



Letter to Father Deguerry (30 December 1886)

My dear Father,

This very morning, I received your letter with enclosed the letter of Mgr Livinhac and the diary of the Kibanga mission. I fully agree with your idea of sending reinforcements to the Nyanza mission, which has been so cruelly tested. The difficult thing seems to me to be to find suitable people; but if you find them, have no hesitation. Under no circumstances, however, should you think of sending Fathers before the ordinary time, that is, in May. By then the Fathers for Kwammouth will be very close to arriving. What I believe immediately necessary is to raise the morale of all these poor missionaries and, according to me, the best thing would be to send a telegraphed message to Mgr Livinhac with the wording: your letters received; will soon send more missionaries.

I am happy that the Propagation of the Faith have given the 40.000 francs that I asked for beside the current allowances. With that we should be able to manage fairly easily. Of course, it will be necessary to go to the Councils of the Propagation of Faith at the time when they are preparing the distribution of funds, in other words in February, or March at the latest. It is important to obtain from them serious and precise commitments for the four vicariates. So Mgr Livinhac has become aware now that there has been too great a leniency in the past in admitting candidates!

On whom is he to put the blame, if not on himself, Father Charbonnier and Father Terrasse? Right from the start, did you not hear me complain bitterly about misplaced mercy? In wishing to avoid disheartening a candidate, it burdens the Congregation with useless members (ouvriers, lit. "workers").

These consequently are extremely dangerous because, not being able to work for lack of solid virtue or intelligence, they become discouraged and discourage others and put them off completely. This is what the directors of the novitiates and scholasticates have up to now not been willing to understand.

During the novitiate, in particular, the big mistake is not to be able to take the decision to send away those candidates who are not suitable, within the first three months. Three months are quite sufficient to know the moral disposition of anyone who presents himself for the missions. It cannot be hope that at that age the moral disposition will change: it has been shaped already for a long time. So if there is no determination to send away someone who does not have the virtues indispensable for apostolic life, not only will he not acquire them, but he will be the cause of others, seeing how he behaves, losing the good dispositions they had or at least seeing these dispositions diminish. Be firm, I beg of you, and keep an eye especially on Father Bridoux, who seems to me to be too easily inclined to admit anyone who externally observes the points of the rule of the scholasticate.

