

Letter 088  
Dordrecht, 16 March 1877

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter; I will make sure you find a note from me in Amsterdam. I hope we shall see each other next Sunday; it will be delightful to be together again.

Many congratulations on Willemein's birthday – what a nice little girl she is getting to be. She will receive from home *The Wide, Wide World*, and I am sending her Christmas at the Pole by Bungener.

I am glad that you are going on a business trip soon, it will be a nice change for you.

"I am so lonely and sad," you say. "And yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

It is good to think of Jesus in all places and circumstances. How difficult the life of the peasants in Brabant is, for instance, that of Aerssen<sup>1</sup>; what is the source of their strength? And those poor women, what supports them in life? Don't you think it is what the artist painted in his "Light of the World"?

You do not know how I am drawn to the Bible; I read it daily, but I should like to know it by heart and to view life in the light of that phrase, "Thy word is a light unto my path and a lamp unto my feet" [*sic*, Ps. 119:105]. I hope and believe that my life will be changed somehow, and that this longing for Him will be satisfied; I too am sometimes sad and lonely, especially when I walk around a church or parsonage.

Let's not give in, but try to be patient and gentle. And do not mind being eccentric; keep yourself to yourself, and distinguish between good and evil for your own sake even if you do not show it outwardly.

"Do not depart from life without having openly demonstrated your love for Christ in some way or other," Claudius says.

You have had an experience that can make you wise for a whole lifetime, do not forget it. "Nourris-moi du pain de mes larmes, vérité enseignez moi" [feed me on the bread of my tears, truth teach me].

Hate sin; remember how Father prayed every morning, "Deliver us from evil, especially from the evil of sin," and well he knows.

I am looking forward to Sunday, and hope you will have a good journey. Work is always a good thing, "There is something good in all labour." I am busy every day until late at night, but I am glad of it.

The storks are here already, but I have not heard any larks yet. The sky is often stormy, and then one sees swarms of rooks and starlings.

The photograph "Mater Dolorosa" which you sent me is hanging in my room. Do you remember, it was always hanging in Father's study at Zundert?

Well, Theo, have a good time, we will see each other soon. I am eager to see the prints you write about; till Sunday, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother, Vincent

1. A day labourer who also acted as gardener at the parsonage in Zundert.