Cardinal Lavigerie

Anthology

Volume I (1857-1874)

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Translated by Donald MacLeod, MAfr.

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Picture of Mgr Lavigerie, in Algiers (1869)
Préface

An African proverb says, “You may not need an old man’s stick, but you cannot ignore his word.” In the Book of Sirach, the author advises his readers in similar terms: “Reject not the tradition of old men which they have learned from their fathers; from them you will obtain the knowledge and how to answer in time of need” (Sir. 8, 9). In African tradition, the word of an elder, especially that of a father or mother, always indicates the right path to obtain genuine happiness. It could also point out a direction that could cause us temporary or permanent harm. Therefore, in African tradition we pay attention to what our elders tell us. We learn proverbs and we try to put them into practice long after the death of the elder. We remember them and pass them on from generation to generation because we know their value. Cardinal Charles Martial Lavigerie, founder of the Missionaries of Africa (1868) and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (1869) is the Father and wise man of our missionary family. His words, expressed in widely different contexts, remain valuable and a source of inspiration and guidance for our missionary vocation and activity as missionary disciples of Jesus and as inheritors of his charism.

Our Founder welcomed the Word of God as the Good News in his life as a missionary priest and bishop and founder of the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. It was through listening to this Word that his passion for the African people and for the Gospel took shape as a gift received from God for the Universal Church. He was able to pass on this gift in many different ways according to the circumstances of his life, through his missionary daughters and sons and through the Church of his time. This Word of God, which nourished our Founder, continues to speak to us today through the different circumstances of our lives. We welcome it as the Way, the Truth and the Life. We live it, first of all, ourselves and propose it to our brothers and sisters to whom we are sent.

The encounter of the Word of God and the word of our Father encourage and stimulate us on our journey as missionary disciples of
Jesus. The Lavigerian charism has inspired and continues to inspire young men and women from many continents. This collection of texts of our Founder and Father allows us to hear his voice in different contexts. We welcome them with joy and gratitude.

Fr. Jean-Claude and the Historical Research group of the Society help us to appreciate the writings of the Cardinal Lavigerie and put them into context. We can see what lessons we can learn from our commitment as missionary disciples of Jesus and inheritors of a charism for Africa and the world of today where we are sent or invited.

A proverb says, “If we do not know where we are coming from, how will we know where we are going!” This anthology of four volumes links us with our founder and opens the way to the future with God in His Mission. In celebrating the 150 years since our birth as a Missionary Family at the heart of the Church, these texts help us to see how we can thank God for this gift that Cardinal Lavigerie left us. It will help us to live in the present with a Lavigerie like passion and to turn to the future with hope. This will demand of us an ever-increasing evangelical creativity and solidarity. As Fr. Ceillier tells us, the word of the Cardinal was often prophetic, missionary, and demanding deep commitment. It should be the same for us, his Missionaries (Sister, Brothers and Priests), our candidates (men and women) in training and friends, laypeople and associations who share our charism by collaborating with us in God’s Mission.

Richard Kuuia Baawobr, M.Afr
Superior General
Introduction

An anthology is a collection of the most important, the most representative and the best known texts of a writer. Charles Lavigerie, Archbishop of Algiers and Carthage, Apostolic Delegate for the Sahara and the French Sudan and Cardinal of the Catholic Church, wrote all the texts in this book. He was born in 1825 in France; he carried out his ministry as bishop firstly in France, in Nancy. He was then Archbishop, Founder and Missionary in North Africa, from 1867 until his death in 1892.

The texts in this anthology were not chosen for their particular literary qualities, as could be done for a selection of poems, but because they all illustrate, directly or indirectly, the life of Archbishop Lavigerie in Algiers, and primarily as the Founder of the Institutes of the Missionaries of Africa and the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa.

These documents are of different styles, they are spread over more than a quarter century in time; they also relate to quite varied correspondents and situations. Yet they all have a very close unity. They deal mostly with the mission, its demands and how Lavigerie would want the missionaries he called to his side to live it out.

Lavigerie wrote a lot, but unlike other Founders of Congregations or spiritual teachers, did not write long treatises of spirituality or complete and systematic methods of apostolate. His charisma was different: he took advantage of events and special situations to develop his ideas and deliver his vision of the mission, often while extending the reflection well beyond that required by the immediate question that he wanted to deal with.

It is by reading his abundant and often well-developed correspondence, his lectures to Missionary Fathers and Sisters, and even more so from his Instructions written in specific situations that we can discover the extent of his ideas on the mission, on the apostolate, community life, prayer, etc.

In a publication like this, the presentation of texts can be done mainly in two ways: either by grouping them by topic or by presenting them
in chronological order. It is this latter choice that was used here. Indeed, this presentation enables a better tracking of the development of the institutions and the missions, and how so many new challenges gradually arose, whereby the Founder developed his ideas, stated the guidelines already implemented and prepared the missionaries for the new situations they would face.

This volume, the first in a series of four, opens with a text from the teaching given by Lavigerie in 1857 at the Sorbonne and ends in 1874, the year of the first official recognition of the Society of Missionaries Africa. Texts are presented here in their entirety as much as possible. For some of them, however, long and repetitive developments as well as some long quotations have been omitted, which is then indicated in the text.

Further explanation is needed to clarify the choice of texts. We find, in fact, some texts that do not concern Lavigerie’s projects and missionary foundations, but rather his commitment to the life of the Church of his time, or the pastoral leadership of his dioceses of Algiers or Tunis. This choice seemed particularly necessary to show the diversity of his responsibilities, his gifts, and his commitments. These texts also reveal some aspects of the faith that inspired him and his prayer. All this is also our Founder, and entry into these texts allows us to better understand the man and his personality.

To conclude this introduction, we must remember that many presentations of Lavigerie’s texts were published in the past by one or other of his Institutes or by other authors. Whether it was a real collection of texts, or the considerations of an author on the mission, illustrated by more or less brief quotations, these books have each made a contribution. A list of the most important of them is to be found at the end of the booklet. However, many of these books are hard to find now, the choice of texts and the way they are presented can be out of date, and no recent edition is available. By publishing once again a selection of texts with introductions and notes, we simply wish to give easy access to the often-prophetic missionary and always deeply committed words of Cardinal Lavigerie.
1 - God is the light of the world  
(1856-1857)

After his ordination in 1849 in the Archdiocese of Paris, the Archbishop of Paris sent Father Lavigerie for further studies. Gaining a double doctorate in French Literature and Theology, he became a lecturer in Church History at the Sorbonne. In his teaching, he took a clear stand against the trend of Jansenist thinking, a doctrine that had been very widespread in the Church in France in the seventeenth century and was still quite influential in the nineteenth. Jansenism embraces a pessimistic view of humanity and of salvation. It teaches an austere spirituality shot through with fear, whereby humanity must acknowledge its great unworthiness before God in hope of reaching the mercy of the Redeemer. By contrast, Lavigerie enjoyed a more open and trusting vision in relation to the God of salvation and humanity. This linked up with a lesser current of ideas, which inspired the more open Catholics of his time, priests, bishops and laypeople. The following two texts are extracts from a course given by Lavigerie at the Sorbonne, during the academic year 1856-1857.¹

I – According to Church doctrine, in the supernatural order, Original Sin completely deprived us of grace. In the natural order, reason has fallen from its primordial state, but it has not lost all its power to reach the truth. The will is damaged and weak, but it has not lost all its power to be freely self-actualising. In addition, what especially distinguishes the Church from Jansenism is the feeling it gives rise to in us about our weaknesses and our wretchedness. It does not rejoice in them; it does not exult in them, it does not imitate Pascal in his testimony: ‘I cannot fail to see without a secret joy the power of reason so invincibly perturbed by its own weapons and this bloodthirsty revolt of man against man, which, in communion with God, into which he drew himself by the dictates of his feeble reason, propels him into the condition of mindlessness.’ I am saddened to observe this joy in such a great man! Why should we rejoice in our wretchedness? What is there so consoling to see ourselves propelled into the condition of mindlessness? It means that in Jansenism, faith is founded only on and triumphs only in
the total ruination of nature. Do you want to believe? ‘Kneel! Bless yourself with holy water! Deaden your mind!’ This is what Pascal is telling you. However, I am telling you with no less conviction and energy: no, do not rejoice when you feel the weakness of reason or the rebellion of evil. On the contrary, plunge into mourning to see God’s creation brought so low and dishonoured!

No doubt humility is the first and most essential of our virtues; no doubt we cannot of ourselves acquire any right to heavenly gifts, but we can nevertheless work with the unfailing help of God to make ourselves less unworthy of it. If therefore there are those among you who do not believe at all and do not feel the desire for a faith that is lacking, then far from seeking to deaden your mind, seek, on the contrary, to lift your soul to a higher and more serene level. God is light and he should not at all be sought in the darkness. The great men of the early period of the Church showed us another way by their example. They taught us that, in order to prepare ourselves to receive an undeserved aid set aside for us by God, that we need to seek, without loss of humility and the proper use of our freedom and reason, to remove the obstacles that prevent God’s grace from acting in us.

Whereas the saying, ‘Out of the Church, no salvation’, was understood in a very narrow way in the nineteenth century, in his teaching, Lavigerie opposed such narrowness and taught a much more open and inspiring vision of salvation for a missionary undertaking.

II- I ask you, is that the true idea of redemption that springs from Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Church? Not in the slightest! No doubt there is in God’s choice an unfathomable mystery for our feeble reasoning, but what we must never forget is that humanity’s loss comes from within, from the wrong use of its freedom. God opens his fatherly arms to all; Christ offers to all, without exception, the merits of his labours, his sweat and his blood. No one on earth is excluded. All peoples have sufficient help to progress at least towards this outflow of mercy. From the summit of Calvary, it spreads throughout the universe. Imagine those deprived of everything. There is one thing they cannot lack. I insist that God’s grace, from the Father and Saviour of all peoples, gives them enough to ultimately reach him, those at least who wish to make use of it.
In 1863, Father Lavigerie came to the end of a few months of service for the Holy See in Rome. Pope Pius IX appointed him bishop of the Diocese of Nancy, France. He was ordained bishop in Rome on the 5th March 1863. Some weeks later, before his arrival in Nancy, he wrote a pastoral letter to his new diocesan charges dated 5th April 1863. Now, he was aware that he would find in this region among some distinguished persons and intellectuals, a trend of thinking strongly opposed to the faith in the name of science. He therefore mentioned these attitudes in his letter. These passages below demonstrate how even before the actual missionary period of his life that his concern was already in favour of openness to all, including those who do not share the faith of the Church or who even criticise it openly. Far from becoming involved in polemics, on the contrary, he invites his diocesan charges to a genuine open-mindedness to the modern world and to tolerance. Here, he addresses more particularly priests who have pastoral responsibilities in the diocese. He thus describes his own pastoral attitude that should also be theirs.²

“Along with devoted sons, I will also have the prodigals, and, far from the faithful flock, I will need to go after the lost sheep. These are the ones for whom it is said that the Good Shepherd must leave everything else to pursue them and bring them back to the fold. I will join with you to retrieve them, no matter how far they have wandered. You will hear my voice to encourage your zeal, but I tell you beforehand that you will not hear words other than those of charity and gentleness.

I assure you I took a commitment, at the feet of the most gentle of Pontiffs³, that I would not dishonour my ministry and yours by insults or abuse. Nothing harsh or hurtful will ever come from my mouth, even against the most unjust enemies of our faith. I learned from the one who sent me to respect the sputtering flame and the crushed reed; if we must always vindicate his glory, it must only be vindicated in forgiveness.
May I give you this first piece of advice? Always bear in mind these rules of genuine zeal in relation to those who do not share our beliefs or have abandoned them. Remember this phrase of a great pope that ‘whoever teaches without gentleness shows that he is looking for other than the truth and that there is no charity in his heart’. 4

Even when you are provoked, believe me, only reply with kindness and making allowances. I would say with Saint Augustine, ‘Love peace; love peace; and if those who are separated from us do not love it, appease them by simply pointing out the truth to them or even in keeping silent, rather than reproving them. You love the light of day, but are you vexed because of blind people? No, you pity them, you know the goodness of which they are deprived and you consider them worthy of compassion. I beg you, show our ‘separated brethren’ 5 the same gentle and Christian charity.’ 6

You see, in preaching virtue to you, we will above all seek to make it desirable. Likewise, when preaching faith to you, we will seek to imitate all the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, in demonstrating its harmony, its perfect alignment with right reason. (...).

It is often said around and among you, I know, that the works of human reason, its progress, institutions and legitimate aspirations are condemned by faith. It is one of the most harmful objections spread around today against religion and the Church. In addition, some conclude that faith has run its course and that the world is drawn towards other horizons; it is now necessary to break with religion as it is opposed to human progress. Nothing could be more widespread, dangerous or false than this discourse. It is true that these harmful principles were upheld by a famous school of the last century. 7 It taught that nature can only produce evil and therefore all its acts, philosophy, science, social institutions, and human freedom are reprehensible in their essence. However, the ever wise Church, always and equally far from extremes, has struck down these senseless doctrines with its solemn condemnation.

In more recent times, a haughty and hotheaded genius, heir without knowing it perhaps, like so many others, had the same preconceived ideas and errors. 8 He sought to bring the world back to the faith by proving the absolute powerlessness of human reason and the incurable
vanity of its entire works. Once again, the Church condemned in the author of this system what it had condemned in his predecessors: the absence of moderation and common sense, i.e., true wisdom.

The Church is not the enemy of your intelligence, philosophy, science, industry, the works of human genius, freedom or progress in human societies when these matters remain within the limits of reason and justice. On the contrary, the Church rejoices. We its intermediaries rejoice with it, in all that enhances this patrimony of glory, riches, honour, well-being, and the produce of intelligence and labour. The Church only asks of you, in the exercise of the powers and in the enjoyment of goods that you have from God, to remain faithful to the rules of the moral order and of truth. Above all, the Church asks of you to remember that you have a destiny greater than the world, that you need the help and light of faith. Temporal things ought to be held by you so that they lead you to wealth that endures and to a homeland that cannot perish.”

3 - Letter to a friend, Bishop Cousseau, on Mission, Rome, and the Holy Father (20th April 1867)

Bishop Lavigerie was preparing to leave Nancy to go to his new Diocese of Algiers. His friend, Bishop Cousseau of Angouleme, wrote to him from Paris to congratulate him on his new appointment. Bishop Lavigerie replied to him touching on some of the feelings that moved him. He also mentioned his upcoming trip to Rome in June 1867, when Pope Pius IX would solemnly celebrate the 18th centenary of the martyrdom of the Apostles Peter and Paul. All Catholic bishops were invited to this celebration.

Paris,

Dear and Most Reverend Lord Bishop,

I was exceedingly touched by your kind greetings. I would have replied to thank you if they had not reached me in the middle of all the
bother and feelings on leaving. The antiquarians were right and our predecessors even more so in opposing translations. Ah! Dear Bishop, leaving one’s Church and clergy is a real act of dying for the first time. Only one thing sustains me. It is the idea that God will approve of my sacrifice and will enable me to work effectively to develop my distant mission, for I am now truly a missionary bishop. Lots has been done, but what is that in comparison to what remains to be done in the presence of three million Muslims, whose conversion will require centuries, especially if we are not given full and total freedom in their regard.10

Unfortunately, I cannot travel to Angouleme for the moment. I am leaving in a fortnight for Algiers and I need to hurry to avoid the heat. I will also go to Rome in June. There are some remarkable things being said about the plan of some people who would seek in a surprise move to remove a dogmatic definition of the personal infallibility of the Pope. I am not looking into the core of the matter, which I consider quite plausible, but the form seems to me making a regrettable precedent. Moreover, I would be more wary of major drawbacks in the climate of ideas especially in Italy and Germany. Many of our colleagues think the same. I heard one of them, venerable for his virtue and his age, say that if a like scheme were attempted in Rome during the meeting, he would take his hat and leave within the hour. Others, more well-known, would perhaps do even worse. All this is a worry, as it seems to me today more than ever that we must be of one heart and mind with one another and with the Holy Father.11

I confide all this to you, my dear Bishop, so that your prayers may ward off, if possible, all the dangers I foresee and even others I cannot trust to paper and ink.

I commend myself to your prayers.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
4 - Pastoral Letter to the Archdiocese of Algiers
(5th May 1867)

This reveals a missionary vision of extraordinary breadth. In November 1866, Bishop Lavigerie of Nancy in the east of France for three years was officially informed that he was requested to accept the See of Algiers, the capital of the French colony of Algeria. He knew neither the country nor the people. It was an appointment, which did not have much prestige. Nonetheless, to the surprise of all the people around him, he immediately agreed. Only his close associates, in particular Bishop Bourret of Rodez, an old friend of his major seminary days, understood and approved of him. They knew that Lavigerie had nurtured within him a genuine missionary calling for quite some time.

Some months later, when he was due to leave Nancy to go to his new diocese, Bishop Lavigerie addressed a Pastoral Letter to the members of the Diocese of Algiers. First of all, he mentioned the glorious history of North Africa, a land of civilisation and formerly a land of Christian faith. Now, for him, this historical greatness was a calling to have confidence in the future. Then he stated his intention to look towards the distant Dark Continent south of the Sahara whenever possible. Still so little known by Europeans, it waited in hope for the proclamation of the Good News. He concluded his letter by addressing Muslim Algerians, telling them that he would bear them, like all the others, in his pastoral care and in his prayers. In this letter, admittedly with the vocabulary, the style and the cultural features of his time, Lavigerie reveals a missionary vision of extraordinary breadth.12

Charles Martial Allemand Lavigerie, by the grace of God and the favour of the Holy See, Archbishop of Algiers, to the clergy and Faithful of our Diocese, salvation, peace and blessings in Our Lord Jesus-Christ.

Dearest brothers and sisters in Christ, I come among you at a noteworthy time for Christian Africa. It is a time when the Catholic
Hierarchy is coming back to life in all its fullness\textsuperscript{13} on this soil soaked by the blood of martyrs.\textsuperscript{14} The Church and France\textsuperscript{15} have united to restore these glories of the past and they send me to you as the messenger of truth, charity and peace. I would be lying, my dear people, if I did not tell you that such a laborious responsibility firstly overwhelmed my weakness and that the prospect of a cruel separation seriously troubled my mind. However, today, the sacrifice has been accomplished, the ties have been broken and I belong only to you. I only hope for one joy alone and that is to bring you the heavenly gifts and see you accept them.

Admittedly, such a mission is made to intimidate, but also to tempt a bishop’s heart. Whether I look to the past, question the future, or study the conditions of the situation at hand, I don’t see any activities being carried out in the Christian world today that could be preferred to it.

Indeed, what is the history of North Africa? Enquire of the ruins that cover its soil. You will find there the traces of the layers of three great historical races, the debris of the most advanced and diverse civilisations, the vestiges of the most illustrious human beings and the sparse remains of famous cities. What distinguished names such as Carthage, Hippo, Utica, and Cirta as well as those of Scipio, Hannibal, Marius, Cato, Jugurtha, and Caesar!\textsuperscript{16}

However, for us Christians, how many even more sacred memories of the heroes of our faith, of their courage, their holiness and their genius there are! How great was this African Church\textsuperscript{17}, with seven hundred bishops, its innumerable places of worship, its monasteries, and its Doctors! Its soil exuded the blood of martyrs; its Councils, where the wisdom and the firmness of its bishops were an example to the Christian world became the rule for holy discipline. The whole Church took pride in its dogmas from the lips of Saint Cyprian and Saint Augustine. Faced with their executioners, its consecrated Virgins surpassed in courage the most fearless of men. Mountain caves and desert oases were anointed with the virtues of the hermits; in every place it offered to the world an object of admiration and holy envy. Nevertheless, these centuries of glory were to be followed by centuries
of mourning. Christian Africa was to become as famous in its misfortunes as it had been through its genius and the courage of its offspring.

(A long passage follows, where after a long description of the gradual disappearance of Christianity in this northern part of the African continent, the new bishop stated his conviction that the time had perhaps come for a rebirth of the faith in this region. He felt deeply concerned in this challenge.)

My dearest brothers and sisters, such is in effect the mission to which, insofar as my weakness allows me, I am called to work towards with you. It is to spread around us with the burning initiative of our race and our faith the true enlightenment of a civilisation of which the Gospel is the source and the guiding principle. It is to bring this enlightenment beyond the desert with the caravans that cross it and that will one day guide you to the centre of this continent still immersed in ignorance. This will be to link North Africa and central Africa to Christian peoples. Such is, I maintain, your providential destiny in the plan of God and in the hope of the homeland and of the Church.¹⁸

I pray God to bless you, all you Christians living in this diocese, from so many diverse nations. You have become our family members since you arrived on the soil of a second France, children of Malta, Italy, Catholic Spain or the Balearic Islands, Germany or Switzerland. I also bless you, the early inhabitants of Algeria, where so many prejudices still separate us and perhaps that you condemn our victories. I would ask you only one privilege – that of loving you as my children, even if you do not acknowledge me as your father. (…) There are at the very least two things that we will never cease to do and that cannot distress you or turn us from you. The first is to love you and to prove it to you if we can by doing good to you. The second is to pray for you to God the Lord and Father of all creatures so that he will give you the fullness of light, mercy and peace. (Idem, p.21)
5 - Letter to Pope Pius IX to request the creation of an Apostolic Delegation for the Sahara and the French Sudan (6th July 1867)

At Rome for the celebration of the Jubilee of Pius IX, Lavigerie wrote to him to request the setting up of an Apostolic Delegation for the vast Saharan region in the south of Algeria. Responsibility for this territory would be confided to him. We recall here that Pius IX knew Monsignor Lavigerie very well for the two years he spent at Rome as Auditor of the Rota. The Pope had shown him great esteem and friendship.

Rome,

Most Holy Father,

The Bulls for the erection of the Diocese of Algiers granted by Pope Gregory XVI and those of the Ecclesiastical Province of the same name, granted in the course of last year by Your Holiness, determine as boundaries the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Algeria and the boundaries of French possessions.

Beyond these possessions, there lies the great desert, or Sahara Desert, where a substantial population live in the oases. This population has a particularly interesting feature in that it is descended in part from the Kabyles of the coast, from the former Christian population of Africa, expelled from Numidia and Mauritania by conquering Arabs. According to accounts by very reliable travellers, these peoples, although they became Muslims, still preserve the memory of their former religion. They have also kept some practices from it, in particular monogamy.

Most Holy Father, it would be very beneficial for religion if Catholic missionaries could enter into contact with these desert peo-
ples. It would be easy for missionaries who would firstly set up in the towns of South Algeria, where these Saharan tribes travel to for their commerce.\textsuperscript{20}

The major obstacle preventing anything being done in this regard is that the great desert is outside the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Algiers and its suffragants. Today, Most Holy Father, I therefore request Your Holiness, as I already had the honour of speaking to you about it\textsuperscript{21}, to please remove this obstacle by doing for the great desert what you did for Zanguebar (\textit{sic}), in erecting it as a Vicariate Apostolic that would be provisionally entrusted to the Archdiocese of Algiers. This nomination would not incur any problem from the French Government because the Vicariate Apostolic would be outside its possessions.

The Vicariate of the Sahara would have boundaries: to the north, the French possessions of Algeria and Morocco, to the south, the (French) Sudan. To the East and West, it would extend to 10 degrees longitude east and west of the Paris meridian.\textsuperscript{22}

The Archbishop of Algiers was to count on several Religious Congregations, in particular the Jesuits, to whom he had earlier revealed the proposal.

Most Holy Father, I am your very humble and obedient servant and son, as I kneel before you in profound respect.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers.

\textbf{6 - Letter to Father Suchet, his Vicar General (6\textsuperscript{th} August 1867)}

\textit{After his visit to Rome, in July 1867, Archbishop Lavigerie traveled to France for the business of his diocese, but more so for treatment. Throughout his life, he suffered from severe illness and several times it gave rise to the possibility of his death. It was in this context that he}
learned of the cholera epidemic that threatened his diocese. He then wrote to Father Suchet, his Vicar General. The following letter demonstrates the extent of his pastoral concern.23

Biarritz,

My dear Vicar General,

I have learned with acute sadness that cholera is threatening the Archdiocese of Algiers and it only adds to all the evils that have afflicted it in recent years24. I pray God will spare us this new trial, or will reduce it to the nonthreatening scale it had in previous years. Nonetheless, obliged to be far from you at this time by the state of my health, which has been badly damaged25, I couldn’t remain indifferent to the evils that threaten my flock. In addition, after two years of food shortage, what is to be dreaded above all is the poverty that would prevent our colonists from taking adequate precautions. I would like to help them by giving up the whole of my salary as Archbishop26. Mr. Ancelin, Secretary General of the Archbishop’s Office, will therefore pay you two thousand five hundred francs, the amount due in the first month. Please have it distributed by the Commissions, which will no doubt be established through the good work of the Sisters and the Parish Priests.

As far as concerns me, I cannot tell you, my dear Vicar General, how much this distancing from my diocese, which has lasted over two months, weighs on me and saddens me in the present circumstances. You will know that the doctors in France have sentenced me to return to Algiers only in the second fortnight of October. This is to avoid a relapse they would consider inevitable. However, if cholera broke out in Algiers, I certainly would not delay, but would set off in order to be among you as soon as my already returning strength would allow me to travel. I remain in the hands of God.

Farewell, my dear Vicar General. Let us pray and advocate prayer, so that heaven will at last look down with a merciful eye on our poor Algeria. I am yours, as ever, in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers.
7 - Plans for religious institutions to be founded in Algeria (9th September 1867)

In September 1867, Archbishop Lavigerie made ready to request an audience with Emperor Napoleon III, in France. He wanted to present to him and gain approval for a plan to create religious institutions in his diocese. In this way, he hoped to facilitate the agreement and financial support of the governmental authorities of the colony in Algeria. In view of this audience, he prepared a memo, which can be read below. The value of this document is to show how, from the first months of his ministry as Archbishop of Algiers, Lavigerie sought the means whereby the Church in Algeria could bear witness, above and beyond the rather limited circle of the small existing Christian population.

Now, did the Founder realise the problems and even ambiguities of such a step? We can assume that he did, as ultimately this document was not sent to the governmental authorities. For all that, it reveals a stage in the founding plans of Archbishop Lavigerie.

Archdiocese of Algiers,

The Archbishop of Algiers believes it would be very beneficial for Algeria to found two special religious Orders, one of men and the other of women. Their aim would be agriculture and the practice of charity towards the poor and the sick. It could thus provide the same service as the Trappists, with a different and more flexible rule that would enable them to participate in all the needs of colonisation. This plan had already been brought forward several times. Mr. Troplong, President of the Senate, officially took it under his patronage. It always failed, because the former Bishop of Algiers did not believe he had to encourage it and that the diocesan authority alone may found, oversee and direct such an undertaking.

