

LETTERS FROM BISHOP BAGSHAWE TO MOTHER MARY POTTER, MOTHER MAGDALEN and MOTHER PHILIP

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

(undated) ?1877

My dear Child,

I do not think you are in any delusion, but in order to be sure you must submit yourself more and more in spiritual and interior matters as well as in external ones, to simple obedience. I am glad therefore that you pray to do God's Will rather than to die. It is well to long to be with God – but if “to die is gain”, “to live is Christ” that it is Christ's will and Christ's work, which comes before your own gain. If you were really in danger of death, I might think of anticipating your profession, otherwise it will be better that you should do simply what you are told about clothing and profession, without manifesting any desires or repugnance. I am not edified at hearing that you express dislike at being clothed again, especially publicly; and this not to me, which would be fair enough, (for once or twice at least) but to Father Burns and others. I do not see what excuse you can give for this.

I think Sister Elizabeth must get her novitiate in the House, I cannot spare her, and her opportunities of practising virtue are considerable. You must tell me quite freely all that you think and feel both about Father Burns, as your Superior, and the Sisters as your subjects. I cannot guide the Community from a distance except by hearing of all that goes on from everybody, you especially, with the utmost fullness and simplicity. There is no one there on whose experience and judgement I can rely implicitly, and therefore I should know all that passes, and (? Is felt by myself ?)

As to your question:-

1. The duty set down at one hour extends to the next, except that the walk may be somewhat shortened, regard being had to the weather, health, strength etc

You are under obedience to Mr. Burns, but with the duty of informing me of anything which appears indiscreet or objectionable in his government of you. I will explain your spirit to him, and ask him to conform to it and promote it. Father Burns is your Superior, but not your Director. I exercise that office myself, though I shall ask him to give you spiritual instructions for me sometimes. I do not think Father Burns ought to prevent you having recourse to me about anything whatever, at any rate anything which in any way affects the Community, since I am your principal Superior, even in matters affecting the Mission only. I desire you to tell me anything you think about it. In this respect

therefore you are not bound by his command. I will ask his motive about the Hymns. Expositions concern the Mission Chapel principally, and Mr. Burns' work. I will see what he can do for you. I think they must be on Sundays, so as to profit the people more, and because Saturday will be a day required in many ways which are so much prevented by the school.

As for your Rules, they must grow gradually. I have already appointed the weekly Chapter of Faults and Instruction in the Institute to be given alternately by you and Sister Elizabeth. When I put your paper aside it was because I was engaged on a time-table, not a Rule in general. Special exercise may be allowed here and there to supersede the ordinary horario and you can ask leave for anything you wish. I never meant to take all initiative out of your hands, my business is rather to approve or disapprove than to initiate. I do not wish you to change the name of your Institute. I daresay there would be time for a ten minutes visit B. S. for the purpose you mention at 12. The visits B. S. going out and returning for not more than two minutes, I approve of. As the Superior you may at the Weekly Chapter after the instruction and accusation of faults, add any extra reading or instruction or correction from yourself, ask any advices or opinions, say any prayers etc. you like. Let them be ad libitum, that is at discretion and not regular, and don't be too long. You may write out in form of a Rule any instructions or permissions you get from me, so as gradually to build up the rule.

God bless you,

Yours affectionately in Christ
+ Edward Bishop of Nottingham

What do you think best as to talking or silence, at other times not meals or recreations when talking is permitted. Visiting the dying will come in time. Monthly nursing is as much a part of the Institute, and necessary to begin with to earn your living, which you promised to do.

(Note from Mother Hilda Potter : NB. Mr. Burns was a newly ordained Priest whom the Bishop put in charge of the Mission and of the Community, and who had absolutely no experience even of parish work.)

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral,
Nottingham

March 23rd. 1878

My dear child,

I think you told me before that you thought it better that you should be allowed to advise and direct the Sisters in their individual difficulties, trials, failings etc. and I replied that I did not wish this work to be done by you. You again press it upon me, and again I reply, that I do not wish you to do it, adding that I do not think you in anyway fit or competent for the office. Any advice or direction not given by the Confessor or me will be given by the Rev. Mother. The "formal interview" was not one for spiritual direction, but only that

the Sisters might be taught methods of prayer, and the nature of De Montfort's True Devotion.

Lectures in ascetical teaching, like those in any other department of Theology are generally given in formal interviews. Teaching a science is one thing, applying it to individual cases is another, and a very different one. The first I wished to be done by you, the second by the Rev. Mother.

The necessity of "denying ourselves" can be perfectly taught, (as it was by Our Lord, as it is in the pulpit) without any enquiry into the way in which individuals practice it. Since you feel that you cannot do the one without doing the other, it will be better to do neither, and leave them to be done otherwise. Perhaps you will teach most usefully by showing us all how perfectly you can mortify your own views, feelings and wishes in this, as well as in other matters.

Really, when you tell me that you "wonder at me" for taking the spiritual direction from you, and that it "was not right to do so" I cannot but feel very much shocked at the difference between your principles and your practice. The saints have felt their unfitness to guide others and have refused offices of the kind till they were forced on them, instead of trying to force their Superiors to appoint them to such offices.

I wish Grignon de Montfort's Devotion to be understood and practised. It does not seem to me to be so very hard to understand. I shall take care to have his life and works read and studied by the Sisters. As for practise, especially the foundation practise of self-denial, we all fall short in that, but I think you are mistaken if you think your Sisters do not try to practise as well as you. They have their faults, as yet very much unsubdued, but I know none among them, who has so much that still needs subduing and mortifying as yourself. To take the last and lowest place in all things till you are bid to "go up higher", our Blessed Lord's teaching and the practise of the Saints.

I cannot see that it is yours and when I see you teaching the world spirituality and at the same time manifesting in your own conduct so great a lack of humility, I sometimes tremble, and wonder whether I am wise in letting your books come out, as I do.

I hope you will take what I say to heart, and wishing you every blessing remain,
Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+ Edward Bishop of Nottingham

(Mother's own note was written on the head of this letter: "The Bishop perhaps forgets he himself told me to do all that a Novice Mistress would do, except tell the Sisters of their faults, or listen to their trials or difficulties.")

To Mother Mary Potter

Ratcliffe College,
Leicester

2nd August 1878

My dear child,

I do not think I have much to blame you for, but still. You had better not have told Mr.

Young you would be glad to have a novitiate. If now I should conclude to decline his offer, he will think and say that I am opposing you, the Foundress. It would have been better to have said nothing on a matter so extremely important.

I am glad you prospered so at Market Rasen. I do not think I quite understood about your journey. I understood you and Sister Cecilia were to go for a holiday to your Mothers, hence my surprise at finding you instead negotiating about a novitiate at Market Rasen. I may have given you leave, if so, alright but if not, you should not without it, have written to an enclosed nun about such a matter. Ways of forwarding a business require discretion and permission as well as the business itself. You do not say what all your letters to her since the Community started have been about. I hope they have not been to ask her to join it, or contained any proposal.

The remark I blamed you for, and must still blame, was that in which you distinctly preferred your own “purity of intention” to Rev. Mother’s.

The use that God has made of you in founding the Institute may give you as much interest in it as you please, but it does not give you any right to mould it as you like, unless in perfect submission to your Superiors. Tell me your views, but accept and be content with my decisions.

I do not in the least wish to throw you off or get rid of you, but I am frightened at your reliance on your own judgement, and canonising of your own opinions as aspirations. Nothing can make tolerable the position you take in your writings but the most profound and complete humility and subjection in your understanding as well as in your will, so long as there is nothing wrong told you. Keep yourself for God’s sake in complete dependence on Rev. Mother as well as on me, and then all will go well. Consider St. Frances of Rome and other Foundresses, how much they loved to obey and to be guided in all things. Be not so impatient, what you wish I may be wishing too, but not just as and when you wish it. St. Philip says, “we learn through obedience how and when God wishes good things to be done.”

God bless you, my dear child. Pray for us all. You have a new Chaplain at Hyson Green – one of “Mary’s Own” who will do much to consolidate the Community.

