

# ACA, Cancillería, Reg. 1751 — Violant de Bar to Charles VI of France

## Document Summary

A courtesy letter in Catalan from Queen Violant de Bar to Charles VI, King of France, dated 25 March 1387 from Barcelona. The letter follows the standard formulae of royal health inquiries: Violant requests news of the French king's health, reports that she, her children, and Joan I are well, and notes that Joan is convalescing from an illness and is expected to recover fully in short order. The letter closes with a conventional offer of service. It is sealed under Violant's secret seal and was prepared by the chancery scribe Bartholomeus Sirvent.

The letter is notable as a piece of very early diplomatic correspondence from Joan I's reign — he acceded on 5 January 1387, and Violant is here writing to her Valois cousin barely three months into the new reign. The mention of Joan's convalescence is of particular interest: this may relate to the illness that reportedly struck Joan shortly after his accession, and it shows Violant taking on the role of correspondent with the French crown on matters of royal health and dynastic courtesy.

---

## Reconciled Transcription

Molt alt e poderos princep e cosi molt car desijants continuament ab fervent desitj saber vra sanitat e bon estament vos pregam tan afectuosament co podem que per vres honorables letres nos en vullats certifficar tota vegada que'us sia en avinent car cosa serva de qu'ens farets plaer molt gran que fort nos grahirem. E car sabem que semblantment vos plaurea saber nre bon estat vos notificam que nos e nres Infants som sans e en bona disposicio de nres persones. E quel senyor Rey marit e senyor nre molt car es en tanta conualescencia de sa malaltia que dins breu s'espera cert guarir perfetament gracias a nre senyor deu. E si alcunes coses vos placen cosi molt car que nos fer puscam fetsles nos saber e seran complides encontinent. la s[an]ta trinitat vos tinga en sa guarda e faça tots temps prosperar segons vres vots. Dada en Barchinona sots nre segell secret a xxv dies de marc del any M ccc lxxx<sup>o</sup> vij. la Reyna.

ffuit directa Regi ffrancie.

d[omi]na R[egin]a ma[n]d[avi]t michi / Barth[olome]o Sirvent / Probatum

---

## Annotated English Translation

Most high and powerful prince and very dear cousin: desiring continually with fervent desire to know of your health and good estate, we beseech you as affectionately as we can that by your honorable letters you should be willing to certify us<sup>1</sup> every time that it may be convenient to you,<sup>2</sup> for it is a thing that serves to give us very great pleasure, which we shall greatly appreciate. And because we know that you would likewise be pleased to know of our good estate, we notify you that we and our children<sup>3</sup> are healthy and in good bodily disposition. And that the lord King, our very dear husband and lord, is in such convalescence from his illness<sup>4</sup> that within a

short time he is certainly expected to heal perfectly, thanks to our lord God. And if there are any things that please you, very dear cousin, that we may do, let us know and they shall be fulfilled immediately. May the Holy Trinity keep you in its guard and cause you to prosper at all times according to your wishes. Given in Barcelona under our secret seal on the 25th day of March of the year 1387.<sup>5</sup> The Queen.

\*[It] was directed to the King of France.\*<sup>6</sup>

\*The lady Queen commanded me, Bartholome[o] Sirvent. Verified.\*<sup>7</sup>

---

## Footnotes

1. *certifficar*: i.e., to inform by letter. The doubled *-ff-* is a scribal orthographic feature, not a distinct word.
  2. *tota vegada que'us sia en avinent*: "every time that it may be convenient to you." The expression *ésser en avinent* is a formulaic Catalan construction meaning "to be convenient, to arise, to be at hand." The manuscript reading of *avinent* was initially difficult due to minim compression in the *-vinent* sequence; see Unresolved Ambiguities below.
  3. *nres Infants*: Violant and Joan's children. At the date of this letter (March 1387), their surviving offspring included the infantes Jaume (b. 1382), Violant (b. 1381), and possibly Joan (b. c. 1384, d. young). The precise number of living children at this date requires further prosopographical verification.
  4. Joan I's illness early in his reign is attested in several sources. The nature of the malady is not specified here. Given the timing — less than three months after his accession on 5 January 1387 — this convalescence may be connected to the episodes later cited by his critics as evidence of incapacity or excessive devotion to leisure.
  5. 25 March 1387 (new style). Note that in some Aragonese dating conventions, 25 March could also coincide with the feast of the Annunciation, which in certain chancery reckoning systems served as a new year marker. There is no indication of Incarnation-style dating here; the year is given explicitly as 1387.
  6. *ffuit directa Regi ffrancie*: The chancery note identifying the addressee as the King of France, i.e., Charles VI (r. 1380–1422). The double-*f* initial is a standard chancery orthographic convention.
  7. *domina Regina mandavit michi / Bartholomeo Sirvent / Probatum*: The standard *iussio* formula identifying the authority under which the letter was issued (the Queen's command) and the scribe who executed it. Bartholomeus Sirvent appears as a chancery functionary in this register. *Probatum* ("verified") indicates that the letter was checked against its minute or otherwise approved before dispatch.
- 

## Unresolved Ambiguities

1. ***avinent* (line 3)**: The manuscript reading is paleographically compressed in the minim-heavy sequence *-vinent*. The word was initially read as *avient*, with one apparent minim fewer than expected. The reading

*avinent* ("convenient, at hand") is adopted here with high confidence on the basis of the well-attested formulaic expression *ésser en avinent* and the absence of any other Catalan word fitting the paleographic constraints (descending stroke confirmed as *i* or *y*; final letters confirmed as *-et*). The apparent loss of one minim in the *-nin-* cluster is a routine hazard in Gothic secretarial hands.

2. ***serva* (line 3–4):** Read as *serva*, interpreted here as a present subjunctive of *servir* ("may serve"). The alternative reading *fa* (present indicative of *fer*) was considered at Stage 1 but is superseded by the user's direct reading of the manuscript. The syntax *car cosa serva de qu'ens farets plaer* = "for it is a thing that serves [as cause] by which you will give us great pleasure" is coherent but somewhat unusual; the possibility that this is a variant of *sera* (future of *ésser*: "for it will be a thing...") cannot be entirely excluded on paleographic grounds.
3. ***plaurea* (line 5):** Read as *plaurea* (conditional of *plaure*, "would please"). The HTR offered *plauria*, the more standard Catalan conditional form. The manuscript letter forms appear to support *plaurea*, but the difference is morphological rather than semantic; both yield "would please."