The Archbishop of Algiers has quite a different outlook. He already has at hand all the needs in personnel required to begin this undertaking; however, the material resources are lacking. He has recourse to His Majesty the Emperor to request him, if it were possible, to help in the carrying out of this idea. This would be from funds provided by the
Société Algérienne²⁹, or of funding from the Ministry of War. To begin with, it would be enough to build two Mother Houses that would be used as novitiates and grant them a capital sum of three hundred thousand francs, for the buildings. Then, twenty thousand francs per year for ten years for each community – let us say – forty thousand francs per year in total. However, this would be on condition that they could be assigned suitable plots of land that the State would grant them directly or indirectly, as was done for the Trappists.

As regards subsequent foundations, both Orders would take complete charge of them, dealing with the Société Algérienne, which would be in their interest to call on them for all the centres they wish to establish. There, they would find at one and the same time an example for the colonists, assistance for the sick and the poor. Moreover, they would even have an on-the-spot safeguard in the community of men who would be organised militarily, according to their Constitutions, in case of a state of emergency caused by the Arabs³⁰.

8 - Foundation of three Missionary Societies and the contribution of the Jesuit Fathers (28th July 1868)

Archbishop Lavigerie addressed the following letter to the Superior General of the Company of Jesus (Jesuits). It is one of the very first documents referring explicitly to the decision to found a dual Missionary Society quite quickly, as well as various other institutions. The text appears as a report of the discussions and requests made to the Superior General during a meeting held the same morning.³¹

Rome,

Most Reverend Father,

Further to our agreements this morning, I wish to recall in a few words the various requests that I had the honour of addressing to you.³²
1. For the Arab mission and especially the one for the Sahara, the setting up of a little novitiate for a society of diocesan priests, directed by Fathers Creusat and Ducat, chaplains at the catechumenate at Ben-Aknoun; the foundation of a mission post in waiting at Laghouat, with at least two or three Fathers for the time being.

2. The opening of a house of Spanish Jesuits at Algiers. This house, set up at Spain’s expense, must be completely distinct and separate from the one of French Jesuits.

3. When the time comes, two Fathers will direct the novitiates of two farming Congregations, one of Brothers and the other of Sisters.

I added the wish to establish a parish at the Algiers residence, but I bow to your observations and give it up, as well as the college, since we must.

Most Reverend Father, be assured of my warmest and most respectful regards.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
9 - Second letter to the Holy See to request the creation of a Delegation of the Sahara and of the (French) Sudan (28th July 1868)

As soon as he arrived at Algiers, in May 1867, Lavigerie began correspondence with the Holy See to obtain the creation of a Delegation Apostolic of the Sahara and the Sudan, united to the existing Archbishop of Algiers. After an initial refusal, he repeated his procedure. It is this second request that we can read in the following text. The letter is addressed to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Propaganda, which was to erect the requested Delegation by a decree dated the 6th August 1868.37

Archdiocese of Algiers

Your Eminence,

Last July, I had the honour of presenting to your Eminence a request to establish a new mission in the Sahara Desert in Africa. In my view, this mission should be a Prefecture Apostolic, provisionally entrusted to the Archbishop of Algiers, as delegated by the Holy See.

Your Eminence was good enough to reply that two problems seemed to you to oppose the immediate setting up of this mission. The first was the fear of going against the rights or the intentions of the French government in a country belonging to it. The second was the request made by the Observantine Fathers of Tripoli to establish a mission in the desert.38

I was able to inform you since then, Your Eminence, that these two problems no longer exist. The first, because the mission to be founded is completely outside the boundaries of French possessions and consequently the French government has nothing to do with it.39
The second is due to the fact that the Observantine Fathers have given up their plans.

Since these problems no longer exist, Your Eminence, I would venture to renew my request and earnestly ask you to grant me the powers needed to found a new mission in the Sahara under the title of Prefecture Apostolic. It would have the following territorial boundaries, which are indicated in black ink on the enclosed geographical map.\textsuperscript{40}

1) To the North, the borders of Morocco, Algeria with its three dioceses, Tunisia, the Mission of Tripoli;
2) to the South, the borders of Senegal and Guinea till the mountains of Kong, towards 10 degrees latitude;\textsuperscript{41}
3) to the West, the Atlantic Ocean;
4) to the East, in a line going from the eastern borders of Fezzan to 17 degrees latitude, to link up with the borders of Guinea, towards 5 degrees.\textsuperscript{42}

This Prefecture Apostolic thus constituted outside any French territory would be constituted as the one that was created on the East Coast of Africa in favour of the Bishop of Bourbon (former name of the Island of Reunion), (Ed.) and like it, provisionally entrusted to the Archbishop of Algiers.

Your Eminence’s most humble and obedient servant, with great respect and devotion,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
10 - Guidelines for the first Novitiate (1868)

Lavigerie did not personally write these next few lines. Father Vincent, a Jesuit, who was the first Novice Master of the Society, quotes them from his words. Father Vincent wrote them to one of his fellow Jesuits in October 1868 when Lavigerie entrusted him with the opening and direction of the first novitiate. Father Vincent relayed to his correspondent the words he heard from our Founder:

Dear Father, may the blessing of God be upon you. Form apostles and follow exactly the directives of the Company’s Novitiate, with one difference in that you give more time for studies. Saints! I want Saints! Plunge them completely into the mould of Saint Ignatius. Let them be like a corpse in your hands that lets itself be carried anywhere and manipulated at will. Or again, let them be like a walking-stick in the hand of an old person to be of service wherever and whenever it is required.
Even if this anthology is focused on the origin and development of the Society of priest and brother missionaries, it has to be recalled that from the outset, our Founder also wanted to lay the foundation for Sisters for the Mission. As early as December 1868, he wrote on the subject of this foundation to Father Payan d'Augery, his friend, the Vicar General of Marseille. He made clear that it would be a Congregation of Sisters who would bear witness to the people through prayer and farming. The Father replied in underlining the problems in such a plan, notably in finding vocations; however, he was ready to help. The following month, Lavigerie wrote this time to the Sisters of Saint Charles de Nancy to ask for their help in this matter. We know that this plan would meet with many difficulties and that it would only be much later that the Congregation of Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa would be able to be fully developed.

Letter to Mother Euphémie Fervel, Superior General of the Sisters of Saint-Charles de Nancy

(...I have therefore decided to train new Sisters who would be exclusively involved in farming activities they would carry out themselves. Candidates have applied and there are quite a lot of them, but what is lacking is already professed Sisters who could direct the novitiate. I would like to set this novitiate up in an annexe of the orphanage, far apart enough not to obstruct one another, but close enough for the farming Sisters to carry out their activities under your Sisters’ direction. I thought that in these conditions, dear Mother, that among the new Sisters you would send, you would choose two who would be suited to direct a novitiate as Novice Mistress and Associate Novice
Mistress. The new community would be quite distinct from the one of Saint Charles. It would have its own separate Rule.

Those of your Sisters who would direct the novitiate would be temporarily on loan. However, since the novitiate would be in the same enclosure as the orphanage, although apart, there would be the double advantage of leaving the two Sisters who direct the novitiate integrated with the community, enabling all the work of the property to be done by the farming novices. I earnestly request this service of you, Reverend Mother and be assured I am yours in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

12 - Projects of the Apostolic Delegation
Letter to the Council for the Propagation of the Faith
(18th April 1869)

Archbishop Lavigerie received the title and responsibility of the Apostolic Delegation of the Sahara and the (French) Sudan from the Holy See in August 1868. He then began to develop various apostolic projects for these new regions. To carry them out, he requested financial aid from the Propagation of the Faith, founded at Lyons, France, by Pauline Jaricot. Almost a year later, he wrote again to the same organisation to submit what he had already been able to do and what he foresaw for the future. It is this text that is presented here. It gives a good insight into Lavigerie’s grand missionary plan, beyond his Archdiocese of Algiers.47

Algiers,

Gentlemen,

In August last year, I was pleased to inform you that the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda had just created a new mission in the
Sahara and in the north of the Sudan. Moreover, the Holy Father was pleased to entrust its direction to me with the title of Apostolic Delegate.

At the same time, Gentlemen, I asked you to make it possible for me by your almsgiving to begin this immense and difficult undertaking with which I find myself. I had counted so much on it, after the kindly reception given by the Council of Paris, when it agreed to admit me to one of its meetings. I did not hesitate to count on it for the future and today I would find myself thoroughly compromised if my hopes were not to be achieved.

In a few words, Gentlemen, this is what has already been done. The first and most essential item being to train good workers, I began by opening a special seminary for Missionaries quite close to Algiers, in the parish of El-Biar. The Jesuit Fathers were kind enough to agree to its direction. Father Vincent, the former Novice Master of the Company at Algiers, was appointed head of this establishment.

The seminary receives young men who are intended for the priesthood and strictly speaking these will become actual missionaries. At a lower level, Brothers will become Catechists. After a sufficient time of trial, both will take the habit and the whole material lifestyle of the Arabs, so as to prepare for life in the desert. This will be extremely difficult for Europeans and would be fatal unless they were gradually prepared in advance. Fifty young men have already begun at the Mission Seminary. Only four of them have been allowed to take the habit of the missionaries. These are Father Finateu, priest of the Archdiocese of Algiers; Father Charmetant, priest of the Archdiocese of Lyons, Rev. Bouland, a cleric in Minor Orders from the Diocese of Belley and Rev. Deguerry, a cleric in Minor Orders from the Diocese of Belley.

However, all of them must remain there for eighteen months, to prepare properly for learning Arabic and Berber and in prayer to be ready for their future mission.

At the same time as marshalling our army, we are preparing the advance mission posts. Once again, the Jesuit Fathers provide us
with this important service. At my request and with funds I gave them, they have established a house at Laghouat on the edge of the desert. There are two Fathers and two Brothers. They are going to open a school for local children as soon as your grants will enable me to rent a new house adjoining theirs. In the meantime, they are familiarising themselves with the languages and customs of the country. Finally, I have received some children from the Sahara and even from the Sudan in our orphanages. These are the first fruits that I am harvesting in this new field that the Father of all confides to me.

Here you have therefore, three undertakings begun simultaneously within six months: the Mission Seminary, the first setting up of Missionaries on the edge of the Sahara, the Christian education of a number of young children from the desert region. The number of these children can perhaps be easily and considerably increased. This is because of the ease of paying for them from Saharan caravans either from the Mzab or from the Tunis marketplace.

However, for this, Gentlemen, funds are needed and you alone can provide me with them; I am already committed for a quite considerable sum. The rent of the house that serves as the Seminary costs three thousand francs. The upkeep of the pupils and their teachers costs eight thousand five hundred francs. The upkeep of the mission and the rent of the schoolhouse for the Jesuits of Laghouat cost two thousand five hundred francs. The education of the children taken in costs fifteen hundred francs: in all, 15,500 francs. May I anticipate, Gentlemen, you granting me this sum from the money in reserve from the final balance of 1868?

I am, Gentlemen, your faithful servant...

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
In 1869, the year after Archbishop Lavigerie founded his Missionary Institutes, he wrote a circular on the 10th May intended for Superiors of Major Seminaries in France. In it, he introduced to them his mission as Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan and launched an appeal for vocations. The importance of this letter is that the Archbishop of Algiers develops in quite a wide sweep his vision of mission and the meaning he gives to his new foundation at its very beginnings. Later writings and one or other direction taken in the following years will show that on some issues mentioned in this document that his approach to things, people and the Mission would evolve.

Amongst other topics mentioned here, we note the one of Islam, a religion towards which Lavigerie bears a severe judgement as to the manner it is taught and sometimes practised, but for whose adherents he holds a profound respect.

Algiers,

Dear Father Superior,

May I take this opportunity of informing you of a new undertaking founded in my diocese, one which is intended to provide missionaries to the lands of North Africa outside French dominion.

It is sad to acknowledge that for the twelve hundred years that Islam has been established, it has set up almost insurmountable barriers against the Catholic apostolate. None of the missions founded in the
lands where Islam prevails has produced significant results; no nation or part of a nation has been either converted from or shaken in its errors by our missionaries.

Nevertheless almost two hundred million human beings have been subjugated by force to the yoke of the Koran. Sad to say, Islam, which seems to be crumbling in Europe with the throne of the Sultans continues its progress and conquests to the gates of our African possessions. Since the beginning of this century, almost fifty million people have embraced Islam in the zone circumscribed by the Sahara desert and extending to the south in the Sudan. The warring tribal chiefs camped on the frontiers of the countries of the Blacks have invaded them. After dominating them, they have forced them, according to their religious laws, to adopt their beliefs.

These are significant setbacks from two points of view for the future progress of the Gospel and those of the civilisation in the north and centre of Africa. Indeed, our missionaries normally experienced an open welcome among animists, as the peoples of whom I have just spoken generally were. By contrast, the obstinate corruption and the twilight of Islam seemed to challenge all their efforts.

On account of these various considerations, our Holy Father Pope Pius IX resolved to create a new Apostolic Delegation. This takes in the countries between the Barbary Coast, the high plateaux of Central Africa, the Ocean and Egypt. His Holiness graciously chose me, despite my weakness, to found and direct this emerging mission.

At the same time that God bestowed this new responsibility on me by the voice of his Vicar, he prepared me and gave me the principal means to bear it. Several ardent clerics of various dioceses in France, understanding the greatness and the worth of the idea conceived by the Sovereign Pontiff, placed themselves at my disposal. Under my authority and direction, they laid the foundations of a Society that is totally consecrated to the mission among the Muslim Arabs of Africa outside French possessions.

This little French Society’s centre is the seminary where the novitiate was established almost a year ago near Algiers. It is under the
direction of a Father of the Company of Jesus, temporarily placed at my disposal by his Congregation. To ensure the success of this difficult undertaking, it adopts methods that have not been attempted until now. I hope they will bring good results, with the grace of God.

We considered that the pride of the Arabs\textsuperscript{57} is one of the main obstacles that prevents them from receiving the good news of the Gospel through the ministry of men whom they deeply scorn. We therefore thought to begin by giving them a signal mark of deference and make ourselves, so to speak, similar to them by adopting their external way of life, their clothing, their food, their nomadic life, and their language. In brief, it was to be ‘all things to all men’\textsuperscript{58} to win them for Jesus Christ.

The seminary is directed in conformity with these rules. All the clerics who make it up have already taken the Arab habit after the first three months of the postulancy. It is also a point in their rule that they only speak Arabic from now on. They sleep fully clothed and on the ground. Their food is like that of the local people, whose lives they need to share. Every day, at their recreation, they bandage the wounds of the sick Arabs who come to their house. At the same time, they receive advice on how to treat the most virulent illnesses of the country. It is without doubt a rough and mortifying life, but it has the dual advantage of completely sacrificing human nature. It also throws light on a vocation, which, it has to be said, is composed of the most complete abnegation and for some perhaps even martyrdom.

For the rest, Algiers offers exceptional facilities for the establishing of an undertaking of this kind. Acclimatisation can be done in favourable conditions, during the novitiate, which lasts fifteen months.\textsuperscript{59} There are opportunities to learn the lifestyle of the Arabs and learn their language. Then, once the novitiate is over and the hour of mission has rung, it is easy to form friendships in Tunis or Tripoli with the various peoples of the Sahara. Gradually, in neighbouring countries, there will be the means to work one’s way into the desert tribes and to the centre of Africa. There, they will establish themselves as doctors and men of prayer. These are two titles that attract consideration and respect among Arabs everywhere.
Finally, if the missionaries set up in the centre, as I hope they will, the south of Algeria will become an institution where they will be able to establish Christian Education institutions for the children of upcountry missions who would be freely entrusted to them. These children, brought up by the Church, schooled in its virtues, instructed in manual skills, would then return to their countries. Among their respective peoples, they would preach the faith and civilisation by their example and their words. As has been said, this would be, strictly speaking, the regeneration of Africa by itself. This is the sole truly effective means of reaching such a desirable goal, because of the unhealthy state of most of these lands; it is an unhealthy state that has already needlessly carried off so many legions of missionaries.

Such is the aim of the Society of priests that is currently forming in my diocese. I repeat that it is not intended for Algeria; its aim is much broader. It is to work for the conversion of all Muslim peoples in my Apostolic Delegation and in the whole of Africa. Putting itself at the service of already established dioceses or Vicariates Apostolic will do this.⁶⁰

It is not necessary to add here and to underline the service this entirely apostolic undertaking will provide at one and the same time for the sake of civilisation, science, and to our national influence. The regions that stretch from Arabia to Senegal are, up to now, completely closed to our activity. Introducing an active element of assimilation and moral conquest, including the spread of the saving principles and productive teaching of our faith, would extend the influence and power of France.⁶¹ Setting up French posts at regular intervals by means of our missionaries as well as the methods of being thoroughly informed on the resources, the needs and aspirations of these unknown lands, including access to the major markets of central Africa would also be of benefit.

This outcome seems to me the consecration and logical, providential consequence of our Algerian conquest. According to my myopic perception, this is the start of the last crusade, although peaceable and civilising. It needs to achieve its triumph not through force of arms, but by charity, dedication, and apostolic heroism and to ensure for Catholic France a marked predominance in the destiny of North Africa.
What I need now are men. These men inspired by an apostolic spirit, courage, faith and self-denial would join the workers of the first hour. In truth, I cannot guarantee them the promises of the world: riches, greatness or the joys of life. Quite the contrary, they will endure poverty, self-denial, all the risks of almost unknown countries up to now inaccessible. At the end, they will perhaps undergo a martyr’s death. In my heart of hearts, this is precisely what makes me sure that my appeal will be heard. Our Lord did not say otherwise than what I am repeating in his name: *In mundo pressuram habebitis*⁶², and his Apostles followed him.

It is therefore that I write to you, Father Superior, to draw attention to the existence of this little mustard seed, which, with the grace of God, will one day become a tall tree where the birds of the air may shelter. I hope you will agree to speak to any of your seminarians who may be showing an inclination for the missions and would be undecided about which direction to take.

The little Congregation taking shape is under my authority as Apostolic Delegate, until the Holy See chooses to give the mission to the Sahara and the Sudan a separate existence. Therefore, clerics who would wish to consecrate themselves to this mission should contact me.

Our future missionaries, as well as our two new farming communities, are dedicated to the Venerable Martyr Geronimo. He was an Arab convert to Christianity whom the Muslims of Algiers put to death in 1569 three hundred years ago. They walled him up alive in the wall of one of the town forts. This is where he was found, in the time of Bishop Pavy, my illustrious predecessor, so as to serve as an example of encouragement and protection to those who would devote themselves to the conversion of his people.

After fifteen months of novitiate, the missionaries are invited to commitment by their choice of promises or by simple vows of devotion: promises or vows of obedience, poverty and stability.⁶³ They dress in Arab attire and adopt Arab lifestyle at the end of their postulancy, which is three months long, within the fifteen months of the novitiate. If they have not completed their theological studies, they resume them after the novitiate, before ordination to the priesthood.
They will never be alone in their missions, because of the many types of risk they could run; they will always be in groups of at least three.

In so far as it is possible to be described in a few words, Father Superior, there you have the body of this new undertaking, which as far as I am concerned, appears providential. Is it too much to presume from your goodness and hope that you and your colleagues would speak about this among yourselves? God alone can do the rest; for what is needed at the outset is that he does the calling and the sending. He will do it, if, as I believe, this new undertaking is inspired by him.

Father Superior, I commend myself to your prayers and those of your colleagues for my undertakings and for myself. I am your humble and obedient servant in Christ Jesus.

+ CHARLES, Archbishop of Algiers
Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan
As he himself writes at the beginning of the text, Lavigerie promised the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda at the Vatican to send an annual report of his specifically missionary activities and projects. In December 1869, he therefore sent his report that gives us a summary of the aim he sought and the steps taken by the Founder of the Missionaries of Africa. This took place from the first year of his mandate as Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan.

Algiers,

Your Eminence, 65

When the Sacred Congregation for Propaganda honoured me by entrusting me, in my capacity as Apostolic Delegate, with the founding of a new mission in the vast lands that stretch to the south of Algeria, I promised Your Eminence to submit an exact annual report of what we had been able to do for the benefit of this new mission.

At the end of this first year and faithful to my promise, I am ready to briefly submit to Your Eminence firstly, what we have achieved until now and secondly, what our needs are and how I think the Sacred Congregation and the Holy See could very effectively come to our assistance, without any burden to them.

I – What has been done to benefit the mission since the 1st October 1868

On the 1st October 1868, after receiving legitimate powers from the Sacred Congregation for Propaganda, I began the business of founding
a mission in the Sahara and the Sudan. For this mission, there was not a single building, priest or even Christian. Therefore I was firstly obliged to apply myself to preparing the indispensable requirements for a proper effective and enduring preaching of our holy faith. This is what we have achieved to date:

1) Opening a special major seminary and founding a special society of missionaries for the evangelisation of the Sahara and the Sudan. The initial need of an emerging mission is the training of clergy capable of bringing the work of the apostolate to fruition. I therefore thought first of creating it and these are the steps I took. I appealed to young clerics in my diocesan seminary and the diocesan seminaries of France, revealing to them the sad state of abandonment in which the Muslim and idolatrous peoples of North Africa stagnate for centuries. I ask those among them who feel brave enough to do so to devote themselves to this Mission.

From the outset, from early October 1868, six young clerics, two of whom were priests, responded to this initial appeal. I brought them together in the one house and explained the problems and the importance of their mission to them. I also spoke to them of the reasons for the complete failure, in my opinion, of the Catholic apostolate towards the Muslims. In agreement with them we mapped out the first rules of their little society. The main guidelines are the following:

1. They will form a society of missionaries intended solely for the apostolate among Muslim Arabs of Africa.
2. They will live in community and will always be three together
3. From seminary, the novitiate, they will adopt the food, language, attire, and sleeping habits of the Arabs.
4. They will learn enough about medicine to treat sick people.

The aim of these various rules is to ease their entry into the varied regions to which they may be sent and to win them the trust and affection of the Arabs more easily. This undertaking has been in existence now for fourteen months. Eight others have joined the first six missionaries. They therefore form a community of fourteen clerics ready to leave for the mission. The Jesuits were kind enough to take on the direction of this seminary or novitiate, as it may be called. I set it up
last year in a rented house, but with the numbers increasing, I have now situated it at Saint Eugène, in a huge diocesan property.

2) **Opening of a special Junior Seminary for the Sahara and the Sudan.** The aim of the Major Seminary and the Society I have just mentioned is to provide evangelising workers for the Sahara mission, but we need to think ahead as well and find ways to use all the factors within our grasp and particularly local factors. Now, among the 1,753 Arab children taken in by us during the recent famine, and some of whom belong to Saharan regions, there are a good number of them who are very intelligent and endowed with exceptional gifts for piety and wisdom. Gradually, we spoke to them not only of receiving Baptism, but even of them becoming priests. They heartily welcomed this idea and we selected thirty-four from among them. We brought them together in a special house. There, they do the same studies as in the Junior Seminaries in France. They display as reassuring an attitude as possible and prepare an abundant range of subjects in advance on the customs and language of the country. This junior seminary is also situated at St Eugène. It is directed by missionaries who have completed their first novitiate, to whom I have added an excellent local man of the Sahara who has already been baptised. Our intention is only to ordain these young men if they intend to join the Society of Missionaries so as to be better assured of their perseverance.

3) **Founding of two institutes on the edge of the Sahara, one for the Jesuit Fathers and the other for Sisters to serve as advance mission posts and for access to the Mission.** Eight months ago, in order to ensure more frequent and direct contact with the Saharan people whom we need to evangelise, I thought it best to found two religious institutes, one of men and the other of women. It is in Laghouat, in the desert proper, but nevertheless still in the territory of the Diocese of Algiers. The first of these has been entrusted to the Reverend Jesuit Fathers, and the second to the Sisters of Christian Doctrine. In these two institutes, local children will be schooled; assistance will be given to adults, hospitality will be offered to desert dwellers who arrive in town as well as some medical treatment to the sick; a special welcome will be given to missionaries. We therefore had to already be thinking of expanding the institute of the Jesuit Fathers by
buying a house. This house belongs to a Kadi or Muslim chief. He agreed to sell it to us in gratitude for the good we do for his fellow countrymen. These are his own words.

4) Founding of orphanages and homes in the Diocese of Algiers for the children of the mission of the Sahara and the Sudan. I will not reiterate here the creation and existence of orphanages for the Arab children of Algeria taken in by us during the famine. Our Algeria orphanages continue to prosper. However, in the interests of the mission, I had to multiply these institutions, making them permanent and as far as possible ensuring their future.

In the course of the year, I will therefore have established five new ones for the mission, on land purchased by me, of which I shall speak later. For the missionaries, these orphanages will be highly prized institutions. They will send to them all the children from upcountry they can take in, receive from their parents, or ultimately purchase from slaving countries to bring them up. The will then be called back to the mission where they will become in any case their auxiliaries.

I think this is the only practical way to achieve sure and significant results. Indeed, by experience converted adults exhibit multiple problems by their demands and their infidelities, whereas children who have been raised in the Christian faith cling strongly to it. If they have received an education that enables them to earn a living, they become a real asset to the upcountry missions. Ad-

Orphans presented to Lavigerie.
ded to this, the unhealthiness of the climate that has swiftly cut down European missionaries makes all the more valuable the supporting role of the inhabitants of this country who are immune to these infections.

5) **Purchase of land and creation of farming establishments in Algeria, for the Mission.** All the reasons I illustrated in the foregoing paragraph persuaded me, as I said, to open orphanages in Algeria on behalf of my Delegation of the Sahara for orphanages in Algeria. These orphanages are farming establishments where the children I have just mentioned will be brought up. For this, Algeria provided me with all the required conditions. The climate is healthy, the lands are fertile and abundant and although its desire is perhaps not lacking, its Government no longer dares to openly oppose my plans. At a stroke, I was therefore able to ensure the territorial establishment of the mission.

For this, I bought, admittedly for a very high price of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, nine different extensive properties, together comprising close to three thousand hectares of excellent land. On this, when everything is cultivated, our missionaries, our orphans, the mission itself will have abundant resources. This is where the children sent by the missionaries will be taken in and brought up by the communities I'll speak of in the next paragraph.

