



1872: Beginning of the construction of the church of St Cyprian (Attafs)

1873: 2 novices drown in the Mediterranean while trying to save one of their confreres

1889: A caravan of 5 missionaries leaves for Nyasa, via Mozambique. The Portuguese Government has granted free passage to our missionaries.

Letter to Father Deguerry, Vicar General (23rd June 1880)

Neither do I accept the reason based on the Institute of Negroes being a provisional measure. You must be determined to take very little notice of the instructions I have given to the missions of the Interior, which were approved by the Holy See, for daring to give me a reason like this. Quite to the contrary, I have established in principle that our aim must be the regeneration of Africa by Africans; that to achieve this we must educate the greatest possible number of young Negroes and that they should be trained in medicine. So, this is not a provisional measure, as Father Charbonnier says; it is vital work, the most vital of all, to my mind and in the view of the Holy See, for the future of the missions among the Africans. Our Institute of young Negroes should therefore seek more recruits and grow; and it surely can thanks to the missions in Sudan and the slaves bought in R'damès and Tripoli and those in Equatorial Africa and the slaves bought in the Ugogo region.

Another objection stated that, in order to follow courses at the Faculty of Medicine in Malta, the young Negroes would have to learn Italian. I would have you know that, in a country where everyone speaks Italian and Arabic, it will not be difficult to teach our children Italian. That will not take long and will not be difficult. If this poses something of an inconvenience, you must recognize that the Faculty of Medicine in Malta offers advantages you will find nowhere else in the world. Firstly, the climate there is one in which Negroes can live, whereas if they were sent to Europe they could not. Then, this is the most Catholic Faculty of Medicine in the world, whereas all the others, with the exception of Lille, are secular. Where shall we send them, if not to Malta? To Algiers? They would quickly lose their faith and their morals. Malta is the obvious choice, if you want to have young Africans trained in medicine.

You also say that these young Negroes are not old enough to follow courses at the Faculty, except Charles and Felix. This is true, but since they have to learn Italian so as to follow the courses and they will

learn far more quickly on the spot, it is to their advantage that we send them straight away.

Your last objections are those of finances and personnel. Concerning finances, if, according to Father Deguerry, the children have the means to live in Tunis thanks to adoptions, it is certain that they will be able to live still more comfortably in Malta where, as well as these adoptions, there will surely be gifts from generous Christians. Personnel is not a problem for Malta, since children will only be moved there in cases where it would be impossible to care adequately for them at Saint-Louis. We must count Tripoli out. So, if they are placed in a separate house, there would need to be the same personnel as would be needed in Malta and this I do not consider impossible, if we content ourselves, as the Council suggests, with the Mdabourou foundation.

None of the objections you raise, therefore, seems sound to me. I would not go so far as to say they are merely excuses, but it looks very like it. As for the very serious reasons which appear to me to militate in favour of the plan, I would put in first place the incalculable advantage of having our young Negroes brought up in a completely and admirably Catholic environment. We know what it has cost us to bring up our Arabs among Muslims and infidels and the sad results we have had. To bring up our Negroes in similar conditions, in Tunis or in Tripoli, would be to make the same miscalculation. It would be putting the souls of these young children in a painful situation, since in the midst of these different religions, they, who already have prejudices from their childhood, will not know which way to turn.