Yours affectionate Father in Christ
+ Edward Bishop of Nottingham

ps. I do not want you to mention this letter to Mr. Young, nor to anger him with me and with the community by telling him that his plans are rejected – but only to remember that you have been, and are perfectly unauthorised to treat with him on the subject, in any other way than by forwarding, if he spontaneously asks you, his proposals to me. If then you have in any way gone further than this, draw back as if you had of yourself recollected your position and duty. Mr. Young is generous, but difficult to deal with, inasmuch as for every favour he asks conditions and power of control which are generally inadmissible: and he not infrequently withdraws his offers if he is in any way opposed.

Letter to Mother M. Magdalen
(known then as Elizabeth)

St. Barnabas Cathedral,

Nottingham.

16th. November 1878

My dear Rev. Mother,

I am very glad to hear that you are better. You did quite right to send Mother Mary Frances, and I hope you will find her willing and obedient in future. You will have patience with her as you have with the rest, remembering how she has lived an easy life, and her own mistress for so long. I have thought best to appoint for her and for Sister Joseph each an assistant, or vice, and as the care of the needlework and also the accounts and cupboards require continuity, I have added, - under her directions. This does not of course exempt them, or any official whatever from your interferences and direction. You will remember that the Sister Bursar and her assistant will have ex officio no duties of cooking or keeping the house clean and in order.

The Rule, as you will see, devolves upon the acting Superioresses, the duty of assigning from day to day, or from time to time the various works in the house, as cooking, scouring, washing, cleaning up etc. etc. among the sisters who may be at home at the time, distributing to each one her share of the labour. If this is not done and the sisters are not rigorously kept to the tasks allotted, the house and the kitchen will get into disorder and confusion, and this will be distinctly chargeable to the Acting Superior, whose place it is to see that all is kept going in proper order. Besides enforcing the punctual fulfilment of daily tasks, it is necessary to repress most strictly all taking hand of tasks not assigned by the Superioress; else under pretext of charity there will be nothing but interference and confusion.

I allude especially to Mother. M. Angela who has the trick of making everybody's business her own, and having a finger in every pie; but whether with her or with others I require that this be rigorously enforced, and any contravention punished. I wish also most particularly that no suggestions be allowed to be made to the acting Superior, and no petition by one sister on behalf of another. As regards suggestions, I have provided a regular opportunity of making them in the weekly council meeting. They therefore when made at all times, become troublesome interferences, and impertinences. As for petitions, the Sisters should be encouraged to ask for what they want, and do not want interceptors or protectors in order to get it. This also I wish you to enforce. I hope you will read the Rule and letters again and again, and see them enforced with the utmost exactness. I have worded them very carefully.

Believe me to remain, with best wishes and blessings,
Yours affectionately in Christ,
+ Edward. Bp. of Nottingham.

- The following note was added by Mother M. Hilda onto the Bishop's letter -

(NB: Mother M. Frances (Mrs. White) was sent as a postulant by the Bishop in 1877 or early in 1878; as soon as she entered the Bishop appointed her local bursar. She received the habit on the Feast of Our Lady of Dolours, September 1878 and was immediately appointed as the Assistant Superior by the Bishop.)

To Mother M. Magdalen

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham.

27th November 1878

My dear Rev. Mother,

Thanks for your note. I am so sorry to hear you are still unwell. I fear that there is still some want of clear understanding of what I wish as to the government of the house, and I cannot quite gather whether you or Mother M. Frances are governing it at present. She tells me of Fr. Herbert having reinstated you on the same evening when I had been there; yet you do not seem to be attending to all the duties of the Office, nor as yet well enough to do so. I think it would be better in every way that you should remain on the sick list until you are quite able to get about again, appoint and supervise the work, hold chapters and fulfil all the duties of the office. I am told there was not a Chapter last Wednesday and yet do not know whom to hold responsible for the confusion, yourself or Mother Frances. When you are strong enough to resume all your duties then announce the same to the Community, and Mother M. Frances will at once cease to give directions of any kind or to have any responsibility for the government.

As I wish the Acting Superior for the time being to have the whole responsibility, so she must also have an undivided authority and therefore I have struck out some words of the Rule, lest they should lead to misunderstanding. I have directed her whenever she is in office and for the present until you resume office, to lean on the side of believing too much rather than too little, in the Sisters ailments. For yourself while ill, you will not be liable to be called on for any work whatever.

The sisters who read should get their meals afterwards, and stay behind to finish after grace is said if necessary, and not be waited for.

Wishing you all God's blessing, I remain
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M. Magdalen

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

3rd December 1878

My dear Rev. Mother,

I should not think it would be prudent for you to resume office until your weakness and deafness are decidedly better, but you will judge when that time is come with Sister Mary Philip's advice, I hope it will not be long.

1 I have given special orders that whatever the sick require they should have. The Infirmarian should wait on them. If neither be at home, or the one at home be imperatively required elsewhere, the acting Superior must attend on them herself. She will leave the Infirmarian generally to serve them as she thinks best, but can over-rule her if she thinks necessary.

2 If you are in office when the operation takes place, you can have any Sister home you like. If not M.M. Frances will arrange as she thinks best.

3 I shall hear what was done in Council from Fr. Herbert. If any dispensation is required by M. M. Angela and refused by M. M. Frances unreasonably, let M. Mary Angela write or come and see me about it, or if she cannot, let her get someone to write in her name. If you mean that she tells me through you that she is now being forced to attend community duties for which she is unequal, I dispense her from doing so until I can speak with Mother Mary Frances on the subject.

4 Mother Mary Frances will decide upon who should go out and who should stay at home at present.

5 I am very sure that you three would be far from consciously opposing or thwarting Mother Mary Frances, but your disapproval of her being in office, as she might easily lead to some unconscious want in confidence and cordiality which she might be able to perceive more easily than you would do it. As for Mother Mary Angela, my impression is that she has a trick of seeking to have things her own way by petitions, suggestions, arguments etc. in a manner which is often troublesome. Let her genuinely seek to find out in silence the real wishes and meaning of the Acting Superior, and conform to them without so many words.

God bless you, my dear child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M Magdalen

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

12th February 1879

My dear Rev. Mother,

Please tell the Sisters that I have decided to be at the Convent and hold the elections on Friday next, at 10 30.

I have hastened them for two reasons: first, because cases might offer any day which could not be refused, and which might prevent some of the sisters from being present. Second, because circumstances press for energetic action, and of course this is impossible 'til the elections are held.

I am writing to Fr. Herbert. Please let the Sisters pray hard for God's Guidance, and let no case be accepted for Nursing except upon the condition that the Sister can absent herself to attend at the Convent all Friday morning.

God bless you all, believe me dear Rev. Mother
Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

An Altarine must be prepared in the parlour, Crucifix, candles, Madonna etc – and two urns or vases to receive voting papers. Fr. Herbert will prepare these.

A note attached to this letter by M. M. Hilda

NB The above was written to Mother M. Magdalen (then Mother Elizabeth) whom the Bishop had appointed Superior in place of Mother Foundress, shortly after the Clothing July 1877. The Bishop's private diary contained a laconic entry: "July 19th – Appointed Mother Elizabeth Superioress Hyson Green."

To Mother Mary Potter after the Elections

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

14th February 1879

My dear Rev. Mother

The Community has now decided for itself as to those who are to have the management of its affairs, and it is now necessary for me to define the extent of my responsibilities towards it.

I will pay the outstanding debts to the extent of £60 sometime in the course of this year, according as they press. You must let me have an exact list of them without delay. You need not pay any of them yourselves, i.e. far as the £60 goes. For the future I enclose a cheque for £10, as a donation to help you make a start, and give you time for arranging affairs. It is for the purpose of enabling you to begin paying ready money for everything without exception which is had, or ordered for the future and if anyone of you orders anything on credit it must be ordered in her own name and on her own personal responsibility exclusively. No one must order anything in my name, nor will I be responsible for anything.