6) **Foundation for the mission of two farming and medicalised communities.** To direct the children's work, farm the land properly and even help in the settling in of the missionaries in these foreign lands, where they have to find everything for themselves by working on the spot, we need other evangelising workers whose nature and activities would be apt for this ministry. I felt I had to instigate and foster the creation of two communities, one of Brothers, the other of Sisters. They would be exclusively intended to help the missionaries in the directing of the separate farming institutions. The orphans, boys and girls taken in, would practice works of mercy towards the poor and the sick, separated by gender, and finally would cultivate the fields.

These two communities already exist. The female one has 27 Sisters and the one of the Brothers has taken in fifteen postulants. Faced with such results, we needed to think about providing some
temporary rules for these communities. This is what I did while waiting for them to become strong enough so that I could submit these rules for approval and correction to the Sacred Congregation and the Holy See. The faithful have given them the name of the Brothers and Sisters of the Foreign Missions under the patronage of the Venerable Arab martyr Geronymo.

I enclose a printed copy of their rules in this report. I cannot define them better than by stating that they are intended to achieve for our mission, as far their humble strength will allow, what, in the Middle Ages, the Benedictine Order achieved agriculturally and apostolically in barbarian and pagan Europe, which it opened up and converted. The novitiate of the Brothers is directed by the Jesuit Fathers while that of the Sisters is run by the Sisters of Saint Charles de Nancy.

7) Foundation in France and preparation in Belgium of Postulancies for the two communities of the Brothers and Sisters of our mission. The two communities I have just mentioned although founded in Africa and with their novitiates and headquarters there, would not be able to find enough new members. There are too few good Christians in this country. Divine Providence has kindly come to our aid by opening up for us the means to create Postulancies in France and Belgium. I made known the beginnings of these two little societies and the aim they set themselves to the Works of the Propagation of the Faith.

Soon afterwards, I received many applications from France. I did not feel obliged to take them all on, because of the problems of travel and distances; I asked them to wait. Meanwhile, Bishop Deleusy of Viviers, kindly agreed to the establishing of two Postulancies in his diocese, one for the Brothers and the other for the Sisters. I took advantage of his kind authorisation and rented two properties in the little town of Vans. Both Postulancies are currently in operation.

While this movement was evolving in France, there was a similar situation in Belgium. Father Jaspers, an excellent priest of the Archdiocese of Malines, wrote to me asking to join the community of Brothers. With him, there would be about a hundred young men
who formed a very large workers' association in Antwerp. I put off this application until I could have a meeting with Father Jaspers and the delegates of his young workers before going to the Council. Their entry into the community has been decided. Father Jaspers and his companions are going to the novitiate at Algiers next February. If I can, I hope to obtain the authorisation of the Archbishop of Malines to open a Postulancy to promote missionary vocations in his diocese as well.

While thus receiving these applications from Belgium for the community of Brothers, I was receiving even more extraordinary requests for the community of Sisters. One of the most distinguished young women of this country in nobility and wealth, Mademoiselle de Mortier, put strong pressure on me to join. She told me she wanted to earn bread for the poor by the sweat of her brow. She is now a novice at Algiers with several of her countrywomen.

8) Translation and publishing of a Catechism and the Gospels in Berber. At the same time as preparing the personnel for the mission, we also had to give them the means of connecting with the people they were to evangelise. Therefore, all the missionaries set themselves to learning Arabic and Berber. This was the first time it had happened. Therefore we had to plan to provide them with books of religious writings in the local languages, and which non-believers could use.

It was not difficult for books in Arabic; we referred to the excellent publications made under the direction of Propaganda Fide. For the Berbers, it was more difficult. There were no Catholic books in this ancient language. I immediately set to work and Father Creusat, the Superior of the Mission Seminary, helped by several local neophytes, and composed a Berber translation of the Diocesan Catechism of Algiers and a translation of the Gospels for the Sundays of the Year. At my own expense, I had these first two books published. I will have the pleasure of presenting them to His Eminence the Prefect of Propaganda as the first fruits of a language up to now unknown in Europe, although certainly contemporary with Phoenician and Assyrian. There, in a few words, is the unadorned and concise account of what we have done this first year.
II- Hopes and problems of the Mission

In line with what has been stated in the first part of the report, we see that the mission in Algeria up to now has eleven institutions, which belong to it, or intended for it. These are: a major seminary or missionary novitiate, a junior seminary for local candidates, five orphanages, three for boys and two for girls, a headquarters for farming Brothers, a headquarters for farming Sisters, a residence for the Jesuit Fathers at Laghouat, a residence for the Sisters of Christian Doctrine, also at Laghouat.

These establishments were bought and paid for by me for about seven hundred thousand francs for the plots and one hundred thousand for the buildings. This sum has been completely paid off, as I insisted on not having any debt on our landed property. However, by doing so, I have spent all my capital. To run properly, and purchase the establishment of the mission of the Sahara and the Sudan exclusively, to bring up the orphans, train missionaries, and so on, I need at least three hundred thousand francs a year for three years. Our property already provide us with one hundred thousand, but we need to find two hundred thousand more by appealing to Catholic Charity.

The problems we need to overcome to achieve this result are of two types. The first comes from the Government of Algeria, which, as I already stated, would not dare to do anything openly against us, but which still harbours an unspoken but very real hostility towards us. It tries to discredit our mission centres, which erodes trust and slows the upsurge of charity. The second item, more distressing and serious (I only confide them to Your Eminence with the greatest distaste) stem from the attitude adopted from the outset of all our affairs by my two suffragans – in particular the Bishop of Constantine. I will take the opportunity to disclose this sad situation to Your Eminence by word of mouth. Prudence and charity prevent me from doing so here.

Nevertheless, faced with such obstacles, I will need the support of the S.C. of Propaganda and its Most Eminent Prefect to have the funds I need:
1) From the Propagation of the Faith and from the Holy Childhood: I received 15,000 Frs for the mission, But the Holy Childhood gave me absolutely nothing, whereas I am raising twelve non-Christian children, entirely at my cost. I feel sure that a single word from Your Eminence to this body would guarantee us a grant.

2) Above all from the Holy Father, from whom I would like to receive a Papal Brief of encouragement and satisfaction for all those who have already helped us so generously and who could continue to help us.

I feel confident that this will be enough to guarantee the funds we need. I am well aware of the great kindness of Your Eminence to hope that you will be pleased to receive my request.

With this in mind, be assured of my deep respect and devotion, Your Eminence, and that I am your most humble and obedient servant,

Charles, Archbishop,
Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan
15 - The First Constitutions of the Society
(February 1869)

Shortly after the opening of the first novitiate of the Society in October 1868, Lavigerie had an initial draft made of the Constitutions; it was a provisional plan, by his own account. The novices received this text at the beginning of the following year, in February 1869, with the invitation to comment on the text in view of possible amendments. These Constitutions, even as a provisional text, constitute a kind of first road map of mission, in which Lavigerie already expresses his vision of missionary life and the apostolate. Dated the 2nd February 1869, the text appears as the first part of a little booklet of 146 pages divided into two major parts, each with two chapters. The general title of the booklet is as follows: Constitutions, Rules and Directory of the Institute of Missionaries of Africa of the Venerable Geronimo, Archdiocese of Algiers. The first part is thus devoted to the Constitutions, the second to the Directory.

The transcripts below, extracts from one or other of these two parts, deal with the origins of the Society, on the spiritual life of the missionaries and the apostolic demands that the Founder prioritises. These are community life, life lived as closely as possible to the people, fidelity to prayer in common, prudence in the steps towards Baptism, the role of the superior in the community, etc. Significant as the first inspiration of the Founder, and despite several subsequent changes, this text can be considered as one of the founding texts of the Society of Missionaries of Africa. A second version would be published in 1872 and a third in 1874, which would then remain as the text of reference for several years. Finally, we note that the publishing of these first Constitutions in 1869 was accompanied by an order for promulgation composed by the Founder himself. Here is the text:

"ORDER from His Grace the Archbishop of Algiers, Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan. Seeking to provide at the least an interim shape to the little Society of Missionaries that we have
founded and thus to meet the need for good internal order and the spiri-
tual and religious training of those who are its members: we have
approved and ratify the interim Constitutions and Rules to be carried
out for one year, from the 2nd February. This includes the Directory
drafted under our supervision and in accord with our views, which we
consider in conformity with the Divine Spirit and that of the Church,
put into practice by the Reverend Father Vincent, Rector of the
Seminary of the Society. We will and order that the aforementioned
Constitutions and Rules will be considered by the members of the
Society as the expression of the Will of God, as it is of their Bishop
and legitimate Superior."³⁷⁶

Part one
Summary of the Constitutions
and Manuel of Rules for
the Congregation of the Missionaries
or the Venerable Geronimo

Chapter 1 – Principal Constitutions
relative to the body of the Institute

Article I: Origin - The Congregation³⁷⁷ was founded in the Diocese
and under the authority of His Grace the Archbishop of Algiers,
Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara. Its emergence dates from the end of
1868. At that time, Archbishop Lavigerie of Algiers, commissioned by
the Holy See in his capacity as Apostolic Delegate for the foundation
and government of the Mission of the Sahara and the Sudan, concei-
ved the idea of creating a Society of Missionaries to assist him.
According to the precept of Saint Paul, they were to be all things to all men to win souls for Jesus Christ. They would gradually adopt the attire, the language, food and customs of the local population of Africa to win their trust and affection. In the spirit of their Founder, these Religious were intended to exercise their apostolate not only in the Missions entrusted to the Archbishops of Algiers, but also in all the other dioceses of Africa where they would be called by their Ordinaries.

An illustrious religious Society, responding to the Prelate’s appeal, agreed to the direction of the first novitiate, which opened at Ben-Aknoun, near Algiers, in the last months of 1868. Shortly afterwards, the Archbishop of Algiers provided his emerging Congregation with its first rules as a trial, following what is to be said in the rest of this volume.

Article II – Its aim, name and spirit – The aim of this Institute is to obtain the glory of God, firstly by the personal sanctification of its members and then by apostolic works and the exercise of zeal and charity, to aim at the salvation of the inhabitants of Africa. In order to achieve this purpose, the Fathers commit to God, by their choice by Solemn Promises or by Religious Vows. They live by a common rule. They found and direct Missions in places in Africa where they are called by the Ordinaries. They depend on these last-mentioned for all that concerns the exercise of their ministry. They depend on their Superiors for all that concerns their community life and their external and internal conduct as Religious.

The name they bear of the Missionaries of the V. Geronimo will constantly remind them of their main duty and the value of their vocation. While applying themselves to the acquisition of the Christian virtues, they are always to bear in mind that the ultimate aim of their efforts has to be the establishing of the practice of Christianity through their example, charity and preaching, wherever they are established. The spirit of the Congregation is therefore one of charity and zeal for the salvation of the inhabitants of Africa.

Finally, in order to draw the blessings of Heaven upon it, the emerging Congregation is placed under the patronage of Our Lady of
Africa. This is while waiting on the hoped-for public invocation of the V. Geronimo, the Arab martyr of Algeria. The Holy See has begun the investigation at this time into the cause for canonisation. It is under these sacred patronages that the Fathers will dedicate themselves to the works of their vocation.

(Article III deals with the organisation and governing of the Institute, notably setting out the primacy in authority of the Archbishop of Algiers as Founder, then the responsibility of the Superior General, the role of the General Chapter, etc. To avoid burdening an already lengthy text, this article has not been printed here.)

Article IV: Missions and Houses of the Institute - This article is devoted to the governing and running of the various communities and missions. There are two passages included, more particularly relevant to the plan of Lavigerie.

The various Missions and houses of the Congregation make up a single united family outwardly dispersed in God’s service, but closely united by the bonds of fraternal charity in a shared apostolate, prayer and action.

Just as the Mother House has distinct responsibilities on account of the general good, it is only right that it collects savings made in each House of the Institute. For this reason, Superiors and Bursars are to send them accurately to the Missionary Superior General according to his pre-fixed ratio⁸².

Article V: Admission to the Institute – Admission refers to the Postulants, Novices and to the Professed. The Professed are divided into two classes: in the one, they still only make Promises; in the other, there are those who, after a given number of years, are assessed as being able to make simple Vows of Devotion.

(...) The postulancy lasts three months, that is, one is allowed to take the habit of the Institute on the first Feast day of Our Lady that follows the three months from admission to the Postulancy. (...) Admission to the Novitiate is concomitant with the Clothing. The Novitiate lasts two years, after the Clothing, so that the Profession of
Vows can be valid\textsuperscript{83}. However, in the second year, the time can be taken for studies or any other external ministry in an Institute, but never in a Mission, even for priests. In order to best occupy themselves in their innermost development and in the acquiring of the virtues required by them, the Novices will not apply themselves in the first year to any other study than that of Holy Scripture, or native languages of Africa that will later serve as instruments for their zeal. To this, they will add two hours of manual work daily…

Admittance to Solemn Promises of Stability, Obedience, Poverty and Chastity is up to a decision in Council. It takes place after the first year of Novitiate, with the same form as admittance to the Postulancy\textsuperscript{84}. (...) Admittance to the three Temporary Vows is again up to a decision in Council.

The three Ordinary Vows are in no way imposed by the Rule on members of the Congregation. They can omit them and simply make the Promises mentioned in the foregoing article. However, the Religious who have taken them are the only ones capable of holding an office in the Institute.\textsuperscript{85} Vows can only be taken after the age of 18. Initially, they are only five-year Vows. After five years, those who apply may be admitted, and of those, considered deserving, allowed to profess Perpetual Vows.

In whoever is admitted to the Promises or Temporary or Perpetual Vows, there has to be the firm determination demonstrated to Superiors to remain in lifelong service to God in the Congregation. In addition, at his request, even the Council may allow him, or enable his confessor ordinarily to advise him to add Stability to his Religious Vows, until his Perpetual Profession.\textsuperscript{86}
Part two
Common directory for all
the missionaries of the
Venerable Geronimo
and Rules for
Specific Service Jobs

As already stated, this second part of the booklet also contains two chapters. The first, entitled Common Directory contains nine articles that set out the organisation of ordinary days as well as Sundays and Feast days in the communities, prayers and spiritual activities in common and private, relations with the Superior, etc.

The second chapter lists the various occupations to perform in a community, such as sacristan, nurse or cook. There are some passages below from the first chapter, which are more characteristic of the direction that Archbishop Lavigerie sought to give to his Institute for mission.

Chapter I – Article 7 Instructions for the principal ministries in the Society

I - Concerning Missions: At the head of the ministries of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa, we place the Missions; it is especially for them that the Society was created. It is called to establish Missions not only in the Sahara, the Sudan and the other dependencies of the Diocese of Algiers, but also in all the non-evangelised countries of Africa where missionaries would be called by the Ordinaries of those places. In the following paragraphs, we will deal briefly with both the various conditions for establishing these Missions and the Rules required for their favourable outcome.
1) **Missions established in already Christian centres** - Missionaries would be able to establish themselves in already-Christianised centres as long as they are in the midst of neighbouring regions inhabited by non-Christians. In such cases, they can accept and exercise the role of parish priests and curates for an already Christian parish.

In the parishes, Missionaries must always be at least three in number. One of them will take the title of Superior of the Mission at the same time as the Parish Priest. He will organise everything in such a way that the private life of the community always corresponds exactly to what is indicated in the Rule. This concerns getting up, Prayer, Particular Examen, Spiritual Reading, visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament, reciting the Rosary, and silence by day and night.

As for the rest of the time, the Missionaries will spend it in studies, recreations indicated by the Rule and especially in apostolic ministry. It is not necessary here to enter into detail concerning apostolic ministry to Catholics. It is enough to say that the Missionaries, under the direction of the Superior, who has the powers of the Parish Priest, must conform to what zealous parish priests and curates do in a parish.

For non-Christians, who must be the special object of their concern, since they are the lost sheep of the House of Israel to whom our Divine Lord sends us, the Missionaries gradually make contact with them in the following way, which, experience has shown, enables beneficial results. Therefore, they are always at least two together to visit the tribes of the neighbourhood, by humbly introducing themselves as men of prayer and eager to be of help. If there are sick people, they will ask to see them; if they can recommend or supply remedies, they will do so generously. To achieve this, they will invite the parents of the sick person to fetch the medication at their home, where they will be welcomed with great kindness and consideration. From time to time on their errands, they will bring some gifts for the children.

If they have some part of the Office or other prayers, particularly the Rosary to say, they will do so in front of the local inhabitants, telling them they are going to pray. They will kneel, without embarrassment, convinced that the Arabs will only esteem them the more. Indeed, the
major reason for their revulsion of Europeans is because they have no religion, because they are never seen to pray.

Gradually, relations of trust and close friendship will form between neighbouring missionaries and the local inhabitants, to whom they will provide any charitable service they can. Once these relations are well established and they will be disposed to listen to the Fathers, the Missionaries will be able to begin speaking to them about religion. If they are among peoples whose ancestors were formerly Christian, as almost all the Berbers of North Africa, the best discourse to hold with them is to tell them their ancient history, to teach them that their fathers were our brothers in the faith. They would only have stopped being so as a consequence of bloody persecutions they were subjected to for centuries.91

Then they can offer to teach some of their children to read, write and pray. If they agree, which may certainly happen, these children can be received at the presbytery, to be properly clothed and a Missionary will be put in charge of their guidance and instruction. Quite soon, these children will become a kind of living sermon. People will propose receiving others, particularly the orphans, of which we shall speak later.

Some time will have to be spent in this situation, being content to reply on religious matters when asked. Replies in detail will be in the form of stories, which the local people are very keen to listen to: all that refers to the life of Our Lord, the prophecies announcing him, the marvellous events that accompanied him. Reference should always be made to the huge difference that exists between Christian law and false religions in relation to justice, purity, respect for truth and above all charity. These discourses will gradually bear fruit, but we must not be in a hurry to pluck them. The catechumens need to be tested before believing their conversation or even their formal requests for Baptism.92

2) Missions among non-Christians only - Independently of the Missions mentioned in the last paragraph, the Missionaries will found others in countries where Christianity does not exist and that are inhabited by non-Christians only. The attitude that should inspire
them in these missions and the rules they need to follow are basically the same that have been set up for those missions where the parishes are at the centre. However, for greater clarity, we will recall the key elements of these rules in adding some other directions or specific recommendations.

As among the native tribes already established in Christian countries, the Missionaries will introduce themselves to the people only as men of prayer and as doctors. These are the two titles that will gain them respect and gratitude soonest. In this matter, they will follow the rules already set out. As soon as they find a suitable occasion to settle in a tribe, i.e., as soon as they are shown a sign of welcome, they will go to set up their dwelling there. Moreover, as far as possible externally, in matters of the clothing, food and lifestyle of, they will imitate the local people. Interiorly, they will follow the Rule of the Community, just as for the parishes.

In the Missions to non-Christians, just as in the parishes, the Missionaries will always be at least three together, where one of them will exercise the authority of Superior. In addition, as soon as prudently possibly, with due regard to the circumstances of places and persons, they will call upon a small community of Brothers of the Mission, composed of at least three Religious, or more if needed. The work of these Brothers should be to look after the upkeep, at least partially, of the works of the Mission and if possible, of the Missionaries themselves. In countries where there is complete safety, they could also call upon the Sisters of the Venerable Geronimo to help them in their ministry towards women.

In matters of conversions, they will take care not to rush entry of non-believers into the profession of the Christian faith. Often enough, a favourable opportunity could be used to send neophytes to the coast. This is what would be particularly apt for children, for whom the opening of orphanages and catechumenates in some Christian land will need to be considered, as will be explained in the following paragraph.

II - Orphanages and Catechumenates – The opening of Orphanages and Catechumenates and their spiritual direction is one of the main works of the Society of Missionaries of the Venerable
Geronimo. It is certainly the most effective for the practical setting up of Christianity in the African interior, where, up to now it has been impossible to introduce it for many centuries.  

The main obstacles to this establishing were, undeniably, the natural faithlessness of the local population. This meant that the adults found themselves surrounded by non-Christians and for the most part reverted to their former vices and errors. The extremes of climate did not allow for increasing the number of missionaries.

There appeared to be only one solution to these two problems. It was the Christian education of the greatest number possible of non-Christian children. The ideas and beliefs with which they will be imbued from children will endure with greater certainty. It will be possible to find among them the elements for a local clergy, which, used to the climate would be able to put up with the conditions. This is how all Christian countries came to the faith and we can hope, with the grace of God, to bring this great continent round from being still shrouded in the darkness of error. Therefore, from their arrival in a Mission it is very important for the Fathers to gather and group the little children around them. This will be all the easier for them since slavery exists almost everywhere in Africa. By this means, they can obtain as many as their funds will allow them.

They could keep some of these children with them, if only to give example and to have them occupy their time usefully and in a holy way. The Missionaries will take favourable opportunities to send the others to the coast where the Orphanages will be entrusted to the two Congregations of the Brothers and Sisters of the Venerable Geronimo for their material and disciplinary guidance. The first of these would be entrusted with orphan boys, the other with orphan girls in two distinct and separate establishments. The Missionaries will only be entrusted with the direction and moral and religious instruction, as are chaplains in similar establishments.

In these orphanages, all the children without exception will be assigned to manual work, according to their category, for a short or long period. However, in addition, they will be taught Christian doctrine, reading, writing and the basics of primary schooling. For those who
show more agreeable attitudes towards piety or for science or above all some sign of ecclesiastical vocation, they will be set to study and wait for God to show his will for them. Nevertheless, one must take note that because of their past and the particular problems of their future situation, that it would be neither apt nor prudent to make them secular priests. They must not be admitted to Holy Orders unless they want to enter the Society of Missionaries or any other community, where they will be supported by a Rule and by the example and encouragement of the Fathers and Brothers…

III – Institutes of the Brothers and Sisters of the Missions of the Venerable Geronimo. – According to the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Missions of the Venerable Geronimo, the Superior of the Missionaries represents the Apostolic Delegate, who is their chief Superior. These three communities are, in fact, only three branches of the one family, working together and in harmony to extend the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

IV – Community clinics 97- Every mission house in non-Christian countries could have community clinics attached, run by the Brothers of the Venerable Geronimo, if they have a house in the place itself, or if lacking, by the Missionaries. For this purpose, they could have one or two rooms, one for medicine and for treating wounds and injuries.

Three times a week, at hours and days fixed and indicated in advance, patients will be received to treat their wounds and ask for medicines. They are to be treated with charity and all will be done to relieve them. If they have wounds to be bandaged, the Brothers or Fathers designated for this act of charity will treat them as best they can, being sure to speak to them in words that will do good to their souls.

To enable the Fathers to exercise this ministry of charity, from noviciate onwards, care will be taken to have them learn some of the more common illnesses of the country and to treat them. They will not use a treatment for illnesses that they do not know. They will be able not only to treat patients at the clinic, but with the permission of the Superior, as indicated above, to visit together the sick of the neighbourhood, particularly on Sunday. However, they will not treat women.
Also, they will take care to cultivate essential medicinal plants in a separate part of the house garden. The Fathers can be sure that this is undoubtedly one of the most sensitive ministries, but also the most effective and fruitful in terms of salvation. By curing the sick, Our Lord Jesus Christ won the hearts of the inhabitants of Judaea and convinced them of the truth of his divine mission.

Perhaps we will not perform powerful miracles as he did, but let us do miracles of dedication and charity. In this sign, we again insist, others will recognise us as his disciples.

V - Hospitality - Hospitality is the virtue proper to the Arabs among whom most Fathers are called to live. We dare to hope that their charity will bring them gradually closer to us.\textsuperscript{98} They must therefore practice hospitality under pain of underachieving in this respect; they will do so with as much spirit of faith as friendliness. Travellers could be received in some separate room and by apologising for treating them modestly they will be shown real charity.

VI – Divine Worship – The Fathers will remember that the ceremony of divine worship is one of the best ways to make an agreeable impact on the local inhabitants. They will therefore concentrate on always observing all its duties with gravitas and respect. Where they can, without inconvenience, even in non-Christian territory, especially if the Brothers of the Missions are established near them, they will give to it all the radiance and ceremony applicable to it.
The text presented just before this one is of the first Constitutions that the founder drafted in 1868 for the first group of novices. In these basic articles, this one text was intended for the three Institutes of priests, Brothers and Sisters that Archbishop Lavigerie wanted to found at that time. Nevertheless, he was very aware of the particularities relative to each one and each Institute received an adapted version. The following text, discovered in the Founder’s papers, but never published, seem to have been drafted as an introductory to the manual of the Brothers’ Constitutions, whom he addresses explicitly. Its importance comes notably from the fact that the vision of Lavigerie on history, the evolution of societies and the role of the Church at the service of all peoples, reveals an unexpected depth.

The book ‘Instructions aux Missionaries’ published in 1950 (Éditions Grands Lacs), included it in its selection of documents. We thought it best to place this document in the present publication as well, which is also to be found in the Archives of the Society.

Dear Sons and Brothers,

I place in your hands the Rule that must from now on be the law of your life. I entrust it to your loving respect, to your charity, to your zeal with the hope that if you keep it faithfully, it will protect you and enable you to bear fruits of peace, civilisation and salvation on this poor African soil.

God forbid that I should give you ideas contrary to Christian humility about yourselves or the work to which you are dedicated. You and I, especially I, are nothing and the burden of our sins and our wretchedness warns us sufficiently that we must never be proud of being effective for God’s work. However, when I think of the past, when I see what poor weak men like us have achieved in the world by the power
of virtue and religious discipline, I cannot avoid thinking that if you imitate their example, you will receive similar blessings.

Twelve centuries ago, my Brothers, Europe presented more or less the same spectacle as our Africa today. On the one hand, its lands were deeply ravaged by barbarian hordes that occupied it and criss-crossed it, leaving behind devastation, fire and death. They camped on ruins they could not name and knew no other right than might. On the other hand, it was a society whose centre was at Byzantium and that perished in shame as a result of the abuse of riches, pleasures, despotism and above all through lack of virile and Christian character. 99

Everything therefore seemed irrevocably lost, when from the heart of this society suddenly arose an army that saved the world, opening safe havens to the deprived, the weak and the sick. Through a continuous endeavour of six centuries, by its example and influence, it shaped a new world of which we are its descendants.

This army was that of the monks, our monks of Europe, of whom Benedict was the legislator. 100 Through manual work, especially in the fields, the practice of charity, the education of children, through the example and influence of its virtues elicited from the barbarism of its conquerors and the decadence of the conquered, our European nations.

