

L.S.,

It is the dream of every archivist of a religious Congregation sooner or later to discover some authentic manuscript of the Founder.

This dream was realised for me mid-December last year.

Towards the end of 1993, while I was searching among the letters of Fr Eymard for any that could have been written on the subject of Belgium I was often taken by the desire to get my hands on one or other authentic letter of the Founder, or at least a good photocopy. It seemed to me that to discover an authentic letter of Fr Eymard here in Belgium was no Utopian dream. I had three sources available. Let us say immediately that the first two (Rev. Fr. Van Derker s.j. at Ghent, and the descendants of Mme de Courtebourne) have yielded nothing, at least up to the present day.

The third source was obviously the correspondence with Mlle de Meeûs. The "Supplementary Correspondence" lists at least 22 letters from Fr Eymard to Mlle de Meeûs. I knew that the letters had been transcribed long in the past, but in our day we have better means, like photocopies that provide a true image of these letters and allow us to correct any chance faults made during their transcription. I also knew that Fr Daix had some regular contact with the Religious of the Eucharist, daughters of Mlle de Meeûs. As he was right there on the spot in Brussels, he was the person indicated to try to get a grip on the matter.

But months passed without any (good) news, and I had already abandoned all hope when towards mid-December I received a call from Gerard: his approach to the Religious had born fruit; he had received on loan from the Religious a collection of letters, among them those of Fr Eymard.

When I had this packet of letters in hand and had checked the authors, to my great amazement I counted, instead of 22, 28 letters from the hand of Fr Eymard. This means that I had discovered at one blow 6 letters of the Founder unknown up to that day.

Further, I also found 'Notes written by Fr Eymard to be placed in the "*Bien Public*" before a sermon at Ghent', and a number of letters of our first Fathers in Brussels. To cite only one example: in this collection were found no less than 30 unknown letters of Fr Leroyer, the first Father of the Blessed Sacrament to stay about a month (October 1864) in Belgium to preach here and in some way to prepare the terrain. These 30 letters uncover for us the important role, almost totally unknown before now, of Fr Leroyer in the foundation in Brussels.

I leave you the job of uncovering the rest, because you will find in the present collection all the contents of the bundle of letters and documents. Needless to say, they are a precious help in better understanding the rather painful situation at the beginning of the Institute and of the foundation in Brussels.

A few more words before plunging into the reading:

1. I have arranged everything chronologically in order to facilitate the understanding of facts as they unfold. In this regard, I recall some dates for you:

Opening Salazar:	2 February 1866
Opening St Anne:	17 November 1867
Closure Salazar:	13 March 1873.

2. I have left with the authors of these letters and manuscripts the right to make spelling or other mistakes, that is to say, I have respected the text just as it is, even if it contained obvious errors, for example Aymard for Eymard, close for clause, Bonne for Boone, etc. To avoid adding more, I have compared the text with the original many times.

To conclude, my heartfelt thanks to the Religious of the Eucharist for having so graciously loaned us this correspondence.

Lommel, January 15, 1995.
Fr. Stalmans, Provincial Archivist.