As regards the maintenance of the house, I advise you to summon frequently General Congregations of all the Sisters. It is not a matter of government, but of existence, and each one has a right to know all the state of things, and consider for herself how far she can safely throw her lot in with it, for I cannot any further undertake to be responsible for the maintenance of anyone. Your Committee of ways and means therefore ought to be a Committee of all the Sisters. At any rate I desire that an exact statement of the financial state of the house, with a complete list of its debts, together with this letter, be at once laid

before all the Sisters and placed so that anyone may refer to them at pleasure. I also desire that every week at the Chapter of Faults a balance sheet of assets and liabilities, that is, of money in hand or coming in, also of debts owing, be presented to the Community, and left for reference as above.

You will also have to consider what has to be done as to Minnie Crocker and the new postulant. It will be the Superioress and not I who will have the responsibility of incurring debt for them, if ready money be not forthcoming. I do not say that I shall not always be anxious to help you with alms, so far as I can, but I think that £70 will be quite as much as I can do this year, and even afterwards what I give must be an alms only, and not a payment for which I am responsible.

Please read this letter to all the Sisters at once. I wish you prosperity and God's blessing with all my heart.

Believe me to remain

Your affectionate Father in Christ

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

17th February 1879

My dear Rev. Mother,

Sister Mary Frances having called to see me, I asked her when I was to receive the list of bills, (and the bills themselves) owing by the community up to the receipt of my letter. She said she did not know she had to prepare it. There must be some mistake. Please therefore let me have at once the complete statement of everything owing by the Community up to that date, as well as the actual bills – the assets of the Community up to that same date, whether the money owing to it, or in stocks of books etc. still remaining for sale. I must also have an exact bill of, and they must of course be deducted from the amount owing – that is to say, to clear you up to the date of my letter, I must take over to myself both your debts and your assets. This I am willing to do, and to discharge the balance of your liabilities, provided it does not exceed £60. If the difference exceeded that sum, I should object, on the score that it was totally unreasonable to run up such an amount of debt without telling me. Less than that sum I will discharge, but I hope the amount may be much less than £60. Of course the donation I handed you of 32 shillings and of any others given since my letter I do not want. I want the debts and assets previous to my letter, and the balance sheet of them, (with the bills) I must again ask you for without delay.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

PS. Fr. Herbert mentioned to me that you had £8 in hand previous to my letter. This sum

would of course have to go in diminution of the amount of debt which would be less for me to pay. I must receive it to help to discharge that amount.
I believe No. 19 stands in my name and that Mr. Taylor and Mr. Lee always make out their bills to me. Please give the two latter instructions not to do so anymore, in regard to any work to be done from now. Also please within a fortnight decide whether to keep on No. 19 as I cannot let the rent-book be in my name after that.

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

16th December 1879

My dear Rev. Mother,

I gather from Sister M.G. (please do not mention this to anyone) that there are some little abuses which want correcting: and I wish you to observe and enforce the following :-

1. If M. M. Frances is away and Sister M. Elizabeth is at home, the latter must act as Mother Assistant, and not Sr. M. Philip.
2. If you are really too unwell at any time to see people, a paper must be put outside the door to that effect, and the exclusion must be enforced upon all alike, except your Nurse, but this paper must be put up by your own order or that of the Sr. Assistant for the time being. Except in this case no one but yourself must ever venture to keep any Sister from your room.
3. Let it be a rule that, if one sister is with you and another comes to the door, that the newcomer immediately retire (unless it be to give some notice or ask some question on necessary business.) If you want her you can call her back, and in that case you should send the first away. Unless you yourself actually want more than one with you, two ought never to be with you at once out of recreation hours. It only makes superfluous and mischievous recreations, and grievously hinders useful interviews. How much time have I known wasted and how much inconvenience caused by having to wait to catch a Superior while any number of others were gossiping in his room. Never let the two be together and never let the second comer turn the first away, unless you think well to call her in. To interrupt one another's interviews is gross rudeness and a most mischievous interference.
4. I know that to enforce these things you will require a strong hand and determined resolution – but I urgently desire and direct that they be enforced, cost what it may. There could be no greater evil scarcely than that any one sister a preponderating influence, and be able in anyway to impede the free access of others to you, and I grievously fear that under the pretext of nursing you, that is what is coming about. Announce and enforce these arrangements, but I would prefer you doing so as from yourself .

(This letter is incomplete)

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

18th July 1882

My dear Child,

I have elicited from Miss Paradon that she hurt herself considerably in lifting a woman who had fallen into a coma, in a case taken just before her last illness. This should not have been as I had given her strict and paramount orders to run no such risks. I am satisfied that no case can be taken without such risks occasionally. Therefore, I wish Miss Paradon never to be sent out, unless it be to help another sister who has the case in any matter, in which she may have the experience. I mean that she is never to be left at a case single-handed. I have wished her to be a Postulant because I believe her ailments will mend in time and she will be able to be generally useful then. In any case I think she will be of great use to the Community in various ways, even if she does not go Nursing. She wishes to be a Religious and thinks she could well manage the routine of the Convent, with perhaps a little exception at present. I should like her for some months to come, to be kept in the Convent observing the Rule and doing needlework or any other light work writing or otherwise, which may be found for her. I am sure she will get better and stronger with a little patience. I wish her to be excused all laborious work, and if she needs it, to have some indulgence as to not rising so early, otherwise to keep the Rule as I have said. The rising might not be noticed if she slept at the home, which will be probably most convenient.

God bless you all,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

Let her continue as I have said 'til the time comes when she might be able to put on the habit, we can deliberate again as usual.

To Mother Mary PotterSt. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham19th August 1882

My dear Child,

In reply to your letter I would say that I think it is better not to disturb the arrangement last made with Mother Mary Frances, that she was not to be asked to take out-door Nursing. If you want Mother M. Cecilia, her time is up, and if you have another available Sister to send in her place she can be recalled, after reasonable notice given to the patient. Mother Mary Philip urged very strongly that Mother M Frances ought to be sent to cases, and when I told her that I arranged otherwise, she spoke of the injustice of placing on the Community the burden of an idle Sister, blamed me for acting without Council and said she had been advised on a previous occasion to appeal to the Cardinal against me, and alluded to the probability of herself leaving the Community.

I am quite sure that Mother Mary Frances, through her disobedient humours is a burden to the Community. I thought it was one which the leading members of the Community were willing to bear at my particular request. If I am sufficiently informed that the case is otherwise, I will consider what other provision I may be able to make for her. But while

she remains, I should be glad if the question of the work to be assigned her, were now considered settled as, if it is continually raised, no one can have peace. I regret much to find Mother still in heart opposed to the entire dependence of the Community on the Bishop's will, and evidently desirous of a fundamental change in this respect. As it is now the second time that she has seriously and formally made objection to the fundamental principle of the Community (besides difficulties) I fear she is likely to cling to it, and if so, that she will not persevere.

Praying God to bless you all, I remain dear Child
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

Mother Mary Philip spoke of your pressing financial difficulties. You will remember that it is my desire that these should not be allowed to accumulate. If they cannot be met, send me a statement and I will see what can be done.

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

9th January 1883

My dear Child,

I wish you a very happy year and many choice blessings in it, with all my heart. With regard to the Sisters founding a new house in another Diocese, I think they might be considered as lent to that Diocese, to be recalled when a Mother House there with its Novices had been sufficiently established to go alone. I have meant with this exception, that each Diocese should have its own Mother House, Novitiate, property and Sisters to itself, so that the Bishop of each Diocese should have real and complete control of the Little Company in his Diocese. The relation of one Diocesan Community with another would be, - first, identity of Rule and spirit, - second, mutual charity, - third, perhaps a right reserved to Superioress of original Mother House to visit other Houses, admonish them for any non-observance and protest against any gradual alteration of Rule.

This has been my idea, but in this, as in other things, I should be glad if one was permitted after some years, if the Rule be passed now, to present it again with revisions and additions and corrections. It remains to be seen if it will pass at all and what corrections they make.

I am sorry I do not see how to help you about the Altar, but I trust God's Providence will. What would you wish done about the founding in Rome? I have no objection to act at once, but for the Cardinal Vicar having advised you to wait 'til approval. To ask for the Pope's leave over his head would not do. The only way would be, yourselves or some intermediary, to get him to say he would not disapprove of your getting the Holy Father's leave to begin at once. You might then do so on the understanding of what I have said above. Whether it be well thus to press him I do not know, but you can, if you think it well

The account of the Consulter's visit (of which you said nothing in my letter) was most important and interesting. They seem to have a good opinion of you, as well as liking

your dress. I hope it may help you through.