I am not only referring to France. You know that almost all the towns of our homeland owe their creation or their conservation to a monastery. I add all the other lands and in particular those the Barbarians had devastated the most in Germany, England and Scandinavia. There, you will not find a town or cathedral city that was not begun by a Benedictine abbey. These havens of work, charity, prayer, and study were like lighthouses spaced out by God’s hand, by the Church, to guide these great races to the harbour of civilisation. 101

If only these ruins, which today are almost everywhere disregarded by forgetful 102 could speak and tell of all the good that their inhabitants had done for our forebears! Consider all the enlightenment, the consolations they spread. Consider all the obstacles they bravely opposed to the savage undertakings of almighty forces. 103 How many blessings from the people, even in our world where faith withdraws, would they not receive?
Dearly beloved brothers, I repeat, this is a similar work in its results. In its attainment, the Rule you have embraced continues to offer many points of similarity. As in fifth century Europe, North Africa, of which we form part, was devastated by barbarian hordes. Eight centuries ago, its ruin was complete in an excess of depredation. Until the conquests of France, it became increasingly worse with the years. Everything was effaced from its soil; its magnificent towns, its eight hundred Bishops’ Sees, its monasteries, its twenty million inhabitants. All this was supplanted by hordes of conquering savages, whose talent for destruction as well as their inveterate carelessness and their sensual and fatalistic religion buried everything under the dust of centuries and out of human memory. They themselves, surrendering to all the fatal consequences of their social principles and vices, no longer operate; they shuffle towards a sepulchre where we see them fall in carnage.

Faced with this barbarism, we bear witness to the endeavours of a great nation like ours, which for thirty-nine years has called upon every contemporary civilising power to restore to these lands, so rich and forlorn, the place they occupied in the past. Admittedly, far be it from me to underrate all these endeavours. Some considerable tasks have been accomplished. Roads, buildings, even towns have been built. However, it has to be said that roads, buildings and towns do not make a people. We are stuck painfully in a rut where everything suffers. The local inhabitants have not been won over by us; this is lacking. For the most part, the Europeans are far from possessing the moral qualities required for the foundation of a people. Moreover, despite repeated appeals, material problems and the unhealthy state of the soil, uncultivated and abandoned for so many centuries on the one hand; the moral distaste on the other, have not enabled more than a hundred thousand French and a hundred thousand foreigners to come and settle here among us. What is missing is a soul: Nisi Dominus aedificaverit Domum...

You, however, my beloved courageous Brothers, you find yourselves here, under the standard of Christian work, dedication and charity. You will reintroduce the examples, and why should I not say so, the miracles of the first disciples of Saint Benedict. You will not become truly religious until you live from the work of your hands after the
example of the Apostles and the early hermits. The soil of our Africa is, at some points, an insurmountable obstacle for the establishing of a new population, until it has been cleaned up by work. Your willing hands will purify it, willing to give good example to the more timid, willing to submit, if necessary, to the exertion and, by this martyrdom of Christian work, to prepare the way for new inhabitants!

Life is hard for our settlers and often they give up half way, leaving behind children without resources and support. No one knows the number more than I do. You will be the fathers of these children, whose fathers are no more; you will receive them into your modest dwellings and feed them from your work. You will share with them your daily bread and especially bread for the soul, i.e., the lessons and examples of virtue. Sometimes, in addition, the elderly see their hopes unfulfilled at end of their careers. You will take the place of their sons; you will be for them a new family and after having consoled and sustained them till the end, you will piously close their eyes and will watch over their graves.

Above all, you will see around you a poor people distanced from you by fierce prejudices because of our role as masters and victors. My dearly beloved Brothers, you must seek to win their hearts, solely by your kindnesses. Regardless of their moral degradation today, you will recall that these men, women and children in rags, are, like you, children of God. You must never imitate those who mistreat or abuse their weakness. You will have respect and charity for them inspired by faith. You will offer ‘God’s hospitality’, as they say themselves, to all those who are ill, a place of refuge for little orphans and to all the proof that by your words and actions you love them as brothers. Gradually, in contact with your kindness and your example, you will see them approach you and give you their hearts. Those who come after us will one day see here one flock and one shepherd.106

Here then is your task, my dearly beloved Brothers, in all its straightforwardness and grandeur. Doubtless it will have its problems and sorrows, but it will also have its inexpressible rewards. In the evening, after the working day, when you raise your eyes to the beautiful sky of our Africa, you will sense that God is with you and that he blesses you! Above all, in the evening of life, when, after long years of
work and suffering, your tired hands will pass on to others the instruments of your labours, thinking of the poor you have helped, the orphans you have fed, the sick you have relieved and the major work of civilisation and faith that you began, you will thank God for having thus used your weakness for his purposes.

Perhaps, even certainly, my dearly beloved Brothers, your reward will not be of this world. Your dedication will be slandered during your lifetime and misjudged after your death. One-day men will come who will speak of your idleness, the idleness of the monks concerning the fields you have cleared and of the houses you will have built with your hands! What does it matter? The work will have been done and you labour for a Master who does not leave the works of his servants without reward!

Therefore, be of good heart! Faithful workers! Put your hand to the plough and, seeing the harvest reserved for you, do not look back, but strengthen yourselves by daily prayer, suffering and humility.
17 - Letter from Rome to Father Finateu in Algiers
(9th February 1870)

The First Ecumenical Vatican Council’s Solemn Opening was on the 8th December 1869 in Rome. Archbishop Lavigerie took part in it and was elected a member of the Conciliar Commission for Missions and the Oriental Churches. He had planned to return to Algiers in early February, but tensions increased between the Council Fathers concerning the proposed definition of papal infallibility. The Holy Father Pius IX asked Lavigerie to delay his departure. During all this time, he wrote frequently to the Fathers in Algiers to request news, notably about the orphans, to encourage them and give them instructions. The letter below, addressed to Father Finateu, is a good example of the correspondence of the Founder during this time. (AGMAfr, Red Volume 18, 1870).

Genoa,

Dear Child in the Lord,

I counted on seeing you at Saint Eugène and that is why I waited until now to reply to your letter to tell you that I expect to have news of Saint Eugène, the children and your good self every fortnight. Now that my absence is to be prolonged, I insist on it all the more.

I understand very well that you are overworked, but it is our lot in our enterprises. For this year above all, I only see one remedy for our ills and that is patience and dedication. I will pray for you, dear Son and I ask you to pray for me, as I need prayer too. My heart is in Algeria, but my overriding duty detains me in Rome.

Tell your dear children that I often think of them and that I bless them with the sincere tenderness of a father, hoping they will grow in wisdom, above all in piety and also in knowledge.

I saw their little companions at Marseille and I was very pleased. Farewell, dear Son, my best wishes to Fr. Bouland and to Brother Deguerry. I commend myself to their prayers; I am all yours in Christ.

Charles Archbishop of Algiers.
P.S. I informed Father Charmetant that the geese, ducks and chickens at Saint Eugène are to be transferred to Maison-Carrée. Tell him to do so as soon as possible and to watch over the ducks and geese constantly. Otherwise, they will escape and the hunters will shoot them down.  

18 - Prayer for the Sovereign Pontiff Pope Pius IX  
(27th October 1870)

Two major grim events occurred in the middle of 1870, fraught with consequences for Europe and for the Church. In July 1870, Prussia and France declared war. France, which had to withdraw the troops guaranteeing the safety of the Pope, lost this war in a few weeks. For several months, France began a period of deep and violent political crisis that finally gave rise to a change in regime and the advent of the Third Republic. In Rome, the First Vatican Council had to interrupt its operations and the Council Fathers returned to their respective countries. However, a great movement for unification called Risorgimento overran all Italy. In September of that same year, the troops of Victor Emmanuel II seized the Papal States and obliged Pope Pius IX, dispossessed of all powers, to lock himself into his Vatican Palace. In this context of violence and crisis, which Lavigerie greatly resented, he ordered public prayers for the Holy Father in his own diocese.

Circular Letter of His Grace the Archbishop of Algiers to the Clergy of his Diocese, ordering prayers for the Sovereign Pontiff

Reverend Gentlemen and dear co-workers, you already know, in the midst of the misfortunes of our homeland the deplorable and lamentable situation of our Sovereign Pontiff, despoiled of all that remained of his States. These were, as our venerable French language tells us, the patrimony of the Church, i.e., the common property of the Catholic people. Pius IX is captive in his own palace. He can only have relations with the rest of the Christian world if his jailers allow it, for they could forbid it to him tomorrow.
In these extreme circumstances, our duty is to have recourse to prayer; there lies our almighty weapon, which will deliver Peter, the first of the Pontiffs, who was Herod’s prisoner when the whole Church prayed for him. Let us pray, Gentlemen, for the triumph of justice, of powerlessness, of this triple majesty of the High Priesthood, of virtue and of his age, all simultaneously oppressed in Pius IX. Let us pray for the persecuted and oppressed Church itself, in the person of its chief. Let us pray for European society, which has fallen so low, alas! Not a single official protest has been raised from it against these latest attacks. What am I saying! Did they not see them being prepared one day some fifteen years ago?

Consequently, from the Sunday following receipt of this letter and until the liberation of the Sovereign Pontiff, we will chant the ‘Miserere’, followed by the versicle ‘Let us pray for our Holy Father Pope Pius’ and the ‘Prayer for the Pope’ at Benediction.

Algiers, 27 October 1870

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
This letter is written from France where Archbishop Lavigerie is held back by the urgency of the political situation. Indeed, since the military defeat of the country by Prussia, France is going through a deep political crisis. Emperor Napoleon III is obliged to flee the country and a new regime, republican this time, is due to be put in place. Many Church leaders and Christians believe that the Church should not withdraw into itself faced with this new situation. Lavigerie is part of this group, which advocates openness and participation in the new plan of society.

My dear Son,

Thank you for the news you send of Maison-Carrée. For me, they are a consolation in the midst of the dreadful problems that prevail in France and that threaten to break out into civil war. Pray lots, my dear children. I don’t know if you know that I am presenting myself for election to the Constituent Assembly. Elections are in six days time and this will keep me apart from you just at the point I was going to leave, because I was due to embark on Friday for Philippeville. The Holy Father wanted it and asked me to do this service for the Church. What will become of me? I don’t know. However, if I were to perish in the doing of my duty, I would commend myself to you, my dear children, before God, for him to forgive my sins.

I wish to let you know also that in foreseeing possible outcomes, I have appointed my Vicar General for the Mission. He is (Auxiliary) Bishop Soubirane. I chose him, because if I die, he will be able to be more helpful to you than anyone else. The temporal affairs are also free from financial worries and Bishop Soubirane knows how. Do not be saddened, children, by these arrangements. These simple precautions of prudence I am taking are in view of civil discord, during which Catholic Members of Parliament could become victims.
In any case, I trust that you will not run any risk in Algeria. Moreover, the terrible crisis that seems to threaten France does not seem to going to last, or go beyond the political arena.

Now, I am going to reply briefly to the questions you asked me.\textsuperscript{118} You can sell the red and grey horses you mentioned, provided they sell well. The red one cost me 1,200 Frs. You need to keep the black one that does the work of two. M. Combes sent me accounts showing that there are a lot of expenses at Maison-Carrée. Think about it. Do not make unnecessary expenses. We have not had donations here for a long time and our funds are diminishing at a fearsome rate.

Please ask Brother Tassy to send me through you an exact and detailed account by hundredweight, 1) wheat sent to Mr. Narbonne since August for milling; 2) wheat already consumed in flour; 3) wheat remaining. This chart has to include the quantity of wheat coming from Maison-Carrée as well as, twice, from the Attafs. What has been done with the barley, maize and broad beans from the Attafs? Has it been milled? I would also like to know the state of your livestock, pigs as well as cows, etc. Make out a complete chart for me, as I wish to sell off the surplus.

For the novices you mentioned to me, there is nothing more to do than maintain their rights, which are clear.\textsuperscript{119} You will see with Mr. Gillard who, as Vicar General, will certify that they have been seminarians for a year, and, besides, they were in Algeria before the 4th September. You can give the habit to these young men you mentioned to me, if Father Creusat thinks it opportune.

Farewell, my dear Son. I bless you all from the bottom of my heart, wishing you peace within and without and requesting your prayers for me.

With warmest greetings,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

P.S. You have to plant potatoes in the vineyard and everywhere you can as soon as possible.
20 - Letter to Father Charmetant: Continue to trust!
(29th June 1871)

Halfway through 1871, Lavigerie was several times in France, where the political and religious situation was difficult and confusing. It was hardly better in Algeria. In this short letter to Father Charmetant, we can understand his attachment to his Mission and to the Missionaries, as well as the faith that inspires him. (Text in AGMAfr. Lavigerie Collection, 1871).

Paris,

Dear Son,

I need your news, as it was not without acute worries that I left you.

I pray God daily, at each moment, for your children and you and I ask him for the means to repair the evil already done for many reasons. Take advice from Father Creusat for problems of detail that could arise. Whatever happens, do not give way to discouragement. Have recourse to Our Lord and to Our Lady of Africa. Do your best and give good example in all areas.

Farewell, my dear Son. Write; tell me a bit about what the situation is, material, and, above all, spiritual. I bless you with all my heart. In Christ,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

21 - Letter to Father Charmetant
(10th July 1871)

The first six months of 1871 were very trying for Lavigerie. The republican regime in France had led to the setting up of an anti-clerical government in Algeria and Catholic activities were often attacked.
Financial funding was seriously lacking and the orphans as well as the Fathers and Sisters suffered hunger. At the same time, Lavigerie had to take charge of the neighbouring Diocese of Constantine, which the ailing Bishop had abandoned with huge debts. A major revolt broke out in Kabylia and for several months the region was subjected to intense battles. We recall that the political situation in France remained very worrying for Catholics and Lavigerie was deeply affected by this. In fact, he was led to reside in France during this time and from there he regularly wrote to the Fathers of Algiers to encourage them. Sometimes, he rebuked them for one or other error, but even more to ask for news and to let them know he was thinking of them.

Paris,

My dear Son,

It is almost a month since I left Algiers and I have no news of you at all. This is not good. The situation in which I left you makes me suffer all the more because of this silence. I hope, nevertheless, that God will have helped and protected you and that I shall find you all on my return inspired with the firm attitude of amending the past.

I plan to return in a fortnight, or, at the latest, three weeks, i.e., Monday the 24th or Monday the 31st of this month. My dear Son, I commend you to maintain regularity as far as possible and to give the example yourself. Do not get lost in external and material works, which have their unrelenting demands, but which are only secondary and very secondary.

In the midst of all our trials, I still receive applications for the Postulancy and I accept them. I am planning to reopen the Novitiate on the 1st October. I am carefully studying your rules again to modify what painful experience shows us to be inapplicable. I count on you, dear child, on Fr. Deguerry, Fr. Soboul, Brothers Prudhomme and Castex, and the young priest just arrived, to give to all the example of a good spirit and fidelity to the Work.

As for the children, subsequent to changes made in the situation, their first departure for France is postponed to the Saturday following my arrival in Algiers. Have them be patient until then by telling them
that I don’t want them to go, even for a short time, without me seeing them and blessing them. I am not speaking to you about material works. I believe they are ongoing. I would like the plot of land between the garden of the big house and my house proper to be tilled and levelled to plant artichokes at the beginning of next month.

Farewell, my dear child. I bless you since I love you from the bottom of my heart as father and friend.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

22 - Presentation and Description of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa (24th September 1871)

From the beginnings of the Society, the Founder cherished the idea of making it known publicly in an attempt to find vocations, notably in France. With this in mind, he drafted presentations of his project several times in the form of letters and booklets, addressed to Superiors of Major Seminaries and Bishops, Parish Priests, etc. Comparison of the various versions of these texts enables us to see how some points of his project had evolved. Here below is a presentation dating from September 1871, three years after the opening of the first Novitiate. It reveals several changes, in relation to, for example, the text of the very first Constitutions presented earlier in this work. The central part of this text, which repeats almost word for word the 1869 Constitutions, has not been repeated here and only the long introduction and the conclusion are quoted. The title given by the Founder to this booklet is the same as the one printed below. (AGMAfi, Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume n°20, 1871).
Notification on the Society of Missionaries of Africa or of the Venerable Geronimo, founded at Algiers under the authority of His Grace the Apostolic Delegate of the Missions of the Sahara and the Sudan, dedicated to the Priests and Seminarians of France

Three years ago, this little society was founded in Algiers with the approval and authority of His Grace the Apostolic Delegate of the Missions of the Sahara and the Sudan. As its name implies, it is intended to bring the light of the Gospel to the immense continent, which, until today, has remained almost inaccessible to the zeal of the apostolate. The Missionaries of Africa live in community, but they do not take Religious Vows at all. Like the priests of the Foreign Missions, they are secular Missionaries, united by the ties of a single government and rule, submitted to the authority of a single Superior and taking an Oath to consecrate themselves to the Mission, as is done in Rome by the Missionaries.

Although the seminary of the Society is set up in Algiers, it is not however a diocesan institution. The priests who come from it cannot be employed in the ordinary tasks of sacred ministry. They are specially charged with the Mission to the local inhabitants, in the whole expanse of north and central Africa where Local Ordinaries call them. For this, they must go where their Superiors send them.

The mission entrusted to them is poor, hard, difficult and the most desolate in the world. It offers to those who devote themselves to it only hardships of all kinds and often, perhaps especially in the beginning, martyrdom, for on several of the points they need to evangelise, the people are fiercely fanatical. For this reason, the Mission of Africa can only tempt those to whom Our Lord himself has given a taste for the truly fruitful words of the apostolate, ‘If anyone wishes to be my disciple, let him renounce himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.’

However, at this price, a great inner joy is reserved to Missionaries. It is to attempt at least and perhaps to succeed in a task that up to now has presented insurmountable obstacles. It is to overthrow the barriers
that Islam and barbarism oppose to the Church in Africa and to truth. Our little emerging society therefore appeals to the generous zeal of priests and seminarians of France who wish to give themselves completely to God and God alone in the service of the most abandoned souls. It is for those who are not self-seeking, but who desire to suffer and die for God!

Quite providential circumstances have given us the means to unite and prepare the work of the Mission. A degree of facility has surfaced for us from the latest events that troubled Algeria and that had seemed, by contrast, to make our enterprise impossible! What we lack are workers, good apostolic workers, for the harvest is great and we are still very few. If any of those reading these lines felt a spark of the apostolate ignite in him, ready to give up everything, and if he wanted to know a little more in detail about our rules and the works to which we devote ourselves, we believe that we could expose here the following extract from our Constitutions, approved by His Grace the Apostolic Delegate and printed in Algiers.

Here follow long extracts from the Constitutions, already quoted previously. These extracts restate the different types of apostolate of the missionaries, the rules of life and prayer in common. The whole document finishes with the following conclusion:

In a few words, such is the perspective of the apostolic works of our Society. Its first rule is to conform in all areas to the doctrines, direction and slightest desires of the Holy See. It is to this life of poverty, dangers, trials of all sorts and martyrdom, if obliged, that we dare to invite our brothers of France to whom God utters the call of grace in the depth of their hearts! Already trained priests, young major seminarians (Levites), we will welcome all those who would like to become working companions, where we have nothing to offer them of what the world is seeking.

Our Seminary is built in isolation, on the shore of the Africa Sea, near Algiers. Three Fathers of the Society of Jesus conduct it. It is here that the priests have to do a year’s probation to learn the local language and integrate the apostolic virtues. The young clerics spend their time in novitiate and in studies. We ask nothing, of those who apply, neither gold nor silver. We ask only sound virtue, the willingness to
devote themselves to the salvation of the local inhabitants, the courage and strength to put up with material poverty, contradictions, and the pain accompanying such a change of life.

Those who wish to devote themselves to this work and become Missionaries of Africa should make a written application to Rev. Fr. Creusat, Superior of the Mission Seminary at Maison-Carrée, near Algiers, or else to Archbishop Lavigerie, Apostolic Delegate at the Archdiocese of Algiers. They should send the required certificates for identification with their application. If accepted, they will be sent a free travel ticket for the crossing from Marseille to Algiers.

Seen and Approved,

Charles, Archbishop, Apostolic Delegate of the Missions of the Sahara and the Sudan,

Archbishop Lavigerie, while developing his missionary projects, was always concerned for the pastoral activities of his diocese as Archbishop of Algiers. In early September 1871, he called a diocesan synod to solemnly publish the Acts of the First Vatican Council. At the end of its sessions, the Assembly then sent a message of diocesan fidelity to Pope Pius IX. The Pope replied in a message of thanksgiving and encouragement. Lavigerie had this text published with a letter of presentation whose text is below. Indeed, Archbishop Lavigerie drew up a sort of illustration of the achievements and pastoral agents in his diocese. This constitutes a very interesting presentation of the life of this local Church at the end of 1871. (AGMAfr; Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume n°20, 1871)

Circular Letter of His Grace the Archbishop of Algiers bearing on the communication of a Brief from the Sovereign Pontiff to the clergy of his diocese in reply to an Address from the Diocesan Synod

Gentlemen and dear Co-workers,

Today, I fulfil a joyful duty in communicating to you the Brief whereby our Most Holy Father Pope Pius IX graciously replies to the Synod Letter in which all the clergy of this diocese renewed the homage of its dedication and obedience to His Holiness and its faith in the divine prerogatives of the Holy See. You will see with joy, Gentlemen, that this testimony to our filial piety consoled momentarily the heart of our Father in the midst of his painful heartache.
There you will find a pledge of hopefulness in his blessings, the fatherly tenderness which Pope Pius IX grants to our African Church re-emerging from its ruins and which, according to the words of this great and holy Pontiff, aspires to reinstate its former splendour. In truth, Gentlemen and dear Co-Workers, I can but join my feeble voice to his, to thank God and congratulate you all in the progress I see being accomplished in front of us, despite so many obstacles to our ecclesiastical and religious undertakings.

In these last four years, the diocesan clergy has almost doubled the number of its priests. In addition, four new men’s Congregations have established themselves among us: the Norbertines, the Basilians, the Spanish Fathers of the Immaculate Conception, the priests of the African Missions. Something truly marvellous, two others have arisen from our own soil: the Fathers of the Mission and the Brothers of the Mission of the Venerable Geronimo.127

Five new women’s Congregations have come to bring us their valuable aid for the education of children and the direction of works of charity: the Sisters of Saint-Charles de Nancy, the Sisters of Saint-Joseph des Vans, the Little Sisters of the Poor, the Sisters of the Assumption of Our Lady and the Virgins of Jesus and Mary. Another Congregation, founded at Algiers, is the Sisters of the Mission.128

In all, today we can count in our Diocese ten men’s Congregations, twelve women’s Congregations, over two hundred priests who work together for the establishing of the faith and Christian life on this land that has been so long forsaken.

The diocesan establishments have multiplied satisfactorily in proportion. Threatened at one time by the separation of the three dioceses and the suppression of the greater part of their resources, they came through the storm without perishing.129 The Junior Seminary, in particular, stripped of any grant, deprived of two-thirds of its pupils, multiplied, so to say, in the midst of conflict. Instead of the single institute of Saint-Eugène, we now have four: a Junior Seminary as such, beside the Major Seminary at Kouba; two Church Colleges, one at Blida, the other at Algiers and finally, by God’s blessing that none of us could expect, there is even a Junior Seminary with fifty local children, Arab and Kabyle, preparing for the Catholic priesthood.
I leave aside the Mission Seminary, the retirement home for our elderly and even our orphanages. Nonetheless, they have already given us a priceless harvest, since they have saved over eight hundred children for heaven. Eight hundred others, mainly Christian, are today growing and learning how to work and live morally. What I tell you, Gentlemen, is not to make you prideful. I tell you this to give you the courage required in the midst of hardships, trials, contradictions, persecutions and calumnies with which our ministry is assailed from every corner in these sad times. It reminds you that our services, which often we believe sterile, are not in fact so, thanks to the hand of God that sustains us and rectifies our mistakes by his kindness. Therefore, take courage! Gentlemen and dear Co-workers, whatever may be the present problems, there are better days that are coming here for the apostolate. A sensible policy, truly, colonial, truly French and truly Christian is at last taking shape and promises us a time of true freedom, the only attribute that the Church requests of earthly powers to accomplish its divine mission.

Bear in mind that the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth blesses us and exhorts us to the good fight. Take courage and no matter the trials that still await us, let us recall the words of the Master: ‘Take courage, I have overcome the world.’ Now, Gentlemen, here is the Brief of the Sovereign Pontiff that I have preceded with this Address, so that you may keep it together in the archives of your parishes like a sacred souvenir of our latest Synod. (The text of the Papal Brief is inserted here. Then Lavigerie concludes):

We will add nothing to such a speech, Gentlemen and dear Co-workers. For you and for us it will endure as a privilege and a strength. Let us ask God daily to make us worthy of it and above all to make it a truth. Yours affectionately and devotedly in the Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
In early 1872, political peace was restored in France, and in Algeria the authorities ended their opposition to the activities of the Archbishop. Father Charmetant wrote to the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons, to inform the benefactors and thus obtain some money. Lavigerie added a letter of introduction in which he recalled his new apostolic achievements. This text follows below. (AGMAfr; Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume 21, 1872).

Algiers,

Gentlemen,

Father Charmetant, a Missionary from the Diocese of Lyons and Superior of our Mission Junior Seminary for local inhabitants, writes to you a letter that I am adding to this one. It is intended for your Records. I myself will write you another very soon on the foundation of our first village for Christian Arabs. I would even ask you to keep it on the baptismal register in giving it its name. It will be inaugurated in June. A small church and twelve houses have been built at our own cost.

At the same time, and following on benign changes in the ideas of the Algerian government vis-à-vis the local inhabitants of Algeria, and thanks to total freedom from now on left to the apostolate, we will begin new establishments in Kabylia. Three entirely Kabyle villages have asked for priests and Sisters to reside among them. We have been able to buy a house in one of these villages; I will go to bless it on Low Sunday. However, we are short of funds, which are essential. We have to be able to maintain Mission personnel there right away, so as not to lose a favourable opportunity.
I have recourse to you, Gentlemen, for this quite extraordinary purpose. Despite the problems of the day, I hope you will be able to come to my assistance.

With every good wish…

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

25 - Letter to Father Charmetant for travel to Rome
(11th August 1872)

The letter below is not as such a document of major importance. Nevertheless, it bears a message. It gives us a familiar and warm image of the Founder. He has to go to Rome. He invites two of the most committed Fathers of the emerging Society to accompany him, knowing that it would please them greatly. As was his wont, he worries about many details, thinking of their replacements, concerned that no child will suffer from these absences, etc. This is the face of a father of a family and this is what is of value in this very straightforward letter. (AGMAfr., Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume 21, 1872).

