

Letter 106
Amsterdam, 18 August 1877

Dear Theo,

I long to write to you again, perhaps it will be a rather long time before we see each other; at all events I hope we shall be in Etten together at Christmas. It was Aunt Mina's birthday last Sunday, and being there that evening, Uncle Stricker asked me a few things about my work, and did not seem to be dissatisfied... I feel that I have made some progress.

Thursday I had a nice morning; Uncle Jan had gone to Utrecht, and I had to be at Stricker's at seven o'clock because Jan was going to Paris and I had promised to see him off. So I got up early and saw the workmen arrive in the yard while the sun was shining brightly. You would be intrigued by the sight – that long line of black figures, big and small, first in the narrow street where the sun just peeps in, and later in the yard. Then I breakfasted on a piece of dry bread and a glass of beer – that is what Dickens advises for those who are on the point of committing suicide, as being a good way to keep them, at least for some time, from their purpose. And even if one is not in such a mood, it is right to do it occasionally, while thinking, for instance, of Rembrandt's picture, "The Men of Emmaus." Before I went to Stricker's, I walked through the Jewish quarter and along the Buitenkant, the Old Teertuinen, Zeedyk, Warmoes Straat, and around the Oudezijds Chapel and the Old and the South churches, through all kinds of old streets with forges and coopers' shops, etc., and through narrow alleys, like the Niezel, and canals with narrow bridges, like those we saw that evening at Dordrecht. It was interesting to watch the start of a new day's work there.

I have written a composition in which all the parables are arranged in proper order, and the miracles, etc. I am doing the same in English and French, and expect to be able to write it later in Latin and Greek too. In the daytime I have to prepare for Mendes, and so I am doing it late in the evening, or for instance as today, deep in the night or early in the morning. After being in England and France so long, it would not be right if I did not acquire a thorough mastery of their languages at last, or at least keep them up. It is written, "Polissez-le sans cesse (sic) et le repolissez" [Polish it (your work) all the time, and polish it again], and also, "Travaillez, prenez de la peine" [Work, take pains].

How are you, boy? Write soon if you can. You thought I was right in returning the money, didn't you? You know that I would have just loved to come and shake hands with you, and also to see the exhibition, but for the present I do not go out of town on Sundays, I must not.

This morning I had a talk with Mendes about M. Maris, and showed him that lithograph of those three children, and also "A Baptism," and he understood them very well. Mendes reminds me now and then of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ," by Ruyperez.

Have you heard anything about Carolien? I had to go to Utrecht on the day of Hendrik's¹ wedding reception; I congratulated them for you, too. It was a very stylish affair; the room was very beautifully decorated, and the bride looked lovely.

In Utrecht I saw the Cathedral and another old church, and the university building, which reminds one of the cloisters near Westminster Abbey. Goodbye, Theo, have a good time, my compliments to the Roos family. Uncle Jan sends you his regards, à Dieu, a handshake from

Your loving brother, Vincent

1. Uncle Jan van Gogh's son.