Today we started Our Lady and St. Hugh's College with 23 boys. I think several more will come tomorrow. There was some confusion about the day. The Club will open next week. Pray that they may succeed. I am very busy or would write more.

May God Bless each and everyone of you,

Your affectionate Father in Christ

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

11th January 1883

My dear Child,

You do not say anything about the English copy of the Rules. I wish you would get a copy made, and send me back the original. I propose to carry them out 'til told to do otherwise. I should be very glad to have Mother Mary Philip home and to send some one in her place, also, if permitted to send others, but I do not know where the money is to come from. A journey each way is at least £10 – and exchange therefore means £20. To send out Sisters who may presently have to come home again is a risk – indeed, it seems improbable, for they can barely live at present, and what you have left in the Bank is only enough to bring you three home. You may send M. M. Philip home if you like, but I fear three is none too many at Rome, and that you cannot spare her. Besides, if M. M. Cecilia goes out when she can, it will show the style of thing, and then you would need a companion. As you have leave to Nurse already, I hope M. M. Cecilia will have made a beginning or will soon do so.

As to taking some other Rule, I certainly should not approve of a French Rule, but if any rule is proposed, I will consider it, and see how far it can be made to fit in with our ideas and spirit. Let me know what is suggested if you may. If not, I shall ignore it altogether, till I get the formal answer to my letter to the Cardinal Prefect. Meanwhile I shall simply act on my own Rule, which as I have said, I shall be glad to get back. My authority suffices, unless and until it be overruled.

The only way in which I can see a chance of founding a house in Rome, would be for you to take in the Postulant you spoke of, or others if you can get them and train them while you stay to begin on their own account, as you did at Hyson Green. Your stay might be somewhat prolonged on account of them.

I have decided to give the Blue Veil for the second Novitiate (not vows) to all the present Novices, and to give the Habit to all the present Postulants but Xavier. Unless by way of punishment for misconduct, I do not approve of postponements. The candidates should either be sent away or promoted. Now I do not think any need to be sent away. Xavier is the only difficulty. I have a strong feeling that if her terrible anxiety about her future were relieved by having the Habit, she would get quite well enough to earn her living and be very useful, and to send her out goes very much against my feeling. Pray consider the

matter, after all, the Habit is still only a trial, she can still be dismissed. Let me know. I approve of having General Congregation instead of Councils. Write to M. M. Elizabeth to have them so. Thank M. M. Philip for her letter, the last one pleased me very much. God bless you all,
Ever your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

27th February 1883

My dear Rev. Mother,

The Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda has written to me that it is not in accordance with Canonical usage for a Bishop to be immediate Superior of a Religious Congregation, which may spread into other Dioceses.. He wishes that the Little Company of Mary should now be allowed to govern itself,. You are therefore now released from the obedience prescribed in the Rule as hitherto observed. You and your Council will henceforward decide for yourselves upon your future movements and those of the Sisters. I have informed Mother Mary Elizabeth that this must be the case with respect to all matters now pending, such as the intended Clothing, Osgadby etc. etc. You will also in future treat with the Cardinal as from yourselves, not as from me. I suppose I must congratulate you upon the independence thus achieved. To me, while it is the diminution of a special interest, it is also a great relief from responsibility.

I pray God to bless you all, and wish you all prosperity and success to your work and Institute.

I remain, dear Rev. Mother
Yours most sincerely in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

8th March 1883

My dear Child,

Certainly I shall continue to protect and help you as much as I can under the present circumstances, and shall be most deeply interested in success and progress. I know very well your affection for me. As for you, my dear child, I rejoice and thank God that this crisis finds you, as I trust and believe it does, firmly established in humility, charity and other religious virtues. You will I am sure, be careful not to lose them in the new and

untried opportunities for a less perfect disposition which the new circumstances may bring with them. Whatever attributes may be given to Religious Women, their truest crown and glory will always be found in their excelling in humility, simplicity, charity and obedience. Thank you very much indeed for your kind and affectionate letter. I am truly glad to hear you are getting on so well.

Praying God to bless you, I remain, my dear child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

26th March 1883

My dear Child,

My decision that Miss Paradon was to have the Habit was given after having heard the opinions of the Sisters, and while I had authority according to the then existing Rule. She would have actually received the Habit but, that the Habits for the others could not be bought for want of money, and so she was accidentally postponed on their account. I have however not the slightest wish to interfere now with the Sisters votes, nor that you should do so. Let them by all means vote as they think best.

Though I should not myself have wished to take the responsibility of instituting the Community on an independent footing, I know well the Church is wiser than I am, and I conclude that the evils I feared are not so much to be feared as I supposed. I am therefore now very glad of the decision in everyway. It has relieved of a very heavy and increasing weight of responsibility and will give me much more leisure to attend to my proper duties. I am now bound to suppose it will be also for the good of the Community. Certainly if the Community be approved by the Holy See it will be shown to have been the work of God, and I shall feel glad and honoured to have been made use of to help in its foundation. I shall continue to do all I can to promote its interests and to be kind to its members. It is however evident, that as its guide and Director, and in any special sense its Father, "my occupation is gone" and the fact, of course, cannot help being realised both by the Sisters and by myself.

I am very glad to hear that the Community is so much liked at Rome and is considered to be the work of God, and hope sincerely that this judgement of it is in some sense authoritative. I can, and will dispense your Vow when you come here, though I could not while you are in Rome. I do not think I shall go to Rome this year. Dr. O'Callaghan says I am not obliged till 1885, and I certainly shall not go till then, unless otherwise directed.

May God bless you all, believe me to remain
Yours most sincerely in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

 -
To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
 Nottingham

26th April 1883

My dear Child,

As I found myself not obliged to go to Rome, I could not possibly afford either the money or the time: and as for knowing many people in Rome, I am not sure that it is very desirable, considering how short one's visits there are. I should have been glad to see you again. I am truly glad that you are so successful in getting patients, and that you are doing so much good. I think you say M. M. Cecilia is returning from Florence, but that M. M. Catherine is probably going there. M. Cecilia spoke of wishing to make an acquaintance with a certain person there. In confidence I advise you not to permit any of the Sisters to do so, at least until you have first thoroughly satisfied yourself as to his character and antecedents, for, in London they are publicly exceedingly ill spoken of. He has long ceased to do duty there. He has however, powerful friends, therefore keep to yourself what I have said. I think you are right generally speaking, not to talk of your affairs, you might get the character of gossipers otherwise.

I sincerely hope you will be able to continue your work in Rome and Italy, as evidently it is exceedingly needed there. As for Bishop Hedley's Diocese, do not hesitate to make arrangements for going there whenever you think it best. Some of the foundations in Nottingham were for the service of the Diocese, rather than for the extension of the Order. I have thought it scarcely fair, but now that the Holy See has practically decided that the Order is not to be subservient to the interests of the Diocese, but to look out for itself, it will be quite right and reasonable that you should withdraw the Sisters from some of the houses, if you need them more elsewhere. Do as you think best. As regards St. Camillus's Order I should be very glad to have a hospital, but I do not know much about them or their rules. If they live by begging there might be difficulties. However I am open to hearing about and considering their plan, if they like to propose one.

I am afraid my sister Edith has not long to live. Some of the doctors declared positively that the cancer had affected her liver, and was the cause of various symptoms, as difficulty in breathing and taking food. Others denied this, but a great attack of pains, these which has lately come on, makes me think the first are right and that the end is near. Please pray for her.

I will pray that you may get better and be long spared to the Community, which so much needs you. May God bless you all,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

Thank you for your present, it has not yet arrived.

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral

Nottingham

28th June 1883

My dear Child,

I am very sorry to hear that the Rule cannot be approved for some months to come, as I cannot think the present state of things, uncertain Rules and government from a distance, at all good for the Community.