Algiers,

My dear Son,

I am going to spend a few days in Rome, and I would gladly take the opportunity to allow two of you to come and represent the Work at the feet of the Holy Father and request his blessing on them. You and Father Deguerry have naturally been chosen. If you can therefore find replacements, I authorise you to come and join me in Rome at the Hotel Minerva. Ask Fr. Combes for two tickets and once in Marseille, you take the ferry to Civitavecchia or the train for Genoa, Florence and Rome. Ask Fr. Combes to give you 1,000 francs for this journey.
I think Father Richard and Father Bouchand will be able to come to Saint-Eugène and Brother Pascal and someone else will be able to replace Father Deguerry. You will be absent for a fortnight. Make your preparations in view of this, materially and spiritually. Advise Father Deguerry not to leave behind any child that causes him concern, and do not leave anyone yourself either. Anything out of kilter, bring it to Marseille. Mr. Breuillot cannot remain at Saint-Eugène. I enclose a word to him that you can pass on to him. Bring him back to France with you.

Farewell, dear friend, or rather see you soon. From the bottom of my heart, Yours in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

P.S. I count on you both in your faith and self-denial not to forsake your activities if they were to lead to suffering in your absence. Tell all this to Father Deguerry. Bring the habit of your Society in good condition to appear before the Pope. I plan to be in Rome on the 22nd and remain until the 1st September.
26 - Letter to Father Deguerry, Superior of Saint Cyprien des Attafs Village
(11th November 1872)

Founded in early 1872, the Christian village of Saint Cyprien des Attafs west of Algiers comprised a considerable farming complex. Father Deguerry closely followed up the work, too closely according to the Founder, who reminded him of his proper vocation as a missionary. The Missionaries of Africa were then six: two priests (Deguerry and Feuillet) and four Brothers, Paul, Vincent, Jérôme and Max. (cf. Instructions aux Missionnaires, op. cit. p. 25 note 1).

Algiers,

My dear Son,

I am advising you once again about what I told you two days ago. I sent you to the Attafs as a Missionary and not as a farmer. You are not in the slightest in charge of directing the work, which is Brother Jérôme’s field, but only to give general direction from the religious and moral point of view and for the exact carrying out of the duties entrusted to each individual.

You and Father Feuillet, you should busy yourself only with the Mission, visiting the tribes, creating bonds of friendship with the Arabs and opening your school as soon as possible. I ask you to make sure that all the points of the Rule, without exception, are kept by everyone: rising, going to bed, meals, prayers, visits to the Blessed Sacrament. This is of prime importance, especially at the beginning and I hold you responsible for any laxity you would let into the Work. Don’t waste time running around the fields spending hours at a time there. Be content with a general inspection from the point of view I gave you, on each one’s duties.

Remember you are a priest and a Missionary and that God will hold you accountable, not for the harvest, but for your soul and the souls
entrusted to you. Tell this on my behalf to Father Feuillet and remind him of the obligation to write to me at least once a month.

Farewell, my dear Son. I bless you all from the bottom of my heart; your father in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers.
27 - Letter to Father Bouchand at Laghouat
(27th November 1872)

Three Missionaries, including Father Bouchand, the addressee of this letter, founded a mission in the south of Algeria, at Laghouat, the gateway to the Sahara, in the course of 1872. Lavigerie encouraged them and reminded them that the deprivation of their installation and the unpretentiousness of their apostolate were an integral part of mission. It should be said that at this time, the four hundred or so kilometres between Laghouat and Algiers was a considerable distance. This community in Algeria was the furthest from the Founder.

Les Attafs,

My dear Son,

You will notice by the date of this letter that I am with Father Deguerry and Father Paulmier. It is from there I write to you, although a little late. I was unable to do so in Algiers because I have been too busy.

I am happy, dear Son, with your healthy attitude and zeal. You must add three indispensable qualities for mission: regularity, perseverance and prudence. All three of you are still quite young and if you allow your imagination to run riot, even in good pursuits, you will suffer, as much in yourselves as for the work. Be therefore only what you should be at this moment; i.e., a good priest and schoolteacher. On the one hand, pray and give good example, on the other, apply yourself as best you can to make your pupils progress. The rest will follow in God’s good time.

I note with pleasure that you are rather put out by the presbytery at Laghouat. It would be deplorable if you were more at ease on mission than we would have been if you had not become missionaries. My dear Son, may God let you taste the joy there is in following him in his poverty and charity for souls and that it will always be beneficial for you.
I bless you and I am with you heart and soul; your father in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop, Apostolic Delegate.

P.S. If you want to know how your confrères are doing among the Attafs from where I am writing, I would say in two words that Fathers and Brothers are doing very well. The Fathers have begun classes for only two pupils. They distribute lots of medication, go to visit the sick and are well regarded by the Arabs. The village is being finished only slowly because the contractor is ill. We will not be able to inaugurate the buildings until the end of January. ¹³⁸ I hope to see you beforehand at Laghouat.

28 - Letter to Father Charmetant, Superior at Laghouat
(27th November 1872)

After a difficult period for Algeria and for Archbishop Lavigerie in 1870-1871, calm was restored to the country. 1872 yielded abundant foundations: Christian villages, the Sahara, and plans for Kabylia. Nevertheless, the founding of a community at Laghouat required lots of prudence and discretion because the colonial administration did not look favourably on the arrival of the Missionaries. Lavigerie kept a close watch on this foundation on which he invested great hopes for the future. This text is in the 1950 edition of ‘Instructions aux Missionnaires’.

Les Attafs,

My dear Son,

Not knowing about your presence at Laghouat or your journey to the Mzab prevented me from replying sooner to your letters. The one I received from Father Paulmier, giving me the certitude of your depa-
ture and your expected return, gives me hope that these lines will find you at your residence.

My dear Son, I regret all the useless commotion made about your journey. Your multiple telegrams, your approach to the Commandant Superior, all this was enough to bring about a major storm. It was nipped in the bud, but do not do this again. Never send me telegrams about the Mission. All your telegrams are read at Laghouat by the Commandant, at Médéa by the General, at Algiers by the General, Head of Arab Affairs, and by the Governor.

It is a miracle that all these people agreed. Our Lady of Africa performed the miracle this time; but don’t count on it anymore! You are young, my dear child, and I am not surprised by this lack of experience, but at least you have learned the lesson.

I hope you finished your journey safely. I wish to receive the detailed account of it and I ask you to write it immediately. If suitable, we will place some extracts in our Bulletin de Sainte-Monique.139

As for your plan of purchases and Arab college at Laghouat, you will have to give it up completely. Content yourself in your little presbytery. It is not our aim to buy splendid buildings; we have too many of them. Moreover, for a boarding school such as you are proposing, we need staff and expenses we cannot meet. Just do your classes as best you can. If some child appears who can be sent to us at Saint-Eugène, accept him from his parents and nothing more.

Finally, dear child, consider Laghouat as only a first stage. The African interior is our objective. It is there we have to reach out to with all our might. I am confident that Our Lord will enable the means for you to enter into this Promised Land of our apostolate.

My dear child, trust in my fatherly feelings for you and my blessing for you and your brothers.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
This end-of-year report provides information of dual importance. On the one hand, it shows that 1872 was a time of rapid development for the Society of Missionaries of Africa and its missionary undertakings. We recall that this same year Lavigerie officially published a new text of the Constitutions for the Society. On the other hand, this report reveals to us an unexpected profile of the Founder in his deep and persistent interest in the Eastern Churches. He had known the Near East in the context of his responsibility as Director of the Œuvre d’Orient from 1856-1861. He was also a member of the commission dedicated to these Churches during the First Vatican Council in 1870. This letter shows that not only did this interest not diminish, but that he cherished the idea of a possible service of the Church towards these communities in the Near East. (AGMAfr., Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume rouge 21, 1872).

Algiers,

Your Eminence,

As the Blessed Festivities of Christmas approach, I am fulfilling a joyful duty in offering Your Eminence my sincere best wishes of respect and devoted affection. I pray to God that he will grant Your Eminence long life for the good of his Church and restore your health that has been lacking for some months.

Here, Your Eminence, our activities continue to progress. I have just had built a very comfortable residence for future Apostolic Delegates of the Sahara and thus to put the final touch to the creation of this mission. There are 53 Missionaries. Those who are in the Sahara are very
satisfied with the unexpected welcome they have received. The others who run the Seminary for local inhabitants, numbering sixty-nine Arab and Kabyle children intended for the priesthood, are also full of confidence in their enterprise.

From the material point of view, everything continues to make good progress. We have never been in debt and our income, due to the charity of France and the produce of our lands, is in excess of three hundred thousand francs. In these unfortunate times, it is a kind of miracle, for which we readily give thanks to Divine Providence.

I noted with sadness in the newspapers the death of Bishop Valerga. It is a huge loss for the Church and the Holy See. He will never be equalled in the Near East.

In this respect, Your Eminence, if I were allowed to voice an opinion, I believe the appointment of a Frenchman to Jerusalem would rapidly and favourably advance the progress of Catholicism in the Near East. France has huge resources in money and men and a Frenchman can turn them to account, if required, for the benefit of the Holy Land. Moreover, the real crux of all the Eastern issues is in Paris. An able French Bishop could manage these matters for the best, in the present and the future, for the benefit of the Church in the Near East.

I know it is hard to find the right man, but I see the undertaking and the means to make it succeed as so important that I would not hesitate personally, if the Holy Father asked me, to make the sacrifice of my situation to take it on. Here, today, my mission is founded. It is only a matter of maintaining it and a Bishop can easily be found to do so. In the Near East, it is another matter. The problems are countless and almost everything is still to be done or prepared.

However, Your Eminence is a better judge than I in this matter. I ask you to excuse my boldness and to see me, in this as in all matters, your very humble, respectful and affectionate servant.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
30 - Letter to the Superior of the Jesuit Fathers relative to the Mission in Kabylia
(1st February 1873)

The mission was begun in Kabylia in early 1873 with two foundations, one at Tagmount-Azouz, and the other at Ouadhias. The Jesuit Fathers opened a mission at the same period at Djurdjura, and Lavigerie gave all of them, Jesuits and Missionaries, the same instructions. This text has been partially quoted in Instructions aux Missionnaires, 1950, p. 27, and in its entirety at Archives, AGMAfr., Lavigerie Collection, Red Volume 22, 1873.

Algiers,

Most Reverend Father,

The time has come for us to be able, I hope, to begin some small installations in Kabylia. You want to open some posts there and I am not against it. The Missionaries of the VG (Venerable Geronimo, Translator’s Note) want to found some as well and I will help them to do so. However, so that everything takes place without problems and without friction in this difficult task, I need firstly to inform you of the following rules that you, as well as the Missionaries, will formally accept in writing.

1) The present and future Archbishop of Algiers must approve beforehand every new establishment, school, residence, post, etc. etc. Without this, we would be vulnerable to rivalries, as well as boundary and influence quarrels that we must avoid at all costs.

2) No public collection will take place for this mission by the Jesuit Fathers or by the Missionaries in France or Algeria. The Jesuit Fathers will have to run their works with the own resources and the Mission with those that I will obtain for the work in general. The reason is that I need all the resources that the faithful can afford, so as not to go
under with the burden of my works, and if we set out to collect for another special mission in Kabylia, it would divide hearts and minds and would dry up all our sources.

3) Until further notice, it is forbidden to both Jesuit Fathers and Missionaries of the Venerable Geronimo to speak of religion to the Kabyles, unless it is dogmas they assent to and their former Christian traditions. For the time being, you will limit yourselves to caring for the sick and schooling the children.

4) Neither Jesuit Fathers nor Missionaries will be able to open a college in Kabylia. They will limit themselves to classes for day pupils. Nevertheless, they could receive some poor children on their premises. However, once they know how to read, they should be sent to Algiers to a special institute, such as Saint-Eugène, until further notice, so as to avoid giving rise to Muslim fanaticism by an excessive number of children.

5) It is forbidden to baptise anyone, and even to propose Baptism, without my authority.

Here are the rules that I believe need... and for which I need written agreement. I am keeping a copy in my possession.

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
Lavigerie is very careful for the mission in Kabylia to be established on enduring apostolic foundations, notably with respect to the culture and the language and in proscribing anything that could appear as proselytising. The two following rulings, written the same day, bear witness to this attentiveness in vigorously specifying the rules to be followed by the Missionaries. Both texts are quoted in ‘Instructions aux Missionnaires’, 1950 Edition.

Algiers,

It is not only public preaching which I forbid, it is even individual preaching, until we have sunk roots in Kabylia, a time I reserve to myself to determine. For schools, I repeat that I do not allow boarding schools in Kabylia until further notice; I will not allow more than four or five boarders per house. If there are more, they need to be shifted to Algiers. As for day pupils, the more there are the better.

The second text, although it is also entitled ‘Ruling’, is in the form of a letter:

Algiers

My dear Children,

In the most valued and serious interest of the Work, I order, in virtue of the obedience, which you have sworn to me in whatever concerns the Mission, and this sub gravi:

1) To speak Kabyle and Arabic but never French; likewise, to avoid using interpreters with the local people, even if you have to endure embarrassments in the beginning.148

2) Never to go under any pretext to French parishes, unless you are in Algiers, with my authority. If you have purchases to make there,
send a Kabyle messenger with a written work for the parish priest who will be good enough to provide what you need.

I pray to God to bless you. I am your father in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

P.S. Father Deguerry should observe the present Ruling to the letter and I oblige him in conscience.
32 - Letter to Father Charmetant, Superior at Biskra (12th April 1873)

As the many letters written by the Founder to Fathers Deguerry and Charmetant show, they were in the forefront of this period of the beginnings of the mission. Lavigerie called on them for difficult foundation, counting on their generosity and their initiative. Charmetant arrived in early March at Biskra (Algeria) with two other confreres, Father Richard and Brother Laurent. Archbishop Lavigerie wrote to Fathers Charmetant and Richard to remind them of, or to specify, the missionary directions that he had given them.

Algiers,

My dear Sons,

I will begin by scolding Father Richard who has not written to me, as required by the Rule; this done, I thank Father Charmetant for the details he gives me. I wish to receive by the very next post the particular rule of your community life, which I shall sign and will send back to you to serve as law. The absolute obligation of always speaking Arabic among you and with the local people has to be observed. Without this, you will make no progress and Father Richard will not succeed. I recommend Brother Laurent to you. Look after him and treat him like a brother.

My dear sons, live at home as much as possible; don’t make unnecessary visits, especially to women and keep busy with the local people. I approve of you receiving children, but only for assessment. You must not keep those who have improper attitudes or those who lack intelligence. Experience tells us that we ought to bring up educated men, catechists, priests if we can, but not workers or farmers. On these terms, I accept the little orphan of Tebessa for Saint-Eugène, and later your orphans, when you will know them sufficiently.
Here, everything is going quite well. The Nortbertines are leaving and we are taking over Our Lady of Africa next week. Father Charbonnier will take charge. In Kabylia, we are going to make two new foundations. The novices will not come. Only two arrived from Rodez.

Farewell, my dear children. I bless you from afar, just as your father in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

33 -. Letter to Father Charmetant, Superior at Biskra
(2nd July 1873)

Archbishop Lavigerie takes a very close interest in the beginnings of his new missionary foundations. He has a permanent worry to avoid the Missionaries making mistakes due, according to him, to their inexperience or underestimating the hostility of the colonial administration. At the same time, he gives news of the others, mentions other projects and thus maintains a spirit of unity among all the Missionaries.

Algiers,

My dear Son,

Some time ago I commissioned Father Terrasse to reply to Brother Laurent. I expect he has done so. The best seems to me to have this good Brother take vows for a year. During this time, we will conclude our Rules. As for conscription, if there are special reasons, he should state them. I authorise you to have the house repaired. However, the sum you indicate is out of all proportion to its purchase price. Therefore, do it as cheaply as you can.

For the moment, I cannot send you a third priest. It will only be possible in October. In anticipation of events, this week we are founding a third mission in Kabylia, in addition to a mission at Géryville at the request of the Bishop of Oran. There are six new subjects to find.
I shall leave for Rome on the 12th July to present my Council to the Pope. I am sick with fatigue and also with grief over the tragic accident that took away two of our novices at Maison-Carrée and almost deprived us of four. It is a terrible example of the effects of disobedience. I myself went to forbid them to go bathing some days before. They did go and poor Brothers Osten and Colliaux lost their lives there.

My dear children, according to what I hear and what you yourselves tell me, I am afraid that you are diving into parish work a bit too much, to the detriment of the Arab task and in particular, you are seeing a little too much of the world, i.e., the officers. You will lose your vocation in this risky game. Resume, please, the exercise of your Rule and in your next monthly reports reply to these three questions:
1) Do you read your Rule in common every month?
2) Do you do your prayer and devotions in common?
3) Are you faithful to speaking only Arabic among yourselves?

Here, God continues to bless us. Only money is diminishing noticeably. The new Governor seems well disposed. We hear that you are going to see Mr de Sonis at Constantine, replacing General Lacroix. This will be a great joy.

Farewell, my dear children, I bless you. I am all yours in the love of the Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
34 - Letter to Father Deguerry Superior at Ouadhias
（6th July 1873）

This letter is a warning written by Archbishop Lavigerie. He is aware that the colonial administration is lying in wait to denounce anything that could resemble the slightest proselytising and close down mission posts at once. At the same time, he reminds the confreres how much their apostolate in a Muslim context demands a broad outlook and patience. In the same letter, he writes to the missionaries in two posts at Ouadhias and Arifs (Iberkanen) in Kabylia.

Algiers,

My dear Son,

The situation is becoming increasingly difficult. A single act of imprudence from one of you can destroy everything. You must therefore, more than ever before, adhere to the rule that I gave you:

1) Never speak of religion to the Kabyles, on any pretext. Above all, do not commit any of them directly or indirectly to become a Christian and do not baptise anyone, even in danger of death, except a child already in its last agony. I blame Father Prudhomme very strenuously for what he did in this respect to a sick and mentally disabled child. I blame him even more for writing it to me in a letter that could have fallen into the hands of anyone. Moreover, as an example for all, I am depriving Father Prudhomme from celebrating Holy Mass for three days for the error he committed. This is not the time to convert; it is the time to win hearts and the trust of the Kabyles by charity and kindness. You must not aim at anything else; everything you do outside of this will put the Work in jeopardy.

2) I do not think you need to accept statute labour from now on; above all, you must never ask for it. How could you have done so for the Arifs?
3) For this last post, you must go and install it yourself. I hope the hostility that you noticed will gradually disappear. If it is otherwise, let me know.

4) Poor Father Chardron is surprised by the indifference of the Kabyles. This is really astonishing. Does he think they are Christians? Doesn’t he know they are Muslims? It is up to us to win them over gradually, but for that we will perhaps need a century.\textsuperscript{158}

Truly, my children, I am sorry and confused to see that you understand so little of your Work and the human heart. Arrange the three posts for the personnel as you see fit. For the material, I approve what you intend to do in Ouadhias.

I leave for Rome on Saturday. In my absence, you will refer to Father Terrasse for spiritual direction and that of the Mission, and to Father Combes for money.

I bless you, my dear children, and I am all yours in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

P.S. Please read this letter to all your confrères.
35 - Letter to Father Charmetant, Superior at Ouadhias
(5th January 1874)

This letter, like the preceding ones, relates to the beginnings of the mission in Kabylia. It enables us to understand how difficult the founding of the first missions in this region was, raising many questions. Lavigerie accompanies the Missionaries almost step-by-step, simultaneously authoritarian and very close to their concerns, seeking to advise and encourage them.

Algiers,

My dear Son,

The upsurge in applications you bring to my notice is very important, but you must act with great prudence. Above all, you must absolutely omit any religious propaganda. The Jesuit Fathers have been accused of distributing medals of Our Lady and Our Lord. If they have done so, they are desperately wrong. You and your confreres, I repeat, must abstain from taking a similar approach.

I agree with you, dear friend, that we need to build each post in stone; at least a little house. Now for that, you need to organise something and above all set yourselves up at Tizi-Ouzou. The only thing to prepare without delay is the stone, from both Beni-Arifs and Tagmount. No, my dear child, you must not leave Tagmount for now. We will teach the Kabyles what they need to do to expel us. Later, when we will be all over the place, we can withdraw without too much bother from a post, but not today. The less we succeed, the more we need to hold on. Now I would ask you to go immediately to Tagmount to settle affairs about the stone quarrying.

Farewell, my dear child, I bless you and your good confreres. Tell them I am very grateful about what they write to me as devoted and worthy. Recommend the observation of the Rule to them. Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
In the one letter, Lavigerie can severely reproach, congratulate and then encourage. However, beyond these aspects of his temperament, it is his ability to think mission that is shown once again in this letter. These include the attitudes to promote, the stages to respect, and above all to live everything as far as possible close to the people. This time again, he speaks of the Work, a word that expresses his thought, both the Mission of evangelisation entrusted to him and that he shares with his missionaries and the apostolic choices to put into practice. Very practically, it passes through concerns to appoint the right people, and to raise funds, etc.

Algiers,

My dear child,

I am sending Father Soboul to Tagmount-Azouz where he will soon become Superior after the departure of Father Prudhome whom I shall recall near the first of February.

I still cannot understand how the house where you are spends more than the others that are content with what I give them. Indeed, I give them, as well as to you, more than any diocesan priest, in proportion. Your Rule is to live like the local people and the Mission will soon collapse if you do not do so. Now what local person spends twelve hundred francs a year, without counting clothing and travel? Naturally, there are none. I am saddened, my dear child, to see that you, who are one of our seniors, are pushing in a similar path and give a very destructive example. You are thus working to destroy the Work very soon. Indeed, it can only survive through poverty and assimilation with the local population in food and materials.
I am pleased that the applications from the local people are multiplying. You need to welcome them in principle and decide to act towards the spring. For the purchase of plots of land, have a good look by yourself and another Father you will take with you. Then, send me proper proposals. I cannot decide with words up in the air. Go and see the things on the spot and deal with the business completely before referring it to me.

I am happy to learn from you that you are not making any imprudent propaganda; keep it up. I even think we could introduce ourselves as marabou-doctors and not seek out children for schooling. We could open schools later and very unassumingly.

Farewell, my dear child. Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

37 - Letter to Father Deguerry, Superior at Saint-Cyprien des Attafs
(24th January 1874)

This time, it is no longer about the beginnings of the mission in Kabylia, but the Christian villages founded over a year before, to wit, the village of Saint-Cyprien des Attafs. It is surprising to see how Archbishop Lavigerie enters with such minute detail into the work of the missionaries. At the same time, we know that for the Founder, these villages were bearers of much hope on the apostolic plane. He was to recognise later that the results of these foundations were not what he had hoped.

Algiers,

My dear Son,

The school objectives were sent off this morning and I expect you will have received them before this letter. You must hurry to organise the classes for men and for women. These classes should last two hours
each evening, i.e., three quarters of an hour of reading, a half-hour of singing canticles or other, three quarters of an hour of writing. On Sunday morning: an hour of reading and an hour of singing; in the evening, an hour of writing and an hour of singing.

The Sisters for the class will arrive on Monday. Make sure everything is ready for their class: tables, benches, etc. Give them also half the syllabaries, exercise books, pens, hymn books, cards, ink, etc. etc. Finally, while paying special attention to the boys, do not neglect the women.

Begin immediately the Congregation of the Children of Mary. They have a manual with their rules. Elect as president the most devout woman, the best able to exert a good moral influence. Entrust the direction of the Congregation to Sister P… whom I am sending to you to direct the women’s class. She is the most capable of the Sisters and the most reasonable.

Begin also the Congregation for the boys. Give them the Little Office of Sunday and badges that you will have them vote for themselves and that you will propose for my approval. With the Sisters, I am sending eight little children from Saint Charles; three for the norias (the two smallest and one almost sightless), five for the flocks. These eight children will be under the direction of Sister S… They will sleep on the floor on straw mattresses, which they will remove in the morning, either in the refectory, in the Sisters’ community room, or elsewhere, if you see fit, for example in the grounds, but always with a Brother or Sister within reach. The Sisters will feed them and will give them, as at Saint Charles, only bread and soup. They will also clothe them. 161

I have bought you a superb harmonium, which will arrive on Tuesday or Wednesday. Go to fetch it yourself at the station and make sure it is carried with care: on a stretcher would be best. 162

My dear Son, I earnestly recommend your undertaking. It is of extreme importance. Everyone has his or her eyes fixed on it. Some English people came to ask me to visit it. The Consul of England wrote to me to obtain a notice on our villages so that he could put it into a
book on Algeria. The Governor wants to come and see you. Therefore everything needs to be in good working order. Direct the men with energy with the aim of surpassing the women’s defects of character\textsuperscript{163}. If little troubles arise, hide them from everybody instead of complaining. Recommend the same thing to the Sisters. Moreover, be convinced that prayer, dedication, and faith will be your best weapons.

Farewell, dear Child, write to me often and believe me that I am all yours,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
38 - First approval of the Society
(19th September 1874)

In 1873, calm was restored to Algeria after four years of social, political and economic problems. As the Ordinary, Archbishop Lavigerie then convoked a Regional Synod that would, in his mind, link up with the tradition of the great Regional Councils of North Africa in the time of Saint Augustine (4th Century). The Bishops of the Maghreb, Abbots of monasteries and Bishops from France attended. Lavigerie had already founded his two Missionary Institutes and decided to submit the existence of the young Society of Missionaries for the approval of the Synod. The Synod Fathers approved and encouraged this foundation of the Archbishop and the following year the Holy See ratified this decision. Very happy with this encouragement from the Church, Lavigerie wrote a letter to his Missionaries to share it with them. This text is important, as it constitutes the first official instruction the Founder addresses to the small group of Missionaries officially recognised by the Church from now on, at least provisionally. At the same time, Lavigerie promulgates the second official version of our Constitutions (after those of 1872). In this document, as well as in the document written two months later after the first General Chapter, we can already distinguish some of the intuitions and major guidelines that inspire and will inspire Lavigerie throughout his ministry as Missionary and Founder.¹⁶⁴

Letter of Archbishop Lavigerie to Missionaries

‘My very dear Sons in Our Lord, I can finally officially pass on to you the text of the Decree of our Provincial Council, which praises and encourages your Society of the Missions of Africa. I am communicating this to you with a double joy. It is not only, in fact, the word of your Bishops, that of the first Council of the Church of Africa resurrected, which congratulates you and approves of your undertaking. A higher significance and authority are given to this already solemn Act,
by the approval with which the Holy See\textsuperscript{165} has invested the Decrees of the Provincial Council of Algiers.

However, even if this favour is extraordinary, I must, to give thanks to God with you, recognise that his blessings on your emerging Society had already prepared you. May you now be able to respond to this by a boundless dedication to the salvation of your brothers and above all recognise with humility that you are nothing, in spite of everything, but useless servants! This is the feeling that fills me. I am astounded that God willed to choose me to work towards, despite my weakness, an undertaking so great and so difficult.

