowds back. We had no horse police to be sure but rows of helmeted men were overwhelmed with the pressing crowds. The poor fellows were just as devout as the people. Poor old Ireland. There is faith here yet. Even from a point of numbers the great Parnell's funeral was inferior to that of the simple holy old Father Charles: now dear Ada, I am sure you will appreciate his sign. There is one thing I should like to say. I really expect that through his intercession miracles will be wrought. I should therefore like you to keep an authentic account of anything that might happen with a view to future proof. If any devout sick person keeps this sign on their breast and prays to our Blessed Lady, St. Paul of the Cross and Father Charles cures *might be* effected. I should like you to have the thing well authenticated. Of course nothing may happen but on the other hand there *might*. Kindest regards to Dad, Jim and Bob.

I am, dear Ada,

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Wilfrid, c.p.

NOTE

"Ada" is Miss Ada Sheehy, Highgate, London. Her brother Robert was married to Catherine Grogan, cousin of Fr. Oliver Kelly, C.P. His son Michael Sheehy, Coolmount House, Rhode, Offaly gave the 'Sign' (Passionist badge) and this letter to Fr. Oliver, C.P. to preserve with other souvenirs.

Those who know of any favours or miracles wrought through the intercession of the Venerable Father Charles of Mount Argus, or who wish to make an offering towards the expenses of his beatification, are requested to communicate with the Rev. Vice-Postulator, St. Paul's Retreat, Mount Argus, Dublin 6.

50p