I was grieved to hear of the Novitiate arrangement, and cannot help thinking it a great stretch of authority on the part of the Council, or rather the four members of it at Rome, to make on their own account a new Rule of such grave importance. It seems to me quite contrary to the Spirit and intention of the present Rule, and will never have my sympathy or approval. I cannot understand how you should say that I ever wished for such a thing. To me the idea of some sisters being shut off from others and forbidden ever to speak to them, as though they were contagious or excommunicated, is in the highest degree repulsive. It seems to me especially harsh and uncharitable when the professed Sisters at home are necessarily (as in your case) too few to form a community by themselves, and must therefore live in isolation. No such arrangement is thought necessary among the Sisters of Mercy, nor I think, in most other Communities.

You ask me to write to advise you sometimes, and I willingly give you my opinion upon anything you may ask me about, but otherwise I fear our views would differ too often to make my interference expedient; except where the external position of the Congregation requires it. As to this, I am uneasy about one or two things. One is, that I hope the school at Melton may be worked efficiently now that M.M. Michael is removed. It is taught gratuitously and most charitably, but it is of little use unless done efficiently, and if it not so, the only chance the Mission would have would be to try and make some new arrangement which would interfere with the Melton Convent. I sincerely hope therefore that you will send an efficient Mistress.

I was made considerably uneasy by M.M. Elizabeth having incurred a considerable debt for the things sent out to Rome. I have not heard if it has been paid off. I trust it may have been, and that no other debt has been incurred. The scandal of any debts that could not be paid would be great, and therefore I hope you will see that the Rule on this point is exactly observed. Thank you for your kind letter, I was much grieved to hear of your illness and Mother Catherine's. I trust you are both better, and that you will all get through heats without damage. May God bless you all.

I remain, my dear Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

PS. I think it would be best that the Vows should be renewed only annually until the Rule is approved. Though the senior part of the Community are morally Professed Sisters, few if any, have made Canonical Novitiates, and a "Sanatio" from the Holy See will be needed I suppose for you all. Till that comes, I should think Annual Vows would be best, Public Vows, but renewed in Community only, and without much ceremony.

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
 Nottingham

5th July 1883

My dear Child,

I thank you very much for your kind affectionate letter and only feel that I am altogether undeserving of it. There is nothing for me to forgive you, but you have my best wishes for your spiritual and temporal welfare. Thank you for all your prayers. If God takes you, you will know better how much they are needed, and will in your charity continue them. You have heard that God has called my dear Edith to Himself. She was so simple, pure, good and affectionate that I am confident she has entered into Glory, or will soon do so. She suffered so much and gained so many indulgences. I do not see the least imperfection in wishing to have as Purgatory. God is more glorified by our debts being paid beforehand, and by the desire to be united to Him in Glory without delay. Nay, I believe people have gone to Purgatory for not fearing it enough, and for not being so desirous to see God at once as they ought.

I have written to Fr. Gavin to tell him that he will probably hear from you shortly concerning the withdrawal of the Sisters, and that I had before approved the measure you are now taking. Do I understand that the Rules are actually passed and approved, or only that you have been told it probably will be so?

If dowries are to be exacted, it is well that you have a fair number of subjects to begin with, else postulants with dowries will hardly be so plentiful. One thing I think it desirable to mention.

I believe it is said that the Sisters are not sufficiently skilled Nurses. In a measure this must be true of nearly all, and certainly of the great majority. Their practice will not be enough for any real training, and of course there will be the mistakes and incompetence while getting practice. Therefore I think the Nursing lectures should be made a great deal more of than I think they are, someone really trained should give them, and the Sisters be individually examined as to their competence.

Unless the Convent be genuinely a Training Institution for Nursing, you will I fear come to grief. There will be invariably some sad accident, scandal, or complaint through incompetence. God has mercifully (... ?) it so far, but however means, should be carefully employed nevertheless.

May God Bless you all.

I remain, my dear Child,
 Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
 Nottingham

6th July 1883

My dear Child,

As to the Novitiate, I have no recollection of ever having expressed any wish whatever that the Novices should not be allowed to speak to the Professed. It would be contrary to all my feelings and to the customs of the Oratory. If you mean to say that you are told on authority that such separation is a universal law of the Church, applicable to all female communities, or that you have received orders from Propaganda to make the change, in either of those cases you had better do as you have been told, and I will hold my tongue. (As it is, I only wrote because Rev. Mother said I had wished for such a Rule.) If on the other hand the Rule is not a universal one, or you have had no special order, I do not think so important a change in the Rule could have been made without consulting me. Carrying out the Rule is one thing, and making the Rules is another. I should have thought that my Rules were in possession and in force, until Propaganda altered them. The advice of private individuals has not the authority of Propaganda. If it is a matter of universal discipline, Propaganda will no doubt insert it in the Rule, and then of course I have no more to say.

I have no wish about the house in which Mother Mary Francis should be. When my authority ceased, I advised her strongly to assure her Superiors that she was ready to go anywhere, and to do anything she was told, like any other Sister, and I have understood that she has acted on that advice. It is perfectly open to the Rev. Mother to place her where she will, or penance her if she deserves it.

As regards Melton, Mother Mary Michael was apparently very successful – but I hope Sister Mary Gabriel may be equally so. I think it is wonderful how you have succeeded in maintaining yourselves both at Rome and in England, and I am not in the least intending to complain of any extravagance. What I wished to say was that I believed your remarkable? Was owing to your strict observance of the Rule by absolutely refusing to get into debt for anything. I was therefore alarmed by the first notable infraction of that Rule by a debt of £20 having been incurred on the occasion I mentioned. I have no reason for supposing it to have been increased, and hope it may have been paid. I draw your attention to it, as I am convinced that any further departure from the strictness of that Rule would be very dangerous.

I am much obliged to Fr. O’Gorman for his opinion, but with deference to it I wish that there were better means of knowing the Propaganda Rules beforehand, and that a Bishop could only establish independent communities. In establishing an independent community one would have liked to know its Rules beforehand. However I suppose I should rather blame my own neglect to enquire more thoroughly into the matter. The responsibility for the good state and behaviour of the community will always in great measure remain with me, while I am here. That being so, I do not think it would mend matters to have an independent Priest Superior, as well as independent Nuns. I should certainly not wish or ask for any such arrangement. I have nothing to forgive you. Your position is a very difficult one, as you have now the duty and responsibility of governing. You have a right to act on your own judgement and indeed ought to do so.

I pray God bless and prosper you all. Thank Rev. Mother for her letter and give her my

blessing.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham.

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

28th July 1883

My dear Child,

I should have no particular objection to either of the plans you mention: but I cannot give any permission for them. You are not at present under my Episcopal jurisdiction, living as you do in Rome, and even if you were here, I do not know that you would need any permission to write to the papers to beg for a foundation elsewhere. You must do as you think best therefore. The substance however of the "Rule" under which the Community in this Diocese is to live, touches me more closely, and I cannot say that I am altogether pleased at the prospect of having a Rule imposed on it which I have never seen, and possibly may very much dislike. The essential basis and principal characteristics of the Institute I begun, have been swept away, and very properly, if they were uncanonical. But it leaves the Institute now coming into being, a new one, and one of which I have had no opportunity of judging whether I like it, such as I should have had, had I been asked to admit an Institute already founded.

If I did not like any existing Institute I could have refused to allow it to be founded in my Diocese. I think therefore that I have a right in justice and fair play, if not in Canon Law, to ask that no change should be suggested, or asked for in the Rule, by yourselves, and only those changes made, which Propaganda of its own motion requires and orders. It seems to me that this is fair, since you went to Rome with my letters to submit my Rule for approval, and not a different one. I fear however that I am late in the day in saying this, and that I shall find a heap of things suggested by you, and accepted by them; like the new tight Novitiate, which I so much dislike. I have but little hope of the Institute coming back as it went, with its spirit, (as I understand it) unchanged, and but little hope therefore of being able to feel any particular interest in it.

I have let myself in for it, and can only hope that the consequences may be as little objectionable as possible. I am very glad to hear you have been enabled to move into the country, as I was really afraid of the effects of the hot months in Rome, I mean of the very worst ones, as you must have suffered enough already.