Only a few years ago, not only did your little Society not exist, but also, even in the conditions applied to us in Algeria, it seemed impossible. How could we have dreamt of making our colony the centre of a Mission that would penetrate the depths of Africa, whereas the apostolate could not be exercised in Algeria itself?\textsuperscript{166}

However, God willed it. He wanted this conquest, the last of the most Christian kings, to be also the last crusade, the one that ought to be waged with truly apostolic arms of charity and martyrdom. He wanted new apostles to leave from these shores where the holiest of our kings met his death.\textsuperscript{167}

We have also seen, in the midst of countless calamities and problems, troubled times, when we wondered daily if Catholic France, if the whole former Christian world was on the way to destruction. Whereas persecution held sway against the most venerable Orders\textsuperscript{168}, your Work germinated in African soil, from an idea born of charity and faith. It took root and became a tree where the birds of the air began to find shelter.

‘Six years ago you numbered three or four at the most, united in a notion of apostolic dedication; today, Fathers and Brothers, you exceed 100. Then, you had only one house under your supervision, born of painful necessity; today, your buildings multiply step by step to the Sahara Desert.\textsuperscript{169} Where could you find, I repeat, a mark of Heaven’s blessing more striking? I therefore hope that it will predestine you to be the instruments of his mercies for so many souls plunged in the
most terrifying darkness of barbarism. I hope that the light of truth will rise on this land previously accursed. After having for so long undergone the effects of divine anger, may the sons of Ham feel the effects of his mercy through you.

What gives me hope that God chose you to work effectively in the footsteps of other Apostolic Societies that go before you on other points of Africa, on this enterprise of life, is the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice that with joy I see prevail among you. What appealed to you in such an undertaking, and led you from so far and in such numbers? It is indeed what seemed to repel you most. I mean the problems, the hardships, the perils, the sufferings demanded. There is no Mission in the world where there was more to suffer in poverty, fatigue, heat, thirst and hunger. Moreover, the more the path opened to you in the centre of these barbaric countries, you also witnessed the cruelty of the inhabitants.\textsuperscript{170}

The Fathers of the illustrious Society of Jesus, who supervised your formation with such dedication and zeal, as well as myself, we did not hide all this from you, as you applied to enter the Society of Missionaries. You know what I wrote, as the future motto of your Work, on the Letters of Reference one of you presented to me on his arrival at Algiers. Now, even though you know it, I nevertheless want to register it here for your successors. This good priest, from one of the most religious and peaceable dioceses of France, brought me his Letters of Reference to be allowed to celebrate Mass.\textsuperscript{171} I took them and without saying anything, instead of the ordinary formulation, I wrote \textit{Visum pro martyrio}.\textsuperscript{172} I then gave him back his letters saying, ‘Read this; do you agree?’ ‘\textit{It is for this I have come’}, he said to me simply.

You have all heard the same words in one form or another on your arrival; you have all given the same reply. Indeed, my dearly beloved Sons, the trial that awaits you all. If it is not the bloody and quick martyrdom, it will be the real and long martyrdom of the everyday; the martyrdom of deprivation, illness, premature death, and something even more bitter, as long as you are not in the midst of non-Christians. It is the martyrdom of terms of abuse, insults, and the lowermost slan-
ders. They come from those who should be upholding your ministry, since by their baptism at least they are Christian.  

However, once you have suffered all this in imitation and in the spirit of the Master who sends you out, you will feel immense joy, of which the Apostle Paul speaks amid the perils of the sea and the rivers, the long journeys, the brigands and false friends: *Superabundo gaudio in omni tribulatione nostra.* The promise comes from God himself and therefore you will not be disappointed: *Quicomque reliquerit patrem, aut matrem, aut agros, propter me, centuplum accipiet.* Now, what is this hundredfold? It is the joy of taking part in the work of God, in the work of the redemption, of the resurrection of souls, to this work of which it is written: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo nisi ut accendatur.* And again: *Ego veni ut vitam habeant.* It is this vibrant and overabundant joy that with simplicity one of you demonstrated to me these last few days. Writing from one of these poor huts that you live in in Kabylia, and that fell on your heads three times this winter, he says, ‘I lack everything, but nevertheless, I would not exchange my lot with any king on earth!’

May God in his goodness, always preserve in you this spirit of joyful generosity: *Hilarem datorem diligit Deus.* May he give you the strength to sacrifice all and yourselves for the salvation of these poor souls to whom he sends you. It is the law of the apostolate: *Omnia impendam et superimpendar ipse pro animabus vestris.* Make these words a reality in your lives. You have begun by giving everything, those you love in taking your distance from them, your mother tongue, clothing, food all the habits of the past and exchanging them for the barbarian language, clothing, food and customs of those to whom you wish to give the light. After having done this, after making yourselves all things to all men, according to the language of the Apostle St. Paul: *Omnibus omnia factus sum*, desire only one thing: life for these poor souls and for you. The grace of God will enable you to put up with them, work, persecution, a cruel death if necessary and *superimpendar ipse.*

This is your law, I repeat, my beloved Sons. You have freely chosen it; you have bound yourselves to it by Oath and by this sacrifice of
your whole selves, you have added a link to this golden chain of super-
human dedication that the Church holds in its hands from its begin-
nings, like a magnificent proof that its origin is high above the earth.
However, an heroic act or sentiment is not enough, in order to sancti-
fy oneself and become able to sanctify others. After the act and even
with this sentiment, one can fall. Saint Paul feared for himself. How
much more should we not fear for ourselves? *Ne cum aliis proedicave-
rim ipse reprobus efficiar*[^181]. To become a saint, a whole life of virtue
is required. Life is composed of a succession of acts and moment that
all have their importance for this great objective.

For this reason, in all Apostolic Societies, independently of the spi-
rit that energises them, there are precise Rules that foresee and order
all: practical rules of prudence, order, and wisdom, that aim to avoid
dangers, to increase the power of good by the union of forces, to ensu-
re, in a word, the success of the battle for each soldier and for the
whole army by drawing up the battle plan in advance.

These Rules were drawn up for you and you have been following
them for several years. The experience appears sufficient for the
Episcopal Authority to approve them conclusively, as far as it is
concerned. This is what I am doing in the Order, which concludes this
Pastoral Letter, after promulgating the Decree of the Provincial
Council of Algiers. I am sure, my dearly beloved Sons, you will find a
new reason for respect and fidelity to these Rules in the approval given
to them. You will also find valuable guarantees in practising them.

Daily prayer, retreat, a spirit of obedience, constant regularity made
into an obligation for you, will be your safeguard. You will have a
secure bastion against dangers everywhere and more so among the
non-Christians, in the instruction that in no case and under no pretext
would it ever send you to be less than three Missionaries together in
one post. This Rule, which is in the Chapter of various Works of the
Society, is sanctioned in these forceful terms, to which I call your undi-
vided attention, because it has to be observed to the letter: *We will refu-
se, rather than break, the most advantageous, the most urgent offers,
and we will abandon the existence of the Society itself rather than
abandon this fundamental point.*
Now, my dearly beloved Sons, march into battle with a renewed courage; you are henceforth armed and blessed. No doubt you still need a sufficient number of already trained chiefs in age and experience. You are almost all very young yet, and the sacrifice you made of your youth is all the more admirable. I believe that God, who chose you and brought you will also let his voice be heard in the hearts of some holy priests of France, whose zeal is being consumed in little parishes and who would find here, if they came to lead you, entire kingdoms to conquer. It is up to you to ask the Lord to send these good workers to your aid.

I also see that, apart from you, some men of little faith worry unduly about the material side. By the foundations we have laid, we have already partially resolved this problem. Your Mother House and your Novitiate have been built. In a few weeks, I am going to consecrate the chapel there, which is successfully completed and fit for purpose. The Holy See, by a special favour, has consented to grant the extraordinary privilege of local exemption, while waiting for personal exemption. This means you will depend only on the Holy See or its Delegate. The Works of the Propagation of the Faith, the Écoles d'Orient, and Saint-Augustin, and the faithful souls will support you.

As I am writing to you, we have clear signs of this benevolent help. You needed in France a general procure and a postulancy for catechist-brothers. Thanks to the extreme kindness of his Eminence Cardinal Guibert and of the Right Reverend Bishop Bourret, these two foundations will be ready next month, the first one in the diocese of Paris, the second in the diocese of Rodez. You are already in possession of the buildings and the personal are appointed.

Finally, I am very pleased to say, that despite the problems of time and enormous expense that the many establishments we have founded over five years have cost, amounting to five hundred thousand francs per year, you have never had, nor do you have, any debt. To tell the truth, you are not rich either. However, my dearly beloved sons, may you always live like this, in the nobility of detachment and poverty, trusting that each day will provide you with the bread you need and
counting for that on the One who said to his first Apostles: *Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

On these matters, after having called on the Name of God, we, in our office as Apostolic Delegate for the Missions of the Sahara and the Sudan, have ordered and order as follows:

**Article One** – Concerning the Decree of the Provincial Council of Algiers: published according to its form and terms, for the Apostolic Delegation of the Sahara and the Sudan, to which belongs canonically the Society of Missionaries of Africa, called of Algiers, the Decree of the Provincial Council of Algiers, approved today by the Holy See that praises and encourages the said Society.

**Article Two** – Concerning the Rules of the Diocesan Society of the Missionaries of Africa, the which Society, exempt from the jurisdiction of the Archbishops of Algiers, depends on that of the Apostolic Delegation of the Sahara and the Sudan is and remains approved by Us in Our office as Apostolic Delegate, the text of the said Rules.

Signed the 18th September 1874, anniversary of the glorious death of the Venerable Geronimo, Arab martyr of Algiers, under Our Signature, the seal of our Arms and countersignature of the Secretary of the Apostolic Delegation.

*The Text of the Rules promulgated in this manner by Archbishop Lavigerie is the same as that of 1872. It is not possible to reproduce the text of this edition here; nevertheless, here are the main passages of Chapter III, devoted to the spiritual life of the Missionaries.*

**Chapter III: The means Missionaries must use to maintain the spirit of their state of life**

The first is the daily practice of mental prayer as prescribed by the Rule. A Missionary faithful to the practice of prayer will definitely maintain the spirit of his vocation, whereas he will lose it if he fails to pray.
The second is the general retreat that Missionaries must do every year in common for eight days, during which they will keep absolute silence, even during recreation time.

The third is the monthly retreat, which each one will do, in private, on the first Monday of the month.

The fourth is the practice of absolute obedience vis-à-vis Superiors. Without this attitude, there is no common work at all; consequently, no apostolate possible. No Missionary will be kept in the Society who does not have this spirit of perfect obedience; all the more reason has it to be called for from minor Superiors who would ruin everything if they did not conform exactly to the orders and spirit of Major Superiors.

Saint-Eugène (now Bologhine), place of residence of Lavigerie.
39 - Ruling relative to the Superior General and to the members of his Council

(1st October 1874)

The first General Chapter of the Society took place on the 11th October 1874 in Algiers. In the days leading up to it, Archbishop Lavigerie published several texts to convoke and prepare this first Assembly, of which the text is below. As in all foundations, the Founder has to take the first initiatives and give the guidelines required to the Missionaries who are going to have to hold this first Chapter. In particular, they will have to elect a Superior General and Councillors. This text is addressed to these future leaders and those who are going to elect them.

Rules for the Superior General – The main qualities that he must have are a truly interior spirit, a great regularity in habits, a love of prayer and meditation, self-denial, outstanding zeal for the salvation of souls, zeal for holy poverty, and outstanding charity, in particular for the poor inhabitants of Africa. Moreover, he needs a proper balance of firmness and gentleness, of calm and activity, knowledge of affairs in order to deal with men of the world and the God-given prudence that always relies above all on supernatural motives.

All the interests of the Congregation are mainly in his hands; the Society has to progress and reach its dual purpose under his compulsion, namely, the sanctification of its members and the exercise of apostolic zeal. At the prospect of such a responsibility, he will feel the need to merit divine assistance through a close union with Jesus Christ, through a very pure intention for the glory of God in all his actions and by a frequent exercise of prayer.

In dedicating himself entirely to the well-being of the Congregation, he will recall daily that if his zeal is to be active and persevering, he must no less bring discretion in the choice and application of the pro-
per means. Since the good state and progress of this Institute depends above all on the exact observance of its Constitutions and Rules, the Father Superior will prioritise attentiveness on this essential point in all his duties. For this reason, he needs to imbue himself with the letter and the whole spirit of the Institute, providing frequent explanations about it to the Fathers and neglect nothing to be sure that they are everywhere inviolably observed.

In his governance, he must imitate the charity and leniency of Jesus Christ Our Lord. He will show himself to be, as the Prince of Apostles said, ‘in the form of the flock’, directing by example, more than by words, his subordinates towards the perfection of their state. He must know how to combine, at the proper time, severity with kindness and also be seen as careful to avoid rigidity and weakness. When he is obliged to punish, he should always do so serenely and with the sole objective of good, without giving way to passion, or personal prejudice or resentment.

The means of maintaining his authority will be, more than anything else, the practice of solid virtue, behaviour that is always balanced and moderate, an affection full of concern for his subordinates and caution with which they will see him in command. In this way, all will love and esteem him and he will achieve the result of people hurrying to refer to him in trust. He will be able to understand that a Superior must not seek to do everything himself, but that he has a good administration, as a joint advantage. He should allow his subordinates to fulfil their duties and develop from the experience. Nonetheless, he needs to follow closely all that is done, to coordinate everything and draw it into unity of governance.

Rules for the Members of Council\textsuperscript{183} - The Members of Council must have a thorough knowledge of the Constitutions, the Rules, the canonical Rulings of His Grace the Delegate and those of the General Chapter in order to fulfil their responsibilities properly. For this reason, everyone will have a copy to hand that they can consult if needed. As they must have constantly in view the common good of the Congregation, they will be watchful of any suggestion of pride or any particular affection that could sway their judgement or opinions.
They will take great care always to give concurrently proof of the zeal that energises them for all that the Institute recommends and at the same time the example of submission, esteem and sincere attachment to the Superior General. In meetings of Council, they will give their opinions with modesty, simplicity and frankness, giving their reasoning in a few words and discussing matters in an open spirit of union and charity. When a matter appears difficult, they may, before speaking, ask for time to consider for longer at leisure before God.

**Rules for the Assistants** – When an Assistant is put in charge of some issue he must also consult and observe the other Rules of the Superior General that may relate to it. In addition, this will be for him an essential duty to enter into his intentions and to act faithfully according to his impulsion and his views, without in any way exceeding the limits of the powers that he has received.

It is of the utmost importance for the general good that each Assistant should be united more than anyone to his Superior, in charity, humility, dedication and obedience. In his words, as in his actions, he should give to others proof of this unity, eager to show and maintain within and without the authority of the Superior General and enthusiastic to strengthen the esteem, respect and affection that all the Fathers owe him. Each of the Assistants will be attentive with a charity full of discretion to the health and physical needs of the same Superior. In the case where he would seem to be excessive in work or mortification, the Assistant should advise him modestly, especially if this were also the opinion of the other Councillors.

Likewise, if the Superior General were to reveal anything seriously detrimental in his conduct or in his office, the Assistants should also warn him in humble and respectful freedom, after having thought about it before God. This duty should be accomplished when the majority in Council see fit. If, after repeated warnings, there was no hope of correction, then His Grace the Delegate should be consulted.

In the exercise of their duties, the Assistants should avoid anything that could be seen as undermining the authority of a local Superior. Far from hindering his administration, they come to help him as far as they are able and promote the necessary subordination. When Fathers and
Missionaries speak to one of them while in office, in whatever hardship or problem, they will reply so as to console them and help them where possible, but without giving them vain hopes, or saying or doing anything that would create embarrassment either to the Superior General or to the Superior of individual houses.

40 - Speech for the Consecration of the Chapel at Maison-Carrée, Mother House of the Society in Algiers, (29th October 1874)

In 1869, Archbishop Lavigerie acquired a property to the east of Algiers, the estate of Maison-Carrée. Initially a reception centre for orphans, Lavigerie quite quickly built new buildings and in 1870 set up the novitiate and a residence for Missionaries. This was soon to become the Mother House, a place considered as foundational, the residence of the General Council of the Society. After the construction of the main body of the building, the chapel was begun in July 1873, and in October of the following year, Archbishop Lavigerie solemnly consecrated it. Thus we arrive in October 1874 and the first General Chapter has just completed its work. Lavigerie has the impression that his founding work is now on a solid basis and he is pleased all the more given that his health is failing and he fears for the worst. (Text in ‘Instructions’, op. cit., p.343)

Reverend Fathers,

Gentlemen,

Firstly, let me thank you for this show of kindness to me that you demonstrate today. Your presence is for the Society of our Missionaries both an encouragement and an honour. They are all the more aware that they know by your actions how much you are seasoned practitioners of self-denial and dedication. 184
My beloved Sons, I have just placed into your hands the outcome of my dearest Works\(^{185}\) and to crown them, so to speak, by the consecration my joined hands have just given to the chapel of your Mother House, united to those of two venerable Pontiffs from whom you have received so many signs of kindness.

I have hoped and prayed for this day a long time, but I wanted it all the more since, buckled by a serious illness, I wondered in anguish if I would not suddenly be stopped in the midst of a furrow I was making in the soil of Africa. I worried that the children I had taken in would not become orphans a second time; if the various works I saw come into existence were not to disappear with me.\(^{186}\)

Indeed, this was a dreadful responsibility, not only in my own regard, but more so in regard to the whole Catholic world. They had a right to demand accountability from me about the outcome of their kindnesses and almsgiving; in regard to you my dear Sons, who so generously associated yourselves to my work; in regard to France itself, whose representatives, in these last few years, lent you their help directly.

I wondered how so many various interests could be attached to the life of a single individual, whose health was deteriorating daily. What justified reproaches would not be made of my memory, if I passed away without guaranteeing the future? Besieged by these thoughts, I returned last month among you. Some accused me of imprudence and thought I had come too soon to confront a climate that had so cruelly afflicted me. However, I was compelled by the voice of my conscience and as I have often repeated to you, my dear Sons, it is better to have regrets than remorse.

Thanks be to God the regrets did not last long; today my conscience is at rest. Indeed, my Works are guaranteed life. They no longer belong to me. You have received them from my hands and instead of resting on my head, which is inclined to the grave, they rest on your young Society. Moreover, to whom would I have entrusted these Works, if not to you, who, in the first place, responded to my appeal when I found myself alone with my heavy task? Were you not in reality the adoptive fathers of our poor children? Were you not those who
cared for them and snatched them from the grave a second time, when
the plague of hunger made their approach fatal? Are you not those who
faithfully shared all my preoccupations? 187

Have you not had your share of these insults and slanders, which we
always met with forgiveness and silence? We left it to time and the out-
come of our works, to the opinion of right-thinking people, to this day
itself, when they surround us in such great numbers, the concern to
validate us. Moreover, we find in our consciences the power required
to endure to the end, if necessary, the injustice of men, while waiting
for the just judgement of God.

However, to entrust you profitably with our Works, in the condi-
tions that Canon and Civil Law allowed us to ensure their permanen-
ce, you needed firstly to organise yourselves once and for all. This is
what you have just done over the last few days. Only just arrived in
Algiers, I summoned you in the General Chapter. After having appro-
vthed the Constitutions and Rules that I gave you and that you observed
for three years under the guidance of venerable masters, I erected you
in a Diocesan Congregation and called you to elect yourselves, accor-
ding to law, those who would govern you.

From now on, you have a special leader freely chosen by you, 188
whose name and bloodline, by recalling to you one of the most illus-
trious martyrs that the clergy of France had given, in these last few
wretched years, to religion, to the homeland, to the Society, similarly
threatened by irreligious hordes, would be enough to remind you of
your commitment to God. Beside him, you placed Councillors full of
wisdom. You yourselves encircle him with your already abundant
dedication, for having begun with only two or three less than six years
ago, in the poor house at El-Biar, which was your cradle, I see before
me today, in your ranks, almost fifty priests.

Now, when I consider this sanctuary, this house, which is your
Mother House, the buildings that surround it, I tell myself that five
years ago, on a day like this, there was neither tree nor stone here. You
did all this, in a country and at a time when religion and the Church
was confronted with such furious opponents. My dear Sons, I cannot
but acknowledge the protection of God and glorify him with you! Give
thanks to him, since it is to him that you owe your existence and are constituted in a permanent way.\textsuperscript{189} However, I myself do not owe him the least gratitude for having enabled me to put into your hands the burden that weighed down my enfeebled hands.

Three days ago, I was able to deliver to the Council of your new Superiors, constituted in a civil Society, not only the legal property, but also the permanent and absolute administration of all the property bought by me, over five years, to found and endow our Works. I was quite happy to hand over this property to them, completely free of any charges and any debt. I added to it all that remained of the funds that charity had confided to the Archdiocese of Algiers for the same purpose. In return, you have agreed to continue, to develop and even multiply, if possible, the Works begun. I can now die in peace.

I am sure that my children will not be abandoned; that the poor we have adopted will not be neglected; that the souls who called me to them will not be left without help. What consoles me above all is that my sons become, as is proper, the heirs of my works. What remains for me to do, after disposing of what I hold most dear, than to lift my trembling hands above your heads to pray God to bless you? This father’s blessing, the blessing Isaac gave to Jacob, I give to you with confidence, despite my weakness, and this confidence comes especially from the sentiments that motivate your hearts.

The Algerian Works that I entrust to you are far indeed from being the only ambition of your souls. You have devoted your apostolate to the whole of Africa, according to which the Holy See, into whose hands I have placed you from your beginning and whose slightest desires you have taken for a ruling, has already decided so and will decide subsequently. What has appealed to you in this Mission are the dangers it presents more than any other Mission on earth. Africa, in its still unknown depths, is we somehow know, the last bastion of infamous barbarism, of seemingly incurable mindlessness, of cannibalism, and of the most unspeakable slavery!

Nevertheless, you came and you committed yourselves by Oath, to live this life, to die this death! You are all looking forward to the time to enter the battlefield where your brothers went before you. It is a battle-
field of charity, where your arms will be your daily good deeds, where your defence will be gentleness and patience, where your preaching will be the power of your example and your final triumph will be the heroic sacrifice of your life.

As I look at you, my dear Sons, I see on your foreheads all the brilliance of vigour and youth. I think on all you have given up: family, homeland, and earthly hopes - and all you can expect in return: insults, suffering, a cruel death. I look at you and I recall that you are the children of Catholic France. I cannot but refer to our homeland and have confidence for her, since God keeps there so many hearts that a heroic and pure dedication can still inflame. 190

Some months ago, a great and noble nation, which we see with joy coming daily closer to the truth, and whose representative today I am pleased to see among us to thank him, despite what separates us, for its constant and open sympathies, England organised the close-to royal funeral for a courageous man who gave his life to lift a corner of the veil that covers the African world and prepare for the abolition of barbaric customs. England, instinctively drawn to great things, was right to honour one of its sons in this way for his dedication and bravery. 191

As for you, my dear Sons, you do not desire anything like this; no thought of self-interest or glory compels you. You often lack bread, and shelter; you die unacknowledged by the world, perhaps after some dreadful suffering. It is the only promise I made to you. However, you know, and it is enough, that you serve a Master who knows how to dole out rewards according to the worth of his servants.

Step out therefore in the name and with the help of God! Go and raise up the lowly, relieve those who suffer, console those who weep, heal the sick. It will be to the honour of the Church to see you gradually show works of charity to the very centre of this immense continent; it will be to the honour of France to see you complete its work in bringing Christian civilisation far beyond its conquests, in this undiscovered world where the valour of its captains has opened the gates.

If you find hostilities in this country itself as a result of the irreligious passions that drive a section of the colony, you will always have,
do not doubt it, (if you continue to combine, as you have done to this day, dedication, and wisdom) protectors in the eminent men whose high quality and impartial justice do honour to them, to such a high degree, the government, the army, the judiciary and the administration of Algeria.\textsuperscript{192} It is in their disinterested love of goodness that I venture to place my trust for the time when, perhaps soon, my voice will no longer protect you.

For me, my dear Sons, whether God calls me soon to himself or if he still leaves me some time in this world, I will never cease to thank him for having made me the father of your souls! Above all, I will not cease to pray that he will maintain in your souls the pure flame that his hands have lit! Amen.

41 - Letter promulgating the decisions of the first General Chapter  
(11\textsuperscript{th} November 1874)

Further to the official recognition granted to the Society by Pope Pius IX, Archbishop Lavigerie thought the time had come to convene a first General Chapter so as to set up a more structured and enduring organisation of the Society. At the end of the Chapter, he communicated to the Missionaries the decisions taken, in a letter of the 11\textsuperscript{th} November 1874. This document sends us back to the very first origins of the Society as an Institute officially recognised and organised.

My very dear Sons in Our Lord, as you know, by Episcopal Order of the 1\textsuperscript{st} October last, I convoked your first General Chapter for the 11\textsuperscript{th} of the same month. Today, I must report on the decisions of this Chapter and modifications that these decisions entail for the government of your Society.

1 - Government of the Society – The main objective of the convolution of your General Chapter was to give you a definitive govern-
ment through the election of your regular Superiors.\textsuperscript{193} In fact, I had had to take upon myself alone, from the moment of the foundation of your Work, all the remits and all the tasks of its government. There lies one of the needs, which is imperative to the founders of regular communities and from which they must not shrink in the beginning.

However, in the particular situation in which I find myself, weighed down and taken up as I am by the many tasks of the episcopate; besides, sentenced to a premature death by daily increasing disabilities,\textsuperscript{194} I could not imagine keeping this responsibility any longer, thus leaving you without regular leaders, who would be able to completely share your life. At my death, it would expose you to dreadful circumstances. For this reason, I absolutely ruled out the idea that you had to elect me unanimously as your Superior General. It touched me deeply, a proof of your filial affection. Indeed, this would have made complete and even more acute the disadvantages that I wanted to avoid.

On the other hand, my dear Sons, it would have been imprudent to abandon you all of a sudden to yourselves. You are all young; you do not have enough experience, for some time yet, to do without higher guidance. Now, all this corresponded perfectly with the Holy Rules of the Church, which gives special rights over Works and Societies submitted to their jurisdiction to Founders, especially if they are diocesan bishops. Therefore, I could and should, by giving you regular Superiors, have remained as your first ecclesiastical Superior and consequently retain the necessary authority to ensure the maintenance of your initial spirit, prevent or repair the errors, if any were committed, and rectify abuses.

