

Letter 094
Dordrecht, 30 April 1877

Dear Theo,

Many happy returns of the day; I hope you will have a good time, and great prosperity in the year that is to come. Time passes so quickly, the days fly by; still, something must remain, and the past is not totally lost. We may become richer and firmer of mind, of character, of heart; we may become richer in God; we may become richer in the pure gold of life, the love for each other, and the feeling "I am not alone, for the Father is with me."

So be it with us all; that prayer of our father's is a good one: "Unite us closely, O Lord, and let love toward Thee strengthen this bond more and more."

I hope to see you soon, for I intend to stop off at The Hague before going on to Amsterdam. Don't breathe a word to anyone, for my only wish is to be close to you. Next Wednesday morning I am leaving for Etten where I intend to spend several days; then, I put my hand to the plough.

I wish you had been here yesterday; in the morning I heard the farewell sermon of the Reverend Mr. Hooyer in the French church. The church was crowded, and he spoke with fire and enthusiasm; the sight of that grave, distinguished congregation struck me – the whole had an extremely serious atmosphere. He expressed his thanks for the love he had been shown by many, particularly during the trying times in the beginning, four years ago, when he had to wrestle with the difficulties of preaching in the French language; for he is a Dutchman. Several of the other preachers were here in the church. Yesterday's sermon happened to be on the same words he had preached about that first time. "Now we look through a mirror into a dark reason, now I only know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known myself."

In the afternoon I was in the Great Church to hear the reverend Mr. Keller van Hoorn; his text was, "Our Father." In the evening I heard the Reverend Mr. Greeff, whom I also heard the first Sunday night I was here in Dordrecht. May the Lord bless thee and keep thee. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and give thee peace. The Lord make thee pray high prayers and think high thoughts. The Lord be thy keeper and the shade upon thy right hand. May He be with thee always until the end of the world.

After church I walked along the path behind the station where we walked together; my thoughts were full of you, and I wished we might be together. I walked on to the churchyard at the end of a black cinder track through the meadows – they looked so beautiful in the twilight. The churchyard reminds me of that drawing by Apol in *Eigen Haard*;¹ a moat surrounds it, and there is a house circled by pine trees – last night a light was shining kindly through the windows – it is an old house, and looks like a parsonage.

Much good may be in store for us in the future; let us learn to repeat with Father: "I never despair," and, with Uncle Jan "If black is the devil, it is always better to look him in the eyes."

Write again soon; next Wednesday I shall be in Etten. Do you have De Plancy's *Légendes des Artistes*, with wood engravings after Rochussen? I hope to bring it for you. Between times I have worked through the whole story of Christ from a catechism book of Uncle Stricker's and copied the texts; they reminded me of so many pictures by Rembrandt and others. I hope and believe I will not repent my choosing to try to become a real Christian and a Christian worker. Yes, everything in my past experience may contribute to it: through the acquaintance of cities like London and Paris and life in schools like those at Ramsgate and Isleworth, one is strongly drawn and attached to many things and books from the Bible, e.g., Acts of the Apostles. Knowledge of and love for the work and the life of such men as Jules Breton, Millet, Jacque, Rembrandt, Bosboom and so many others may become a source of new thoughts. What a resemblance there is between the work and life of Father and that of these men; I value Father's higher still. May God help us, boy. A handshake and once more the very best wishes from
Your loving brother, Vincent

Kind regards to the Roos family.

1. A Dutch magazine.