



1868: Lavigerie dismisses from the novitiate Eugène Barbier and Louis Pux, two of the 3 founders of the Missionaries of Africa.

Letter of thanks to the Cardinal Archbishop of Naples (Italy) (8 December 1888)

Your Eminence,

I had already received, in the past, numerous kind signs of your fraternal charity towards our Africa. You are giving me a new one in inviting me to start in Naples the establishment of the Anti-Slavery Society in Italy and to plead this cause myself from the pulpit of your cathedral. Everything is encouraging me to accept such an offer, both the faith of your people and the religious memories which of old united the Church in Naples with the church in Carthage.

I do not forget, in fact, the under the dome of your cathedral our African saints lie in the midst of your saints. I found the virgin Restituta, the bishops Gaudiosus and Quodvultdeus, one of the successors of St Cyprian and alongside them a multitude of confessors who had imitated them in defending the Faith with the same intrepid courage. The persecutors had piled them into half-wrecked boats, without sails, without a pilot, thinking that they would perish, but the winds and the waves took care to lead them to your harbour. It is there that one of your predecessors, Nostrianus, who himself is revered as a saint, with the same charity that you have inherited along with his see, offered them refuge and allowed them to have, at the very gates of the city, the monastery in which they put the finishing touches to the sanctification of their lives. The Church in Naples has done even more, it has enrolled their names in the list of the most venerable pontiffs and has placed their relics in the altars.

Yet if these memories encourage me, a serious obstacle is stopping me: this is my inability to expound in your beautiful Italian language on the numerous details which are necessary to make this initiative well known and appreciated. I can follow a pri-

vate conversation in Italian; I cannot, without temerity, speak in Italian in public. I therefore dare to request of you, Eminence, to allow me simply to address an exhortation in my own language to those of your faithful, and they are many, who speak and understand it. For the others I shall have translated into Italian a booklet published in Germany by our anti-slavery committee, at least for the part concerning East Africa. In so far as North Africa and the Mediterranean basin is concerned, which interest Italy more directly, I will have added to it a special chapter giving all the details on the slavery that exists in North Africa and in the Mediterranean basin, [suggesting] the principal actions that members of anti-slavery committees could undertake to suppress or at least to lessen this slavery, and finally the letter that I have just recently addressed to Cardinal Celesia. This booklet is in fact destined not only for the Catholics of Naples but for all those of Italy.

Coming from a town which has seen, even during our own Century, the birth of so many works of charity for the Christian instruction of slaves, for tending to their needs, for the education of Black children who have been ransomed out of charity, and offering it under the patronage of a pastor who through the inspirations of his generous charity, through his heroic courage, has set his name together with those of Charles and Frederic Borromeo, it can only receive a favourable welcome from all.