Indeed, as long as they are not approved by the Sovereign Pontiff and exempted by him from the jurisdiction of the Ordinary, Diocesan Congregations do not and cannot have other rights in the Church than those they receive from the Bishop. It is up to him to direct them, to extend them or suppress them and they can do nothing legitimately without his authority. My dear sons, it is on this principle that I based myself, to draw up, in two Orders, the rules that were to follow your General Chapter. It would give it the attributions it would keep until the Holy See would arrange it otherwise, if it thought fit. Finally, it would lay the conditions on which the governance of your Society would be constituted.
These fundamental rulings, for which I had earnestly asked the Lord and Our Lady of Africa to grant me their illumination, were transcribed at my order as headings of the logbooks of the deliberations of the Chapter. Moreover, I had them printed and they are in your hands. I therefore have no need of making them known otherwise. In conformity with their content, the elections to the Council of the Society proceeded.

As no one was yet found to fill the necessary condition to become Superior General, i.e., who had ten years of presence in the Society from his entry to novitiate, the Chapter elected three Assistants: Rev. Fr. Deguerry, Superior of the Affats; Rev. Fr. Charbonnier, Superior of the Junior Seminary for local inhabitants; and Rev. Fr. Livinhac, Deputy Director of the Scholasticate.

Under the terms of the Ruling above, I myself chose Rev. Fr. Deguerry, from among the three Assistants to give him the office of Superior General for a period of three years, with the title of Vicar of the Society. My dear sons, you know him as the worker of the first hour. He shared faithfully with me in the works, the hardships, and the problems of our emerging works. You freely chose him yourselves, for in appointing him, I only followed your own indication. After coming to love him and esteem him like a brother who gives you the example of apostolic virtue, you will obey him like a Superior, who from now on represents for you the authority of God. Indeed, he is legitimately charged, according to the provisions of your Rule, to govern you with the help of the Council the Chapter has elected.

In truth, the rule adds that it is under my authority that he governs you and I explained to you above in what sense it is to be understood. As Founders and your Bishop, I have the right to oversee, direct, withdraw, to love you, to protect you, and above all to help you. It is even to contribute in protecting and helping you in a more effective way that I appointed Father Gillard Vicar General of the Delegation. However, I must, for good order and the possibility of governance, stop dealing with ordinary details.195

I am no longer obliged directly to make appointments or changes; it is up to the Father Superior and his Council. You should no longer add-
ress your regular correspondence to me, but to the Father Superior. Finally, I no longer administer the goods and provide for the expenses, but the Father Superior with those that the Rule gives him as assistants. In all this, I must and need only maintain a general overview, either when the Father Superior asks my opinions in the cases foreseen by the Rule, or where I believe it is my duty, to avoid any disadvantage or to avoid error, to give them myself. However, in fact and in law, authority may not and must not be divided. It is directly exercised in your regard through the Rev. Fr. Superior.

My dear Sons, I will suffer from not having daily contact with you, which was so dear to me, especially when I could show my dedication through my paternal encouragements. You will maybe also suffer sometimes, but we will all resign ourselves to this sacrifice, believing that it is necessary for your Work to strengthen and get used to standing on its own two feet.

Further to this thought, immediately after the appointment of the Rev. Fr. Superior and of his Council, I entrusted them with all the material administration of the Society and its works. I placed in their hands the title deeds of all the buildings and all the properties that I bought to endow them, for six years, with the immediate use of all incomes. These titles consist in shares to the bearer of the civil Society founded by me nearly two years ago, to ensure the perpetuity of our works. Moreover, through the Secretary General of the Archdiocese, I had them paid into the fund of what remained of what Catholic charity had given us. This amounted to 51,342.25 Fr., for which Father Livinhac, Procurator General, and Father Bresson, Secretary General, gave me a receipt. From this date, the interests of the Diocese and those of your Society are separate; you have your income, your own resources, you also have your responsibilities which are by far greater, but which your individual zeal will seek to lighten, each one taking his share, either by hardships that they will impose on themselves, or by embarrassments that they will undergo to acquire their needs.

My dear Sons, such are the notifications that canonically I had to give you so that all could take place regularly among you. It remains for you to learn the other detailed measures taken at the General Chapter and approved by me. However, it is up to the Rev. Fr.
Deguerry, alone, in his capacity as Superior, according to my Ruling of the 1st October, to communicate them to you.

2 – The Spirit of the Society - Before concluding this Letter, which is perhaps the last direct communication that I will address to you, my dear Sons, I wish to give you three recommendations that seem to me required for the success and preservation of your works.

The first is that you never lose sight of the specific character and spirit of your Society. Indeed, it has a special purpose, from which it should not detract without losing its reason for existing absolutely. It is intended for the non-Christians of Africa. It may not or must not undertake anything that does not have this aim in view. Not only does it have this special purpose, but also it must achieve it by special means - that its action has a specific character. This character is to approach the local inhabitants in all external habits, in language firstly, in attire, in food, conforming to the example of the Apostle: ‘Omnibus omnia factus sum ut omnes facerem salvos.’

You should know that every time, through an unreasonable sense of innovation, you depart from these two points, you destroy, as far as you are capable, the reason for existing of your Society. It is only in fact to supply this great need of poor African souls and to supply by this means that you have been founded. Let the other Congregations follow their way; they are up to it; they do it better than you would do yourselves; do not invade their territory and keep faithfully to the little parcel of land that the Father of the family has commissioned you to cultivate.

My second recommendation, my dear Sons, is to continue to combine prudence, patience and charity in the exercise of your zeal. Prudence, because if you seek to hasten or exaggerate affairs, you will do great harm instead of doing good. A single imprudence from one of you can set back, for a long time, perhaps for centuries, the salvation of many peoples. Patience, because your Mission is hardest amongst all and it is only in knowing how to suffer much without discouragement and complaint that you will overcome obstacles. Finally, charity, because it is the major armament, the one that pierces hearts and makes wounds for eternal life. Let this be the whole secret of your
action. Love these poor non-Christians; do good to them. Nurse their wounds. They will give you their affection firstly, then their trust and finally their souls.

My final recommendation, my dear Sons, the most important of the three, the one without which all the others would be futile is the recommendation of the aged Apostle of Ephesus: *Filioli, diligite invicem*\(^{199}\). Love one another. Remain united, United in heart, united in thought. Form a truly single family; in the Christian and apostolic sense of this word, hold strongly to the esprit de corps. Protect one another; support one another, always help one another. Let not discord ever penetrate you; may you be constantly ready to protect one another mutually as a single person against all outside adversaries. In a word, be not only united, but one. It is the only grace that Our Lord, when he was leaving them, asked from his Father for his Apostles, knowing that this grace would bring all others, and in its wake the conversion of the world: *Ut unum sint*\(^{200}\). It is also the only grace I ask for you, the fundamental law that I leave you, the one that will guarantee victory over all your enemies, over all the obstacles that confront you: *Ut unum sint. Pater serva eos in nomine tuo quos dedisti mihi.*\(^{201}\)
42 - Ruling on the study of theology and on correspondence with the Superior General
(December 1874)

Written and published in the course of the last quarter of 1874, this text is to be understood in continuity with decisions made at the first General Chapter of the Society. It addresses two different questions, one concerning the ongoing formation of Missionaries, the other the duty of reporting. This practice was not infrequent at the time in Religious Congregations. It is a practice that can also be understood as a call to make a personal appraisal of one’s actions. (Instructions, p.53)

My dearly beloved Sons in Our Lord,

One of the most sacred obligations that the Church imposes on its priests is the attainment of theological knowledge. Indeed, this knowledge is absolutely necessary as much to understand and teach religion as to fulfil, themselves, their challenging obligations. *Labia enim sacerdotis custodient scientiam, et legem requirent ex ore ejus.*

However, for Missionaries, the study of theology has another advantage no less significant. Often, in the midst of material tasks, such as treating the sick, they receive unending distractions that society and conversing with non-Christians create. There are greater dangers in which they can find themselves as a result of distance and of bad examples before their eyes; then the study of theology can lift the soul towards higher regions, oblige the soul to turn to eternal realities and finally safeguard the soul from idleness.

For all these serious reasons, it seemed appropriate to the Chapter of the Society legitimately assembled and presided over by Us, to impose for ten years dating from their ordination, as is practiced in the greater number of dioceses, the obligatory study of theology for all young Missionaries, so that in the space of ten years, they will have reviewed entirely their theology twice.
The point of the Rule that stipulates writing to the Superior General is absolutely essential for the maintaining of unity and common action and to uphold regularity in the Society. It is therefore urgent to ensure its performance and since experience has shown that it can easily slide into neglect, the Chapter legitimately convoked, assembled and deliberating under Our authority, decided that a sanction would be fixed to it.

It is therefore prescribed that Fathers of each house or Mission other than those near the customary residence of the Superior General, will write to him or one of his Assistants, (who would be designated to replace him on this point,) on the last day of each month; local Superiors will write twice a month.

Now, for this correspondence to be useful to the Work and the Missionaries themselves, it has to touch on all the points essential to make known to the Major Superiors. Consequently, we point out the issues that the Missionaries should always address:

1) Has the Rule been read in common, as prescribed once a month, on the eve of the retreat?

2) Have theological conferences taken place regularly?

3) Were the spiritual exercises that should be done in common, i.e., prayer, particular examen, spiritual reading, always done? How many times were they missed and why?

4) How is the state of health? Has one had what was required? Has there been any wastage or waste of money in this regard? Does the Father Bursar fulfil his duties regularly?

5) Does charity prevail among the Missionaries? Is anyone of them in the situation of compromising the Mission by any imprudence?

6) How many children have attended school? Are there many sick to treat?

7) Is there anything out of the ordinary on the part of the local inhabitants or on the part of the authorities?

8) Has there been any proposal for a new establishment? Has there been any threat to existing ones?
One can add, if desired, other details on the Mission, on the works, on one’s person, but these eight questions, to which everyone must always reply, ought never to be omitted. These letters are by their nature confidential.

43 - The Importance of the Service of Professor in an Apostolic School (1874)

This text is in the Archives but has no precise date. It is an extract from the ‘Règlement de l’École Apostolique de Philosophie’ written under the direct control of Archbishop Lavigerie, very probably in 1874. As the Society became more structured, Lavigerie had rules written for the various stages of the formation of candidates. Often, these texts reveal, at the same time, aspects of his missionary project and the distinguishing marks of his personal spirituality. The school concerned here corresponds to the pre-First Phase of the current cycle of formation in the Society. (Instructions, p. 248).

The aim is to form Apostles, by inspiring the pupils received here with a more ardent love for Our Lord, for his glory, the salvation of souls, primarily the most abandoned souls, such as those of the African missions. For this, they are taught to know, love and practice with greater perfection the Holy Laws of God and of his Church and they are to be inspired in generous eagerness to make them known and practised by the poor people who do not know them.

Directors and professors have to be apostles to fire up these young men, to whom they are entrusted, with thoughts of the apostolate. They have to transform them to rise above themselves, to bring them to the height where God calls them. They have to establish in them a solid basis for all the priestly virtues. They have to inspire them above all with a burning love for their vocation, a devouring zeal for the Mission and for the salvation of the non-Christians of Africa.
They will do so themselves by their example, constantly bearing open witness to their esteem and love for their vocation, not allowing a single act or word that shows distaste or scorn. They will light up their speech, by their preaching in the chapel, by their direction in the confessional, by their conversations in recreation, by spiritual reading. In this way they will show forth the great flame, with which Our Lord commands us to set Africa ablaze.

What greater than this for a Mission! What more apostolic? The directors and professors in charge of the conduct of this new Cenacle must never think that they are lesser Missionaries than their confreres. They are even more so, in the real sense, since the future of the entire Mission is in their hands.
44 - Letter to Father Charmetant in Canada to raise funds (29th December 1874)

The problem of finances constantly preoccupied the Founder, from the beginnings of the Society, to feed the orphans, the Missionaries, the first foundations, etc. Aware of the generosity of the Canadians, to whom he had already sent two priests of Algiers, he sent two confreres, Fathers Charmetant and Delattre, to raise funds in Quebec for the Mission.

Algiers,

My dear Son, I received your welcome letter from so far away and through so many storms. The good Lord will bless and reward you, as well as good Father Delattre, for what you do and suffer for the Mission.

For what to wear, we leave you free to do as you see fit, only obliging you to dress, as do the Jesuits, according to this Rule: sicut honesti sacerdotes loci in quo degunt. I regret the cold in Canada that must be severe for you in this season. Perhaps it would have been better to go in summer, from the health point of view. Nevertheless, I understand the motives you give me.

I hope you will have received from Archbishop Fabre the welcome full of charity that he had already given to the priests of the Diocese of Algiers who went to Canada. Please give him my affectionate and respectful greetings with my gratitude.

Here, everything continues to make progress. One thing is lacking: money. It is on you above all that everyone is counting, knowing your dauntless skills. Here we are in 1875! My dear son, may it be for us all a holy year.

Paternal greetings and my heartfelt blessing to you and the good Father Delattre. I am yours in Our Lord,

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers
45 - Letter to the Missionaries and Children of the Apostolic School of Saint Laurent d'Olt (29th December 1874)

Saint Laurent d'Olt is a village in the Diocese of Rodez, France. Bishop Bourret of Rodez, and future cardinal, was a former companion in major seminary and a close friend of Archbishop Lavigerie. He helped him greatly in his missionary foundations. In 1874, the Founder transferred the junior seminary for Arab and Kabyle Christian pupils, founded at Saint-Eugène, Algiers, in 1868, to St Laurent d'Olt. Lavigerie had heard that the government was making plans to close this school, whence his decision to transfer it to France. He invested a lot of hope in this foundation and he frequently visited the young pupils of Saint-Eugène whom he loved, in his own words, like his children. These sentiments of affection recur in this letter, which is in fact a letter of greetings for the approaching New Year.

Algiers,

My dear Father, my dear Children,

I wish to write today all at once to Missionaries and Children, Fathers and Brothers to tell you all how much I hope that the year which is due to begin will be for you a holy and happy one; happy because it will be holy! What use are the years that cannot be counted for heaven? They pass too quickly and leave only a bitter memory, when they have not been used for God!

Your best means to use them for him, and this year in particular, my dear Children, is to prepare yourselves for the African apostolate by the practice of virtue and by study. Saint-Laurent d'Olt is in France, no doubt, but you are only for Africa, to which the Fathers consecrate themselves by Oath and to which the children belong by heart, by blood, and by origin. Poor Africa! It thirsts for and needs truth and salvation as it thirsts for water and the dew under its sun. It is from you that Africa expects all this.
While I am writing this to you from my office, I hear the bells of Our Lady of Africa sound, announcing the evening Angelus. You are no longer here to recite it, my dear Children, but we will say it in union with you. When I am on my terrace, this awful terrace that sometimes scared you so much, and I see the yards deserted, I think of Saint-Laurent, and I wonder what you are doing. I hope you are doing what you should, for us and for the Good Lord! I thank Father Doré and Brother Louail for the welcome letters they wrote. I hope that all will imitate them and above all will give me some details of what you are doing in France. I learned with great sadness that Father Charbonnier was taken ill, and with great joy that he is better.

Farewell, my dear Children, I love you very dearly. I bless you from the bottom of my fatherly heart. I am all yours in Our Lord.

Charles, Archbishop of Algiers

St. Laurent d’Olt
Notes

2 Text quoted in Le Cardinal Lavigerie, X. de Montclos, op.cit. p.61. All the texts quoted in this anthology are also available for consultation from the General Archives of the Missionaries of Africa, 269 via Aurelia, Rome. From now on, in this volume, these archives will be designated ‘AGMAfr’.
3 Pope Pius IX
4 Pope Benedict XIV in Constitutio Sollicita
5 This phrase is to be understood as ‘far from the faith’.
6 Saint Augustine, sermon 357
7 Jansenism.
8 Félicité de Lamennais (1782-1854)
9 Bishop Antoine-Charles Cousseau was bishop of Angoulême (France) from 1850 till 1872. This letter is in the Archives AGMAfr. Red volume 14, 1967.
10 These thoughts reveal that the prospect of converting Muslims formed part of the missionary outlook of Lavigerie. He is aware however, that the French colonial authorities would oppose any organised form of presence or service to Muslim peoples. In any case, in Lavigerie’s thinking, there was never any move to exert pressure or appeal. Moreover, he also knows that any future conversions could only be achieved in a distant future.
11 In this second half of the 19th century, there was a strong tendency throughout Catholicism to favour an increasingly assertive papal authority. In particular, there was a desire to proclaim his infallibility. Here, Lavigerie is referring to rumours whereby some bishops would exert pressure in the ferment of the upcoming celebrations to proclaim this infallibility by acclamation. Lavigerie was very well-informed of the situation of the Church in the Europe of his day and he knew that the German and Italian governments of the time would react in a hostile manner to this assertion of pontifical authority. Nevertheless, this dogma was to be defined three years later in the First Ecumenical Council of the Vatican. Throughout his ministry as bishop, Lavigerie was to remain very attentive to what was being experienced in the Church. Frequent appeals were made to him from Rome as a counsellor, consultant and ultimately as a conciliator with the civil authorities.
12 This text, available in several works, is in the Lavigerie Collection 1867 at AGMAfr. The letter is dated the 5th May 1867.
13 Lavigerie requested the Holy See to erect the See of Algiers as an archdiocese in memory of the time when the North African Church numbered many bishops and archbishops.
14 A recall of the many martyrs executed on North African soil at the time of persecutions against Christians in the Roman Empire.
15 Lavigerie believed that France, a country of ancient Christian tradition, could be
the instrument of God to bring about great works in the name of the faith. In France, at this time, there was no separation of Church and State.

16 These places and personalities represented the prestige of North Africa at the time of the Roman Empire.

17 In the following few lines, in the style of the time and with a quite remarkable lyricism, Lavigerie recalls the vitality of the Church in North Africa in the first centuries of the Christian era. This passage is interesting insofar as it shows how, from his assuming responsibility as bishop, Lavigerie is inspired by his knowledge of history. Indeed, he had taught this subject at the Sorbonne. Throughout his life, he was to rely on the past experiences of the Church to inspire some of his pastoral and missionary initiatives.

18 In this passage, as in other parts of the letter, Lavigerie relies largely on a fairly widespread idea of the time. Down the centuries, France was profoundly shaped by the influence of the Christian faith. It had to do everything in its new territories to renew this great historical and spiritual adventure.

19 Grégory XVI was Pope from 1831 to 1846. In Lavigerie’s time, the Ecclesiastical Province of Algeria comprised one archbishopric and two dioceses: the Archdiocese of Algiers, the Diocese of Oran and the Diocese of Constantine.

20 It appears astonishing here to see how, in charge of the Archdiocese of Algiers for only a few months, Lavigerie formulated a missionary project of such great breadth. For this, he clearly had foreseen an embryonic organisation, as the rest of this letter demonstrates.

21 Lavigerie had already submitted his request to the Pope by word of mouth during an audience. The present letter is just the official follow-up of his action.

22 The proposed eastern and western boundaries are more fiction than fact, as they are so vague and concern regions that were practically unknown by the Europeans of the day. It should be noted that at the time, the term ‘Sudan’ designated all the region south of the Sahara, from the Red Sea to Mauritania and not just to what we know today as ‘Sudan’.

23 This document is in AGMAfr, Lavigerie Collection, 1867

24 For some years, the harvests had been seriously deficient, bringing the famine, illnesses and epidemics that usually accompany it.

25 In a letter of the 30th May 1875, addressed to Father Payan d'Augery, a priest friend, he indicated that he had been diagnosed with a tumour near his liver.

26 At this time in France, bishops received a State salary.

27 This document is in AGMAfr, Lavigerie Collection, 1867

28 ‘Colonisation’ here does not mean that Lavigerie would want to put himself at the service of the colonial system; it simply means the range of persons and social activities of the ‘colony’, which could benefit from such religious foundations.

29 Governmental organisation commissioned to manage foundations and social work. However, at that time, some regions of Algeria were governed directly by the Army.

30 It would not be lacking respect to its author to emphasise here the unrealistic and somewhat utopian side of this plan. However, two points of detail will help to understand this approach of Archbishop Lavigerie. Firstly, he takes inspiration from a time in Church History when monks in Western Europe largely contributed through
their enterprises and their example to the rise of the rural world and its Christianisation. In addition, he continues to believe that he can count on the support of the Algerian governmental authorities to uphold his ministry of charity and dedication to the peoples of his diocese, both Arab and of European origin. On this last point, he will be sorely disappointed. As for the mention of armed monks to protect the defenceless, there again, he refers to history, to times and contexts that were nevertheless very different. Lavigerie himself was to revise his plan, no doubt aware of its incomplete structure. This text, it seems, was never sent to the Emperor. Nonetheless, it remains as the relic of a plan that seeks fulfilment and of a passion to be at the service of the poor that was to be the hallmark of the whole missionary life of Lavigerie.

31 This Document is in AGMAfr, the Lavigerie Collection, 1868.
32 This letter is dated from Rome, and is thus the morning of the same day that Lavigerie had met the Superior General of the Jesuits at Rome.
33 Lavigerie already knew of the desire of some diocesan priests of Algiers to consecrate their lives more particularly to mission. We know that some of these priests were to be candidates for the first novitiate of the Society four months later.
34 The future foundation of Laghouat is labelled ‘in waiting’, because in the plan of the Archbishop of Algiers, this foundation was foreseen as an outpost for missionaries intending to continue later towards the south of the Sahara.
35 This initial plan of a dual foundation of Religious Brothers and Sisters dedicated to agriculture was inspired by the model of monks in the European Middle Ages, as was indicated in a preceding document. We know that the foundations desired by Lavigerie ultimately were not achieved based on this model.
36 The variety of requests for personnel expressed in this letter shows the trust Archbishop Lavigerie placed in the Jesuit Fathers and in their aptitude in understanding and supporting his missionary plans.
37 Document in AGMAfr. Lavigerie Collection, red volume n°16, 1868.
38 The Italian Observantines were Religious within the Franciscan family. They already provided a missionary presence in the north of Lybia, principally at Tripoli.
39 When Lavigerie was writing these letters, the regions south of the Sahara had not yet been colonised by France.
40 Lavigerie included a map in his request, where he outlined precisely the proposed borders for the future Delegation, which he repeated in his letter.
41 The mountains of Kong are a more or less mythical range of mountains mentioned in most maps of Africa drawn by Europeans in the 19th century. It refers to the ancient kingdom of Kong and its capital, situated in present-day Côte d’Ivoire. In mentioning the 10th parallel, it describes a border situated approximately in the north of Côte d’Ivoire.
42 These quite vague indications would correspond to a line joining the Lybian southwestern desert in the east, to the region of Guinea in the west.
43 This text is quoted in Instructions aux Missionnaires, Lavigerie, Éditions Grands Lacs, Namur, 1950. This extensive collection of the Founder’s writings is the latest important edition of Lavigerie’s documents. A considerable number of texts published there will be repeated in the following pages.
This is the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Fathers. Their novitiate was exclusively focused on spirituality, whereas Lavigerie wanted a more open programme for future missionaries, especially for learning Arabic and subsequently Swahili.

This text has often been quoted to assert the Founder’s choice of Ignatian spirituality for the Society of Missionaries of Africa.

The history of the MSOLA is developed mainly in two books, which are very well documented and complementary in their method. Sister Marie-André du Sacré-Cœur, *Histoire des origines de la Congrégation des Sœurs Missionnaires de Notre-Dame d’Afrique, 1869-1892*, éditions Saint-Charles de Kouba, 1946; Sister Marie-José Dor and Sister Marie-Aimée Jamault, *A rereading of our Family History*, Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa, Rome 2015.

AGMAfr. Lavigerie Collection, Red Series, volume 17, 1869.

At the very beginning, in the perspectives of the Founder, the first mission posts to which he would send missionaries would be established on the edge of the Sahara and would thus serve as relay points to advance more towards the south.

These are in effect the first members of the Society. Finateu and Bouland did not continue in their missionary vocation; Fathers Charmetant and Deguerry, for their part, became very close co-workers with Archbishop Lavigerie for several years before each of them left the Society. The expression cleric in Minor Orders means that in their major seminary these two candidates had already received what was then known as Minor Orders, which preceded the Subdiaconate and the Diaconate.

Lavigerie uses military terms in his examples, as Saint Paul did in his time. The army he means is simply the group of missionaries.

These are children of slaves put on sale by the caravans on slave markets in the oases or in the towns, as indicated in the continuation of the text.

This insistent request corresponds to many other papers demonstrating how much the issue of financing the mission was, from the outset, a constant preoccupation for Archbishop Lavigerie.

It is hard to understand completely this indication on the regions concerned in the future mission. Perhaps Archbishop Lavigerie wishes to point out that the activities of the missionaries will not remain limited to Algeria alone, which was then the only French possession in Africa.

As a historian, Lavigerie is perfectly well aware that throughout past centuries, several initiatives were taken by Christians to bring the Gospel to Muslim regions.

Lavigerie refers here to the increasingly fragile Ottoman-Turk Empire, which was then governed from Constantinople.

It is difficult to clarify from which source the Founder drew this information.

This expression, shocking for today’s readers, should nevertheless be seen in the context of the nineteenth century. Even among themselves, European nations easily accused one another of defects, faults and doubtful cultural inclinations. This often gave rise to prejudice and fuelled attitudes of hostility or contempt.

This expression of ‘all things to all men’, taken from Saint Paul (1 Co 9:22), comes back very often in the writings of Lavigerie. It is one of his key expressions in his vision of Mission.
59 Lavigerie is referring here to the novitiate that lasted fifteen months, because it included a postulancy of three months. Traditionally, the novitiate lasted a year.

60 Although this was apparently a far-reaching and somewhat ambitious apostolic programme it is good to recall, as did the Founder elsewhere, that at the same time, other apostolic societies in Africa or on other continents had already founded missions in the spirit and according to the practical guidelines mentioned here by Lavigerie. Moreover, if Lavigerie mentions here the plan of converting Muslims, the notion has to be tempered by the very robust instructions he gave to his missionaries in the practice of their apostolate. These include tolerance, respect for other peoples’ convictions, an attitude of listening, refusal of any proselytising, of applying pressure of any sort, a benign presence and rendering selfless service, etc.

61 The convictions expressed here on the development of French influence in Africa are based on a dual consideration in Lavigerie’s thinking. For him, on the one hand, faith is a factor for human and social progress, for civilisation; the work of mission is, through the message it reveals, a source of progress for humanity. On the other hand, France, as still officially a Catholic country at the time of writing, has a particular responsibility in this universal mission. The following lines even have him evoke the notion of peaceful crusade. It is a word that at the time was not yet synonymous with the dramatic and tragic historical error it subsequently became. Finally, it has to be noted that down the years that followed, the Founder had many occasion to discover how much the policies of the great powers were able to contradict his vision of reality.