May God bless you all. Pray for me and believe me, my dear Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

Let Rev. Mother see this please.

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

5th August 1883

My dear Child,

Thank you very much for your letter which pleases me, as it makes me understand the state of things much better than before. I think you would do well to have the Rule put into Italian, if you can conveniently. At any rate see that the alterations are correctly made. The re-arrangement of the order of it seems to be good. I shall like to know what is to be done about Poverty. If you know it, please do so. As to the Administration, of course I accept Propaganda's Ruling. The only thing I am anxious about is to know how the Council and Congregation are to act when their members are scattered, out nursing etc.

Is there to be voting by letter? Have the Councillors a right to be summoned if out Nursing. Is there any safeguard against what might be called packing a Council or passing votes when some Sisters were away who might oppose them etc. In a Congregation so liable to be scattered, there are vitally important questions. Serious abuses might creep in without any apparent breach of Rule if the cases are not carefully considered and provided for. There was no necessity for such provisions when the Bishop was despotic. If it be not made now the Superioress will become despotic, or could easily make herself so, by a little manoeuvring. If it is intended therefore that there should be no important general government without the Council, very special Rules about the summoning and voting of absent Councillors will be required.

As to your notes, I like the idea of Contemplative Sisters, but do not think they should be always silent or debarred from intercourse with those who go out, and at present I do not see how they could be maintained. I suppose a trial might be made of them, and a new branch of the Rule be worked out by experience, after the rest is approved. I am pained about Sister Mary Bernard. I do not remember to have heard of her being examined or taken to the Turkish Baths. I have given no direction about her since the change of Rule. Sometime before that I forget when, I said I thought that a disease which disabled her so long and made her vocation and future so uncertain should not go on without the doctor being allowed to know what really was amiss. Moreover we were responsible to her parents, and bound to do what was necessary for her cure. I did not hear that she had refused or objected to the examination so suggested. I do not remember to have heard that it was ever actually made, or anything whatever about it. I cannot say that I think an absolute rule should be made which might authorise a professed Sister to remain a helpless burden to the community, if it was really probable that an examination might enable the doctor to cure her. No doubt Superiors would almost always do well not to oblige anyone to such a thing, unless the necessity were clear and urgent.

I am glade you like the Rule. It is the first time you have given me any opinion about it. What I fear is, that the Community may come to resemble so many \Communities, which deal ruthlessly and cruelly, and to my thinking, often unjustly towards individuals, covering every piece of harshness by the plea of the good of the Community, just as if the Community had

any more business to be hard and selfish than the individual would have. Sudden dismissals with no apparent cause or warning have often shocked me in Communities. The cessation of intercourse with Novices (which I am glad to hear does not continue) seemed to me harsh and unsisterly, and I have been obliged to strike out a passage in the proof I sent you, as I cannot at all agree it or think it right. If every unhappy Novice (or even those who have made first Vows) is to be turned out because they have been careless or not given entire satisfaction, I think it would be most discouraging and often most mischievous and unjust. If you do not like my correction you may if you prefer it, strike out the whole thing, but I cannot give it my Imprimatur as it stands.

I do not think that anything will take away my interest in or affection for the Community unless it be any appearance of such a harsh or selfish spirit in the Council. It used in days gone by, often appear, and I had continually to resist it and shield individuals from it. All I could do now would be to pay no attention, take no part, and take no interest. But I pray God it may never be so, and that the spirit of gentleness, long-suffering and mercy may always animate the Community as a whole, as well as its individual members. God bless you my dear Child and prosper your work. I hope you are better. May God bless you all. (I object to nothing else about the Novitiate except the total separation.)

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

14th August 1883

My Dear Child,

Thank you for your letter, and promise to try and send me a Rule when you conveniently can. I am very glad to hear you have rented nice premises with a garden, for a Convent. It is a great blessing.

What is intended about the head house? Is it to be in Rome or here? Is the Community to be an English one or a Roman one? If the Head House and Novitiate are at Rome, of course it will soon cease to be an English Community. The English houses will be branch houses, governed (before long) by Italian Superioresses. Is that what is intended?

The College has done fairly well, and if we open next week with 45 pupils, as I am told is expected, I shall be well pleased. The Club also has done well, but of course not much during the summer. Next week I open Grimsby Church, St. Patrick's Nottingham in September and St. Edith's Oakham, in October. I am glad the Cardinal Vicar thinks at least one of you is "piena di carita" – perhaps he did.

May God bless you all,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

8th September 1883

My dear Child,

Thank you for your two letters, which I have not been able to answer sooner. I am glad M. M. Philip is better, and hope the others are so too. I shall be very glad if you will send me a copy of the proposed Rule as quickly as may be, so that I may see if there is any suggestion or alteration to be made before it goes before the Cardinal. Is a dowry required and if so how much? Is the begging still to be permitted? Will Nursing confinement cases be permitted to any, and if so, to what extent? Of course I mean permitted in the proposed draft. You cannot of course foresee what the Cardinal will permit. I do not understand you, when you say the responsibility rests with me about admitting to the Renewal of Vows. Does the Rule give the Bishop any power of vetoing those whom the Community has passed either as Postulants, or for the Novitiate or Profession? If it so meant it should be so expressed, I do not understand it, (unless there is some grave and evident cause.) I see however no reason for your stopping any of them.

Mother M. Agnes is a useful Nurse and has no idea whatever of quitting a Convent life, nor can she think of anything to suit her better than where she is. I have examined the three, and find all three disposed to renew their Vows for one year, or three as you might direct. They would all prefer three and I see no reason against it. Write and say if it should be for three. Sister M. Juliana was unsettled at being passed over. I only scolded her for want of humility. At the same time I repeat what I have often said. Unless for some distinct punishment for some fault, often pointed out and left uncorrected I altogether disapprove of the trial periods being prolonged, or of juniors being promoted over the head of their seniors. The trial time appointed by the Rule ought to be sufficient for forming a judgement and either accepting or rejecting the Candidate. I am uneasy, very uneasy at what you say about the Council. If votes are passed before you have given your opinion fatal mistakes may be made. Three or four juniors inexperienced and heedlessly following one another, might determine the most important questions before the Superiors were even heard!!! Let the juniors give their opinion first, in order, and then you give yours last. When all have spoken, let reasonable questions be asked and answers given, a moderate debate in fact. Then, and not until then, let the votes be taken all round, the majority deciding.

The Oratory Rule prescribes this, and even orders that except in pressing or trifling matters, the voting Congregation should be held the same day, after the consulting one. The order I have given followed at our Bishop's meeting. With respect to absent Councillors I should say "let the opinions of the home Sisters be sent to each absent one along with the question. Let each absent one send her opinion and vote. Then let the home Sisters vote also, and the majority decide. If it be thought that the absent Sisters might change their votes, on a more thorough knowledge of the others views, let the opinions be sent back for reconsideration.

As regards M. Mary Francis she has, so far as I can see and learn, behaved most excellently for many months past. She is quite prepared to do anything at home or at a branch house, you may like to trust her with, and I think she may be trusted. I have no objection to Sr.

Aloysius going out, or any one you will. I think you might fairly ask for Sister Mary Michael to be sent out by the Archbishop Executors. But for him she would have stayed in Rome. Why should you lose what you paid for her passage out? She did not seem to know what exactly you were blaming her, nor indeed do I.

I hope you will be able to come home when the Rule is settled. If you say the Mother House is to be here, the Governing Body should as much as possible be concentrated here. As regards Melton and Quorndon I do not wish to make any change, and should not think any advisable at any rate till things are settle. If you can get two copies of the "Pianta di Roma" which I gave you, I should be glad if you would send them to me.
(NB this letter is incomplete)

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

14th September 1883

My dear Child,

You do not say what has come to your ears, so I will not pretend to discuss it. I think I have said pretty much what I thought. I objected to the Novitiate Rule and the way in which it was ordered, and supposing of course you had no command from authority, and if you had, you should have let me know.

