



Annual report to the Cardinal of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (1st December 1869)

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.

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.

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. They 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. Added 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.