62 “In the world you will have hardship, but be courageous: I have conquered the world.” (John 16:33)

63 We know that subsequently Lavigerie was to choose on a permanent basis a commitment expressed in an oath addressed to the Superior General of the Society.

64 Here, the choice of community life is presented under the aspect of mutual protection and security. Later, Lavigerie will often refer to the evangelising dimension and witnessing value of life in common.

65 Cardinal Alessandro Barnabo, appointed to this office by Pope Pius IX.

66 The people of North Africa were indeed Muslim, but the term ‘idolatrous’ in Lavigerie’s thinking is no doubt a reference to beliefs and ancestral practices that remained sometimes very much alive in the lives of the people.

67 The French word ‘principe’ used here means beginning or start.

68 We recall the names of these six men who first heard the appeal of Archbishop Lavigerie and decided to respond to it in committing themselves to the Mission: François Deguerry, Félix Charmetant, Eugène Prudhomme, Claude Feuillet, Auguste Soboul, and Alfred Paulmier.

69 In 1867-1868 Algeria was tragically stricken by drought. This brought famine, epidemics and deaths in thousands, primarily in rural areas. Lavigerie then organised a remarkable scheme of rescuing and fostering abandoned children.

70 It should be pointed out here that Lavigerie never put pressure on the orphans taken in to compel them to become Catholics. Nevertheless, the writings relating to these events show that a good number of these children were very impressed by the dedication and example of the people who looked after them. They asked to be baptised.
71 The French word 'children' used here is not in reference to age, but means the native population.

72 The lands and estates mentioned here by Archbishop Lavigerie were later to become the two Christian Arab villages of Saint Cyprien des Attafs and Sainte Monique, in the Chéif Plain, 180 kms west of Algiers.

73 From the outset, Lavigerie intended to found three interlinked missionary communities: Fathers, Brothers and Sisters. The last two mentioned in this passage were in his mind based on the Benedictine model. As a former professor of Church History, he knew the past well and deeply admired its evangelising and civilising action in Europe.

74 Quite soon after his consecration at Algiers, Archbishop Lavigerie faced more or less open hostility from the local French colonial government. It reproached him for his zeal and social initiatives towards the well-being of Muslim Algerians.

75 Bishop Jean-Baptiste Callot of Oran, and Bishop de Las Calles of Constantine had shown their discomfort and disapproval quite early on when Lavigerie publicly confronted the colonial authority from 1868. He openly reproached it for not really assisting the victims of the drought and more generally for his charitable and social action.

76 This text is in the Archives of the Society, A.G.M.Afr. Lavigerie Collection, red volume 17, 1869.

77 Here, the name of ‘Congregation’ is to be taken loosely, even if Lavigerie did foresee from the outset establishing the missionaries as Religious in the current canonical sense. He was later to also use the term ‘Institute’.

78 We note here the reference ‘all things to all men’ of Saint Paul (1 Co 9:22) as a major theme in the missionary thinking of Lavigerie.

79 This is the Society of Jesus, which supplied the first Novice Masters to the Society.

80 This mention of possible choice in the manner of commitment reveals the still undecided character of the institutional model desired by the Founder.

81 Géronimo was a young Algerian Muslim who converted to Catholicism and was martyred, put to death by his co-religionists in 1569. The initial V. represents Venerable.

82 This article establishes a genuine and systematic solidarity at financial level between all the Houses of the Institute. This is not necessarily the rule in all Religious Institutes.

83 It was then in the Canon Law of the Church that Religious Vows required a two-year Novitiate beforehand.

84 This paragraph, as well as the following, clearly demonstrates Lavigerie’s intention to organise his Institute on the specifically Religious model, with Promises, then Temporary Vows, and finally Perpetual Vows. Lavigerie saw this as the best model for a life totally and irrevocably consecrated to God and the mission. For all that, this plan was not taken up in the final edition of the Constitutions. The Founder ultimately considered this structure as too rigid for an apostolic and missionary life.

85 Lavigerie has undoubtedly taken inspiration from the rules of the Society of Jesus in this range of choices in the form of commitment.
This invitation to making a possible Vow of Stability demonstrates the influence of monastic life on the Founder, in an attempt to define a commitment for Mission as complete as possible.

Here, Lavigerie speaks as the Archbishop of Algiers and the Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan. For all that, we have no idea to which other territories he is referring, unless to express his desire to see his missionaries available for the whole African continent.

Here, Lavigerie's stance is in the context of the already existing teams of missionaries installed in the Archdiocese of Algiers; at the same time, he sees beyond the localised situation.

The use of the French word infidèle, frequent in Lavigerie's time in the Catholic world, comes from the Latin infidelis and describes someone who does not have the Christian faith.

Here, the Founder is doubtless referring to the ongoing apostolate towards the Muslims by some priests of his Archdiocese, notably by the Jesuit Fathers.

Here we find a cherished idea of Lavigerie: the Christian past of North Africa continues to exist as a calling for the peoples to rediscover their Christian roots.

While wishing the conversion of those men and women who welcome the presence and services of the Missionaries, notably among children, the Founder counsels prudence and discernment. The underlying idea is not to baptise at any price.

The Founder always considered the medical services, practised by the Missionaries in one way or another, to be of great value. Simultaneously, it firstly relieves suffering and bears witness to the benevolent intentions and friendly attitude of those who put it into practice.

When Archbishop Lavigerie was drafting this early plan of the Constitutions, he still had in mind the plan of founding three institutes consecrated directly or indirectly to the Mission, one of priests, the other of Brothers and the third of Sisters. We know that ultimately this initial plan would be achieved by founding only two institutes.

In French, the expression ‘personnes du sexe’, often used in the religious writings of Lavigerie’s time, was used to mean ‘women’.

The Missionaries of Géronimo was the name Lavigerie had firstly thought of giving to his new institute, as we saw previously. He ultimately dropped this plan, persuaded by his friends in France that no one would understand the meaning of this title. In this sentence, the continental scale of Lavigerie’s missionary project for Africa is clearly expressed.

Lavigerie always held that visiting the sick and treating them as best they could were essential aspects of mission ministry.

This brief remark shows how much Lavigerie, throughout his apostolic project kept in mind the hope of one day seeing Muslims accept the Christian faith. However, we note that he always firmly condemned any form of disrespectful proselytising in a Muslim environment, as well as any insinuating procedure to gain complacent conversions.

In this rapid and somewhat simplistic recall of the situation in Europe at the end of antiquity, Lavigerie, on the one hand, describes the barbarian invasions in Western
Europe and, on the other, the weakened power and in some respects the decadence of the Byzantine Empire.

100 Saint Benedict of Nursia (480-547). Born in the north of today’s Italy, he was the Founder of the Benedictine Order and wrote a monastic Rule of Life that inspired all the great monastic foundations of Europe.

101 This long historical development shows once again how much Archbishop Lavigerie was marked by his studies in history, which he brought to doctorate level. The subject of the rural, social, cultural and spiritual development of peoples so broadly promoted by the monasteries in Europe, was for him an extremely important source of reflection and inspiration to which he would frequently return throughout his life.

102 Here, the Founder recalls the many monastic sites abandoned and sometimes fallen into ruin in Western Europe.

103 During the European Middle Ages, where the countrysides were often put to the test during wars, pillages, violent episodes, the monasteries were always places of refuge open to the poorest and most deprived.

104 In a broad sweep, Lavigerie recalls the invasion of North Africa by the Vandals in the sixth century and the conquest of the same regions by the Arab peoples almost two centuries later. His comparatively severe judgement on these historical dramas is based on the recalling of the former civilisation developed in these North Africa regions at the time of the Roman Empire.

105 “If the Lord does not build the house…” (Ps 127). This rather severe analysis Lavigerie makes in these few considerations shows that he continued to believe in a genuine encounter possible between the two peoples: the colonised and the coloniser, and at the same time how much he saw the accumulation of obstacles and setbacks.

106 In these passages we have just read, the Founder invites his brothers, monks and missionaries all together, to treat all the inhabitants of Algeria with the same concern, essentially the poor, the lonely and the distressed. He does so with a tone that reveals the intensity of his own commitment. In a way, it is a mission spirituality being recalled in these few lines.

107 An allusion to the mockery and criticism that monks were subjected to at certain times in European countries.

108 Saint-Eugène was the customary residence of the Archbishop of Algiers. It sheltered many orphans of the famine and Father Finateau was in charge of this reception centre, while continuing his theological training.

109 Throughout 1868 and 1869, Lavigerie expended considerable energy in his diocese to organise the reception of several hundred orphans. He saw to their supervision, their daily upkeep, their schooling, etc. All this was in a context of criticism and hostility from the Algierian government authorities. The orphans always showed a deep attachment and much affection for Archbishop Lavigerie.

110 Both, with Father Charmetant, did the first novitiate of the Society in 1868-1869. The Founder calls Deguerry ‘brother’ as he is not yet a priest. He and Charmetant were in charge of the group of orphans at Maison-Carrée.

111 This is a characteristic of Lavigerie that will be evident throughout his life. As well as managing difficult and important issues, he also attended to practical problems, such as the farmyard or the cultivating of vegetables in the missions.
Here the French word ‘années’ refers to the advanced age of the Pope. Born in 1792, he was then aged 78 years, which at that time was very old.

In the second half of the nineteenth century in Europe, a deep-rooted movement of the emancipation of peoples and the hope of forming free, independent and democratic nations developed. This was not done without political tension and struggle. The Church, which had often been very influential in empires and kingdoms, became anxious about these alterations and was specifically targeted by the partisans of these changes. This is the context to which Lavigerie refers.

In fact, between March and May of this same year, Paris underwent a violent riot that set up a revolutionary workers’ government for some weeks. This movement called the Commune was repressed and destroyed in bloodshed by the new established government.

In the context of the new political regime being set up, elections were organised to form a Constituent Assembly. Several clerics then came forward as candidates so as to guarantee the presence of Catholic opinion in the future Assembly. Lavigerie, who was appreciated in the Church in France and considered an expert in political circles, decided to present himself in his own administrative division. He was not elected.

Philippeville, former name of Skikda, an Algerian harbour town.

Lavigerie, underneath his fiery and self-assured temperament could be sometimes very impressionable. The political insecurity in the country led him to fear the worst and he did not exclude the risk of dying.

Here again, as has been said in an earlier note, this is an aptitude of Lavigerie to deal with general correspondence and very practical advice for community life. It has to be said, in understanding this attitude, that from the foundation of the Society, financial problems were constant and often very serious.

This is about a conflict about the obligation of doing military service, from which seminarians were normally exempt.

We can assume that Archbishop Lavigerie is recalling here the problems arisen over the preceding months in the reception services of the orphans, the problems of food, lodging and supervision, without forgetting the difficulties with the governmental authorities.

Due to the serious events arising from August 1870, with the war between France and Prussia, the Novitiate did not open in October 1870.

The very first provisional text of the Constitutions caused uneasiness among the novices. They found it was copied too closely from those of the Jesuits and ill adapted to a project of missionary life.

This is about a small group of orphans that Lavigerie had decided to settle in France. Amongst other reasons, he hoped to find less arduous material conditions there. A centre was foreseen for their reception in the Diocese of Rodez.

After the end of the rebellion in Kabylia (early 1871) and the restoration of civil peace in France, the authorities of the governing body in Algeria ended their attacks against the Church and authorised the development of its social services.

For reasons of proximity and contacts already established, Lavigerie launched these vocation appeals first of all in France. In succeeding months, he extended these appeals to other countries in Europe, notably in Belgium, Germany and Canada.
126 The French word, ‘Levites’ means major seminarians. It is no longer in use today.
127 At this time, at the end of 1871, Lavigerie still considered the Brothers’ Institute as a separate foundation, even if he already saw its uncertain nature.
128 This is the future Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa. Lavigerie’s expression is more reserved here, as no doubt the beginnings of this foundation were not as certain and promising as he wanted; nevertheless, it became so in the ensuing few months.
129 In the three preceding months, tensions temporarily blocked proper coordination between the Dioceses of Constantine, Bône and Algiers. At the same time, the government in Algeria did all it could to suppress assistance to the schools and social services.
130 We need to recall that in 1870, in France and Algeria, there were serious political problems, with, in particular, a current of anticlerical leanings shown in aggressive press campaigns against the Church, its enterprises and its leaders.
131 Father Félix Charmetant, born in 1844, was from the departement of l'Ain, in the Lyons region of France.
132 By this procedure and confiding a type of sponsorship to the Propagation of the Faith, Lavigerie no doubt wishes to express his gratitude to Propaganda that had helped him greatly since the beginning of his ministry as Founder. The village would be called Saint-Cyprien.
133 This expression The Work, which we find several times in the writings of Lavigerie, means the collection of his missionary enterprises, Society and first foundations.
134 Father Combes was in charge of the material and financial affairs for the Archdiocese of Algiers.
135 Civitavecchia: Major Mediterranean port of Italy, near Rome, where ships bringing passengers to the city docked.
136 The children mentioned here are the young pupils of the Seminary of Saint Eugène, and more generally the orphans taken in since the famine. As for the expression out of kilter, his familiarity showed the spontaneous character that characterised the conversations between the Founder and his missionaries.
137 This concerns a co-worker from France and who, for health reasons or other, could not remain at Algiers.
138 This is a village intended to receive young Christian couples, former orphans taken in by Lavigerie and who subsequently became Christians.
139 The miracle referred to here by Lavigerie was that not one of the authorities mentioned intervened to forbid the installation of the Missionaries in the oasis of Laghouat and the journey of one of them to the south, and to order them to leave the town immediately. For the colonial authority, the Missionaries by their presence alone could provoke negative reactions on the part of the Muslim population, which the government dreaded above all.
140 Father Charmetant made a trip for contacts and information in the south of the Sahara to prepare the departure across the desert of a missionary caravan that would reach Equatorial Africa.
His Beatitude Joseph Valerga, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, died on the 2 December 1872.

This analysis, perhaps too rapid, on the possible influence of France in the near East, is nonetheless not without foundation. The history of rivalries between the Great Powers, as far as their interest in this region was concerned, had enabled France to assume a good position with the authorities of the Turkish Empire.

It is therefore correct, as has sometimes been recalled, that Lavigerie proposed himself to the Holy See as potentially available for the responsibility of Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. Deeply affected by the fragile nature and divisions within the Eastern Churches and by the less than open attitude of the Latin Patriarchate in relation to Eastern Catholic traditions, he thought he could change matters and reintroduce the venerable traditions of these Churches, while engaging them on the road to renewal.

This statement can perhaps appear surprising, even if we know, as has been said, that 1872 was a year of consolidation for the organisation and development of the Society of Missionaries of Africa. There was still a lot to be done to develop the Mission properly and it is understandable that the Holy See, appreciating the commitment of the Founder in relation to Africa, did not follow through on this unexpected proposal.

The literary turn of phrase of this statement should not delude: the Founder himself is the instigator of these projects for the Society, even if it is true that among the Missionaries there was a genuine attachment to these plans for new missions.

Archbishop Lavigerie held the Jesuits in high esteem and he appreciated their presence in his diocese. Nevertheless, he knew that the excessive zeal of some Jesuits and Missionaries, could lead to attitudes of rivalry or competitiveness that would be harmful for the whole combination of the Mission enterprises.

There are some illegible words in this manuscript letter, but the meaning is not difficult to guess.

This directive of the Founder is extremely demanding. Nevertheless, he will come back several times to it in subsequent letters, as far as making it an obligation, ‘under pain of mortal sin’ (Letter of the 28th April). We are aware of the inclination of the Founder for sometimes radical decisions, but for him, this is to commit the confreres to a method of missionary integration without compromise.

Lavigerie feared that the missionaries might be inclined to make too many visits to European families, mainly French, who had settled in some of the small towns in the south of Algeria. He comes back several times to this point in his correspondence.

‘Assess’ means to evaluate and get to know. For Lavigerie, engaging children for schooling is foreseen for training future leaders and apostles.

The Norbertines were at the pastoral service of Our Lady of Africa up till then.

Archbishop Lavigerie shares here his concern of not seeing many candidates for the next entry to novitiate. Nevertheless, the Diocese of Rodez (France) would provide many vocations for the Society, thanks to the friendship and missionary spirit of Bishop Bourret, formerly a companion of Lavigerie in the Major Seminary.

Brothers took Vows up to the first General Chapter of 1874. After the Chapter, all the Missionaries took an Oath. Conscription means the call to military service, which was then obligatory for all young Frenchmen.
154 Here, Archbishop Lavigerie is referring to the Provincial Council of Africa that he brought together at Algiers some weeks earlier. He must now submit its Acts to the Holy Father Pope Pius IX. This Assembly, at Lavigerie’s express request, gave ecclesiastical approbation to the existence of the Society.

155 Henri Colliaux was from the Diocese of Rennes, France, and Théodule Osten from the Diocese of Cambrai, also in France. Both were drowned on the 24 June 1873.

156 This is the Governor General of Algeria. The de Sonis family was an old family of France, renowned for its attachment to the Christian faith. The parish of Biskra was then in the Diocese of Constantine, whence Lavigerie’s remark about this town.

157 The French word ‘idiot’ was then normally used without scorn to mean a person with mental disability.

158 This letter exists in the collection Instructions aux Missionnaires, op. cit., and it bears at this point in the text a note that relates the following incident. In a talk given during a retreat to the confrères, Archbishop Lavigerie would have said, ‘The Muslims stand together; we need to prepare mass conversions (together, not individuals). This preparation will perhaps last a century. I am a Bishop; I have a crozier and a mitre. I could raise my mitre at the end of my crozier and raise my arm as high as I can in vain. I will disappear with you in the foundations of the new Church of Africa.’ We could not find a trace of this declaration in the AGMAfr. Archives.

159 In several posts in Kabylia, at the beginning, the Missionaries were received coldly and with distrust.

160 This is about applications made by families concerning the entry of their children to the school opened by the confrères.

161 The financial situation was still particularly difficult at this time. Conditions for lodging and food remained very poor for the children as well as for the Fathers, Brothers and Sisters.

162 Archbishop Lavigerie considered that, even in financial straits, expenses relative to liturgical celebrations and the fitting-out of churches should be priorities.

163 Here it refers to young couples, established in the village, whom the Missionaries, men and women, should accompany and advise in their work life as well as in their family life, where applicable.

164 The whole of this text is in the Archives at Rome, AGMAfr. Lavigerie Collection, 1874, Red Volume n° 25. There are long extracts in Instructions aux Missionnaires, op. cit., p. 39.

165 The successor of Peter was then Pope Pius IX; he knew Lavigerie during his service at Rome and it was he who appointed him Bishop of Nancy in 1863.

166 Here the Founder is referring once again to the problems created for him by the French colonial administration faced with any apostolic project or foundation of a post in a Muslim environment.

167 This historical review refers to Saint Louis of France (King Louis IX), who died on the shore of modern-day Tunisia in 1270, going on a crusade to the Holy Land.

168 In 1870 and 1871, after its defeat in the war against Germany, France experienced a period of serious political upheaval, accompanied by attacks against the Church and its institutions.
169 In 1874, as we have seen, Lavigerie had already founded some mission posts in Kabylia and in one or other oasis in southern Algeria.
170 Lavigerie is probably referring here to slavery that he knew was broadly developed in some regions south of the Sahara.
171 This was Father Charbonnier, from the Diocese of Rodez (France). After fulfilling various responsibilities in the Society, notably as Superior General, he was the first Vicar Apostolic in Tanganyika; he died there in March 1888, at the age of 46.
172 Translation: Visa for martyrdom.
173 Allusion to European Christians settled in Algeria in the context of the colonial regime. They often gave a counter-witness by their lapsed Christian lives and by their attacks against the faith of the Church.
174 I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation (2 Co 7:4).
175 And every one that has forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (Mt 19:29).
176 I am come to send fire on the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! (Lk 12:49)
177 I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (Jn 10:10).
178 For God loveth a cheerful giver (2Co 9:7).
179 And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (2 Co 12:15).
180 I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1Co 9:22).
181 When I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Co 9:27).
182 Mt 6: 25-34.
183 We may assume that Lavigerie is thinking of the prospect of enlarged meetings of the General Council, where other members would attend with the Superior General and his Assistants.
184 These first words are addressed to the Bishops of Constantine and Hippone present for the consecration, and to the invited civil authorities, in particular the Governor General of Algeria, General Chanzi. Immediately afterwads, the Founder continued his speech in addressing the many Missionaries present.
185 Here, Lavigerie refers to the first General Chapter that had just taken place. During it, Lavigerie, as he liked to say, confided the Mission and the Society to the Missionaries themselves. We know that in fact he continued to direct everything until his death. In speaking of his Works, the Founder recalls here both all he did for the orphans, the first missionary foundation in Kabylia and in the Sahara, and his projects concerning Africa south of the Sahara, etc.
186 Lavigerie was seriously ill in October 1874, and, notably, he had to leave the General Assemblies of the Chapter several times to take to his bed. The thought of imminent death often haunted him during these periods of serious illness, which were frequent throughout his life.
187 We know that, from 1868, the reception of hundreds of orphans was the first commitment for the first Missionaries of Africa. Lavigerie also recalls the criticisms
and accusations against these initiatives, from, amongst others, the government authorities that criticised the Archbishop of prosélytising.

188 This was Father Francisque Deguerry, who had just been elected the first Superior General of the Society.

189 The Missionaries now form a group recognised by the Church.

190 In 1874, the Missionaries of Africa were still almost all from the dioceses of France. We know that from the foundation, Lavigerie sought to promote vocations in various European countries, and afterwards in Canada.

191 Lavigerie is referring here to David Livingstone (1813-1873), Protestant missionary and explorer in Africa. He denounced slavery with vigour. He had just been ceremoniously buried at London.

192 It is clear that in these words, indirectly addressed to the authorities of the government mentioned above, Lavigerie both denounces harassments undergone in the course of past years and launches an appeal for greater consideration and possible partnerships for the present.

193 Here, Archbishop Lavigerie means that the time has come for the Society to have a Superior General and Assistants elected in conformity to the newly approved Rule, hence their title of regular Superiors.

194 Here, Lavigerie emphasises his responsibility as Archbishop of Algiers, one that is all the more complicated by the increasingly anticlerical policy of the French government at this time. However, he also refers to his uncertain health, in mentioning the feeling of being under the sentence of an early death.

195 Several times, at the General Chapters that were to follow, the Founder would repeat, as here, his intention to leave as much responsibility as possible to the Superiors of the Society. In reality, he would always remain very directly involved in the government of the Society until his death in 1892.

196 As soon as the Society was canonically recognised, the Founder was careful to ensure its autonomy in relation to the diocesan authority of Algiers, by placing it under the authority of the Apostolic Delegate of the Sahara and the Sudan and in ensuring the separate management of its property.

197 Here, Lavigerie is alluding to humiliations already experienced by Missionaries who were making collections for the Mission in dioceses and parishes in France or elsewhere and who were sometimes badly treated. He himself had experienced this kind of humiliation when he was Director of the l'Œuvre des Écoles d'Orient, from 1856 till 1860.

198 In 1 Cor 9: 22 Saint Paul says: ‘I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.’

199 ‘Beloved, let us love one another’ 1 Jn 4: 7.

200 ‘That they may be one’ Jn 17: 11

201 ‘Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.’ Jn 17: 11

202 The lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, (Malachi, 2: 7).

203 This questionnaire is surprising today in its meticulousness and its more or less inquisitorial character. However, as was said previously, this type of examination of
conscience was not infrequent in the religious world. The Founder took inspiration from the general practice of the Jesuit Fathers. For the Society, the 1938 Directory ratified this obligation and enumerated practically the same list of question as these below.

204 Travelling from North Africa to North America at that time meant a long voyage, not devoid of risks.

205 Father Delattre would later be appointed by Archbishop Lavigerie to take charge of the archeological excavation site at Carthage and was to become a world-renowned specialist.

206 In Canada, clerics then wore the Roman collar. Lavigerie only asked of the confreres to wear what the priests of the place wore.

207 His Grace Édouard Charles Fabre (1827-1896) was then Archbishop of Montreal.

208 1875 was a Holy Year, like all the years with 100, 50, 25.

209 French word ‘cabinet’: Today we would say from my ‘office’.

210 St Eugène Seminary and its yards were just next to Bishop Lavigerie’s episcopal House. Time to time he invited the children to come up on the terrasse and most probably they were frightened by the height.
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Beginning of a handwritten letter of Mgr Lavigerie to Fr. Charmetant
Bibliography

The present bibliography provides a selection of the most often quoted books on Lavigerie and of his writings. In addition, it is often possible to find them in libraries of missionary communities. Therefore, this is in no way an exhaustive bibliography and each reader may complete it with profit, according to his knowledge and his own reading.

1) General Archives of the Missionaries of Africa (AGMAfr)

The Archives of the Missionaries of Africa are at the Casa Generalizia, 269 via Aurelia, Roma (Italy). The Lavigerie Collection contains all the original manuscripts of the texts quoted in this anthology. These same texts in their typed version can also be consulted in a double series of bound volumes, one chronological and the other of addressees. The mention red volume presented as a reference for one or other text in this anthology, is a reference to the chronological series, that contain close to thirty volumes coloured dark red and filed by years.

2) "Œuvres Choisies de son Éminence le Cardinal Lavigerie", Librairie Poussielgue Frères, Paris, 1884. In his lifetime, Lavigerie published under this title documents and pastoral writings he considered most important, in two volumes. The first volume opens with a preface addressed to Missionaries, in which is found the famous passage, ‘I have loved everything about our Africa: its past, its future, its mountains, its pure blue sky, its sunshine, the great sweep of its deserts, the azure waves that bathe…’

2) "Instructions aux Missionnaires"

- Lavigerie, Instructions aux Missionnaires, Éditions Grands Lacs, Namur, 1950. In 1907, Bishop Livinhac, at that time Superior General, edited this book for the first time, then completed and reedited it several times. Intended for the members of the Society, it presents a great number of texts, most of which have been or will be taken up again in this anthology. Very widely distributed in the Society, it was given to novices at the start of the 1960s. No re-edition has been made since then.
3) Other books presenting texts of Lavigerie

More recently, here are some books that present selections of texts by Lavigerie, with commentaries.


4) Books on Lavigerie

Several books, bibliographies of Lavigerie or others, quote the texts of the Founder and enable an understanding of their context:


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N° 7. *Learn the language to spread the Word; the linguistic work of the Missionaries of Africa*, by Ivan Page. 2007.