As for Sister Michael I did not know she had taken any Vows and have not said anything about them. If I had been anxious about what was going on, it is because I have had so little definite information either as to what it was proposed to put into the amended Rule for approbation, or as to the mode of Government which took the place of mine, when mine was put an end to. The Council was divided into two nearly equal parts and I heard nothing as to how it was consulted and came to its conclusions. When I found an important new measure like the Novitiate suddenly put into force, I naturally wondered by what authority, things were done. I have learned more about you by Rev. Mother's recent letters, but still have little or no definite information either about the present or future Government of the Community, or about the proposed alterations in the Rules.

I do not all say that you are bound to send me copies of the proposed new Regulations, or to keep me informed of everything.. I am only explaining how it is that I may at times have expressed anxiety about your proceedings, for I suppose it is something of that kind which you say has come to your ears. I shall continue to be anxious as long as you have no duly authorised form of Government.

I returned my last proof to Richardson, the one before, I sent you. I fear I cannot promise much in the way of a Preface, but I will write something in the way of recommendation as well as I can. I am sorry you have been so very ill, but no doubt God has given you many precious graces through it. The nearness of death must make one more humble and thoughtful. I will pray both for you and your sister.

Praying God to bless you all, and you and Rev. Mother in particular. I remain my dear child,

your affectionate Father in Christ,
+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

18th September 1883

My dear Child,

Thank you for the two maps and for the copy of the Rule. Thanks also for all the details about the Rule proposed. I like very well all that you tell me about them, but shall of course be glad if it can be managed to see the text of all that the Consulter has changed in, or added to, my draft. I should by no means wish to risk displeasing or losing him, but it might be some little inconvenience might be saved, or advantage gained if I had the opportunity of reading them, and making any suggestion to him through you. As you say you have suggested to him the point in my last letter.

I shall be happy to give the one year's Vows to all the Sisters who have made the two years Novitiate, whom the Council presents. It will save the necessity of a whole year at Rome for a fresh Novitiate, and they will still be on trial. I will also give the Cross and Ring to Monica and Raphael. Sister Michael seems to have acted most wrongly about the letters and should be rigorously made to obey in such matters.

(Lady Herbert is a dangerous person, without meaning it. I have heard that her tongue runs wildly.) As for private Vows, the Community may ignore them and I did not know she made any others.

Whether Sister M. returns to Rome or not, her fare there I think, should be got from the Archbishop's Executors. I hope you will soon get strong now the cold weather is coming on. Miss Edwards has left Nottingham for London. I have not her address and I do not know what she is doing. I trust Rev. Mother is getting stronger. Give her my blessing and with the same to yourself and the others.

I remain my dear Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,
+Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

3rd December 1883

My dear Child,

I do not myself see anything against receiving illegitimate children, you will be able to find out what is thought of it there, better than I.

I should have no objection to your having Perpetual Adoration at Hyson Green if the expense,

Chaplain etc. be provided. I suppose you could not so engage to carry it on, as not to include the condition "so long as it is morally possible." For want of Novices, engagement of Sisters elsewhere, as in an epidemic, or otherwise, might prevent it.

I should be very glad to make Mrs. Jarvis's acquaintance if she will come here. Quordon must first be paid for. It owes £300, and £100 more to me. I must at any rate get the first sum paid off. I am having the schoolroom made with four rooms, with offices and a piece of garden. Front door towards common, separate house, probably Priests house, paying myself rent out of Diocesan Mission Funds. I am throwing bake house and Father Nolan's old room into the Convent, and putting that in order, paying myself rent on behalf of Barrow School, say £10 per annum and out of the Diocesan school fund. Separate bit of garden, front door through kitchen. The Priest's present house, I shall let to some extern with a small bit of garden, (or for men's hospital, if women in present house.)

By the three rents I shall pay interest and soon pay off principal of £400 and £70 for alterations. By this plan the Sisters would gain a good Kitchen, a good Sitting Room, a better Reception Room, (i.e. their present Kitchen with partition removed) and two small Bedrooms. If you like to have a small Hospital, the present upstairs range would accommodate 8 or 10 female patients and two Sisters, the other Sisters sleeping in Father Nolan's part, now disused. Signor Marioni's offer was in aid of a Hospital, but no plan, and as you see, there are as yet no premises. I said I must have more property unless he wished to give the money unconditionally. I have heard no more. As for Mr. Robson, we must have a definite plan before asking him.

I am glad to hear about the Fathers of St. Camillus, and that you are doing so well. I hope the Rule will soon be done, I hope for a good Postulant then, i.e. Miss Clayton. I am not sure of her, so do not speak of it, and her parents would oppose., so the Rule had best be settled first.

God Bless you all,

In haste, ever your affectionate Father in Christ,

+Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

19th May 1884

My dear Child,

It was a very great pleasure to me to see you handwriting again, and made doubly so by the pleasant contents of your letter. It is indeed a thing to thank God for, that the Order is so approved and the Rules, with whatever alterations, sanctioned, as I gather from your letter it is now certain they will be

You speak however of the obstacle of your being in only one Diocese as if it still was an obstacle. Perhaps it may prevent the approval being so final as it might have been, but

apparently it will not prevent its being given now very shortly. I am rejoiced also very much at the news about the confinement cases, both because they are so important, and because they would help your finances so much. If you could by any means lead them to release in any way the Rule against being present at the time, by showing how very seriously this one point would hinder your getting engagements, and how it would hamper your work, it would be an immense gain. Since the permission given by the Cardinal, such a concession seems to me not hopeless. At any rate much has been gained. If you think the time has come for the Sisters here to begin again to take such cases, please send them word.

I think you should accept the Archbishop of Sydney's offer, but I should like you to get some instructions as to how the distant Community would be related to the Mother House in practise. Even coming home for the Novitiate would be an immense expense, and a Mother Provincial and separate Novitiate would seem to be necessary. Clear up these points. You would then more or less have to get volunteers, i.e. send those Sisters who would not mind going away from home practically for life. For communications, except by letter would be I fear almost out of the question.

Thank Mother Philip for her most kind letter and give her my blessing. I agree in the arrangement proposed about the one she speaks of. As to the photo, hitherto it has been really almost impossible. I have been awfully busy, and neuralgia and unwell, am pretty low at the moment. Should I find you at Rome D.V. at the end of October, if I came this year? It is not impossible I may be able to do so, but have not made up my mind. As to the Sisters going out to Rome annually and back, the expense is the only difficulty but it seems a big one. May God bless you many times and all your dear children. Pray for my poor soul.

I am ever, my dear child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,
+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

6th July 1884

My dear Child,

Thank you very much for the book which is very useful, as for the rug, I beg Rev. Mother to appropriate and use it. I have all the rugs I want, both in and out of the Confessional, and I should like Rev. Mother to have that. I don't quite approve of Sister Michael's little joke about the citron, not to say it was an untruth. I think Father Nolan gave up his connection with Fenianism if he had any, long ago at the time of its condemnation. As regards Father Mitchell I am quite prepared to speak strongly whenever things are so told me, as that I can do so, but hitherto Mother M. Magdalen seems afraid lest it should vex him, and make things

worse. I see no reason for fear. You do not depend on the priests, and their gossip now could not hurt you at Rome, nor in any way that I can see.

I do not think my money affairs and others, will make it convenient for me to go to Rome this Autumn. The time of everybody would be occupied by the Irish Archbishops and Bishops appointed to go there then, so I shall wait till next year.

I am most anxious that the Mother House should be properly constituted as soon as possible after the Rule is approved, if it is to be approved. For this and the good Government of the Order it seems to me to be quite necessary that the Council at least should be here, and the Superioresses, Vicaresses, if she herself is unable to return.

The Roman House is not even a house at all yet, and I should not at all like the Order in England to be for long, governed from a distance.

God grant that Mother Mary regain strength sufficiently to be able to return this autumn. If it is impossible, I think two at least of the Mothers there should be sent home, that the Council may be constituted here. But I wish with all my heart that both you and Rev. Mother might return soon. Is she sick at sea? If not, a sea voyage all the way might do her good, and it would of course be far less fatiguing than the Railway. Something should be arranged for when the Rule is approved.

