



**1869:** First taking of the habit of the MSOLA presided over by Lavigerie.

**1888:** Arrival of the caravan in Tabora after a long and arduous journey.

### **Letter to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (7 November 1892)**

Your Eminence,

The extensive mission of Upper Congo, situated within the territory of the independent State and served by the priests of the Society of Missionaries of Algiers, is at the moment without a leader. Reverend Father Coulbois who had been in charge of the administration this last period, with the function of Pro-Vicar Apostolic, returned to Europe in April of the present year for serious health reasons and finds himself obliged, for the same reasons, to resign definitively from his previous office.

It is my duty, Eminence, as Superior General of the Society of Missionaries of Algiers, to call the kind attention of your Eminence to this situation so that it can be regularized by having our Holy Father the Pope accept the resignation of Fr Coulbois and designating, at his choice, the priest who should succeed him as Pro-Vicar Apostolic. Of all the missionaries who are working at this moment in the mission of Upper Congo, the one who appears to be the most worthy and the most capable of fulfilling this important office is Father Léon Marquès. Born 15 November 1863 in Thourout, in the diocese of Bruges, in West Flanders, Fr Marquès took his Oath as a Missionary of Algiers on 17 October 1886 and was ordained priest on 17 July 1890. He unites in himself knowledge and virtue. Educated at the College of Propaganda in Rome, and having a doctorate in theology, he has always been noted for his zeal, prudence and piety. And finally, he has been for a year now in the Pro-Vicariate of Upper Congo. This is the missionary that I would venture to propose today to Your Eminence to be appointed by the Holy Father Pro-Vicar of the mission of Upper Congo.

While expressing in advance my gratitude for the welcome you will give to this proposal, I have the honour to remain, Eminence, respectfully kissing your hands, your most humble, most devoted, and most obedient servant.

### **Supplementary Instructions for Missionaries going to Equatorial Africa (November 1880)**

Some ethical considerations. 1) The missionaries must always bear in mind this truth, that they are apostles, not tourists, and that they must therefore be guided by the spirit of faith, not vain curiosity; by their whole attitude and in all of their talk, they must seek to enlighten and not, through some dreadful aberration, to act like common travellers, or even worse, as we have seen a few of those who left most recently do, to our great shame. The Father Superior must pay close attention to this point and reprimand, even severely, anyone who might need reprimanding. 2) During the journey, it is not always possible to keep, to the letter, all of the Rules. But their spirit, at least, must be kept. I recommend in particular the spirit of obedience and of prayer without which nothing would work as it should. 3) The Society's Rules give zeal for learning the local languages as one of the sure signs of a missionary vocation. This is the primary duty of missionaries to Equatorial Africa. All must apply themselves henceforth to this task and firmly resolve to make every effort to be able, as soon as possible, to speak without an interpreter. It was a disgrace which was followed by the greatest of misfortunes to have seen in the last caravan one of the superiors, Father Moinet, reach Tabora and spend some time there and then travel on to Lake Tanganyika without being able either to understand the local Negroes or to make himself understood. It was certainly due to this ignorance that his caravan was wiped out. Everything must be done to avoid repeating similar disasters. But especially, everything must be done to equip missionaries to be able to preach the Word of God as soon as possible. They must never forget that it is for this sole aim that they are sent among these pagan peoples, and they must ardently strive to achieve this aim.