May God bless you all.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,
+Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham
11th August 1884

My dear Child,

I have been, and am, so much pressed for time that I have not been able to go to the Retreat, and I must write briefly now. I trust you are better, and that the terrible heats are abating. Dr. Gualdi speaks of the necessity of your remaining in Rome "for a few years." Of course this implies that Rome will be the Mother House for the same time. Where the Superioress and principal members of the Council are, there will the Government be and the Mother House. As you are all of the same opinion I will not interfere, but as it is an English Community, depending upon an English Novitiate, it has to be considered whether it is safe to leave the bulk of the Community under a provisional Government for so long. Mind I am not questioning at all the great good gained by your having been in Rome, and so shown there the Nature and Spirit of the Institute, and possibly remaining there till the approval. Then the Roman House (if it be then really made a House) ceases to be of such primary importance. I should have thought as the Mother House and Novitiate, and the removal of the Centre of Government from the latter for some years, seems to me a risky thing. However there are strong reasons on the other side, including your health and the difficulty of your travelling, so let things be.

Mrs. Powis now speaks of giving only £10 or £20 additional help to the new Pastor of the Mission for some extra Expositions. The new Pastor is full of promise, a Priest of experience and virtue, gentle and kind, called Father Golden. Father Mitchell ceases to have charge on

Monday week. You will hear of the things I was told last Saturday.

I think a new site should be looked for, for the new Convent, and the present one sold, or better, turned into a Hospital. A Hospital attached to the Mother House would be in every way a gain. Quorndon as now altered and improved, would receive a dozen Convalescents well, which would do good, and make money. The Sisters would have their rooms apart. Give Mother Philip and the rest, my kindest regards and blessing, and with the same to yourself.

I remain my dear Child,

Your affectionate Father in Christ,
+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

19th August 1884

My dear Child,

It is better that you should remain in Rome for some time to come, for your health and all the other reasons given. I am glad of the arrangement which Mother Magdalen tells me is made, that her decisions as respects the Sisters here are no longer appealed from, and that she has her own Council. This will give sufficient authority to the Roman Government. Of course you with your Council there, will direct and be consulted in all general measures of importance. I think you will hear good accounts of Father Golden, the new Missioner of Hyson Green instead of Father Mitchell. He is very good and virtuous, with much experience, wonderfully sweet tempered and good natured. He is a general favourite. The Convent of the Sacred Heart of the Order of Peace was opened on the Assumption at Bluebell Hill, Nottingham. I think a great work will be done there in having and training girls etc.

I cannot write more just now, but send my affectionate blessings to your self, Mother M. Philip and the rest.

Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

25th August 1884

My dear Child,

I am very glad to get your letter, because I hope from it that there is a chance of a better state

of things than now is. My own belief is that Mother M. Magdalen is ruining the temporalities, and Mother M. Michael, the spiritualities, of the Convent. I feel certain that the former is seriously in debt. I know she was a little while ago, and (against all Rule and propriety being the Superior) she keeps the bursarship in her own hands, so that no one, neither you nor I nor the Council can know how things are.

M.M. Michael is self opinionated, obstinate and full of humours and passions and quite capable of Irish intrigue. I have always lamented her appointment her appointment as Novice Mistress and believe she will do great harm to the Community if she keeps the Office. M.M. Magdalene and Michael pull together and rule everything. Agnes and Francis are ciphers, without any office or influence, and afraid to speak their minds, even to you. I think the Community will go to pieces if things go on as now.

I do not in the least know how the elections or appointments are made, or ought to be made Canonically. My Rule is squashed and nothing in the place of it, but considering this abnormal state of things, and the removal to Rome of the influential and capable Sisters etc. I think my wishes should be regarded. I most earnestly wish and require that a change should be made.

Mother M. Francis should have the bursarship with full knowledge of accounts and money matters, and with orders to send periodical statements to you. Mother M. Agnes should be Novice Mistress, she is motherly and gentle and much more spiritual than Michael who is totally untrained, and unfit to train anybody. I should much prefer Raphael being substituted for Michael on the Council, but this might be too strong perhaps. Could she not be added to it? The home Council is very small, and Mother M. Magdalen has of course always a casting vote in her own favour, so that with Michael she is completely unchecked. I hope you can carry out my wishes. Anyhow I protest officially against Mother M. Magdalen holding the Bursarship along with the Superior Office, and against her getting into debt, also against the smallness of the Hyson Green Council.

Take courage my dear Child and trust in God. He will never abandon you, and all storms will soon pass away. My kindest regards and blessings to you and to dear Rev. Mother. I do wish you could both be here as well as in Rome.

My blessing to you all

Your affectionate Father in Christ
+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

I believe Mother M. Francis is very much changed for the better, and much more reliable than she was.

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

1st September 1884

My dear Child,

I should like very well to take more interest in the Community affairs, and to encourage and help the Sisters occasionally, but of course I can do nothing of the kind, unless I am asked or

appealed to, except by holding a formal invitation. I certainly am much surprised at your saying Sisters having left, without my hearing a word about it, but perhaps you don't mean lately. In the Sisters of Mercy they never send any one away without asking my leave.

If you all there decide on Mother M. Francis being Bursar, I will insist on her appointment as such, and if you ask me to do so, I will enquire about Mother M. Elizabeth's debts and why she does not answer you straight forwardly. The former I could well do on my own authority, as it is a breach of the Rule to incur debts, but I would rather do so in your name. I think it would be well to have Mother Mary Michael, the Novice Mistress out there. It would do her much good and I do not think would be much risk. I shall wait and see what your next letter says. If you want to help me in carrying out any arrangements, say so. I should indeed like to see Rev. Mother again. I hope God will spare her till we can meet. Give her my special blessing and ask her prayers for me and several Diocesan undertakings. God bless you my dear Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother M. Philip

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

18th November 1884

My dear Child,

I have just received from Mother Mary Magdalen, to my great grief the sad news of dear Rev. Mother's dangerous illness and terrible sufferings. I hope that even yet she may get better, and that God may spare her to us. Truly she has been nailed to the Cross with Jesus, and will have immense reward in proportion to her great love and fidelity in suffering. Give her my most affectionate blessing, and assure her of my prayers and Masses for her. I do trust God will spare her till I can see her again in the Spring.

I have been much from home and exceedingly pressed with letters, or should have written sooner. I will consider what is best to do about the matter you write of. Thank Agatha very much for her nice letter.

With my blessing and sympathy to you all, I am ever, my dear Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

To Mother Mary Potter

St. Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham

26th November 1884

My dearest Child in Our Lady,

I hope this may find you better and in much less pain. It is dreadful to read the account of what you have been suffering. Your desire to suffer for Jesus will have made it easier for you, and immensely increased your reward. When you get to Heaven you must get for me some little desire for suffering, for unhappily I have none. I hardly realised how much we should all miss you, till God seemed to be on the point of taking you. I hope He will still spare you to us all. If not, it will be a great trial for all your children, and for me also. I hope still to see you after Easter next. I do not see how I can come before, and I trust we may rejoice together over the approval of the Rule, and the establishment of the work for which you have so much prayed and suffered.

As for me, I hope through your prayers and those of my good children to get at last to Heaven which I am far from deserving for my self. May God ever bless and console you.

Believe me, my dearest Child,
Your affectionate Father in Christ,

+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham

No header as to whom this letter was addressed.

Saint Barnabas Cathedral
Nottingham
19th February 1886

..... As regards the singing of the "Te Deum", it is premature to throw about charges of falsehood. The clear and positive evidence I have that it was sung, together with the "Magnificat" by the Community, on receipt of your letter announcing the decision of Propaganda is not contradicted by the two Sisters who write. Only one of them alludes to the Te Deum, the other says only that it was sung on the day my letter arrived. It was a day or two afterwards when yours came from Rome. I do not care either to discuss or blame the various proceedings by which the Community has been made something quite different from what I intended it to be, and almost wholly withdrawn from my care and influence, or the dispositions of the Sisters in respect of this change.

The change itself necessarily alters our relations with one another, and my feelings towards the Community. The position of the Governing body since then, appears to me abnormal and irregular and several of its acts I have disapproved.

Yours very sincerely in Christ,
+ Edward, Bishop of Nottingham
