



1874: First approval of the Society of Missionaries of Africa. The name of the Venerable Geronimo no longer appears as protector.

1875: Leon Livinhac takes over the direction of the scholasticate.

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

I cannot tell you how saddened and ashamed I was to see how several Fathers, especially among those who left in the last caravan, failed to obey the most elementary Rules of obedience and wisdom; how they have thus become the talk of both Europeans and natives alike and how, finally, they ended up in catastrophes such that in all the newspapers of Europe we read: «The Missionaries of Algiers' adventure fails!»

To achieve such results, which are the exact opposite of the mission entrusted to them, these missionaries must have completely forgotten the moral responsibility they were shouldering. By acting as they did, it is not only themselves whom they have harmed, but the mission, the Society, the whole of the Catholic Church. And frankly, because of that, I do not know if it would be too hard to say to one or two of them: « It would have been better for that man not to have been born ». I use these terrible expressions to make you understand very well to what depth the responsibility undertaken by the missionaries who are about to leave for the mission commits them, for not only have they to fulfil their duty, but they must also repair mistakes and disasters which are both a great affliction and a great scandal. I emphasize, in particular, the following points in which the Missionaries who left in 1879 seem to have failed:

1) I urge missionaries to live in a spirit of unity and charity and I make it absolutely compulsory for them to allow nothing, other than differences of opinion, to get in between them and divide them. The last time, this was so much in evidence that the Spiritan Fathers in Bagamayo could write in their mission journal these awful words: 'A complete lack of team spirit and organization'. They not only wrote this in their journal, but they also wrote it in Europe where it gave a dreadful impression.

2) To maintain this unity and team spirit, it is essential that there be one single authority. The last time, the three superiors and the bursar claimed that each one was in charge. This time, there is only one superior who is in charge and who gives orders to all and no-one has the right to give orders except to carry out the orders of this superior. It is Father Guillet who has received this title and this authority from us.

3) So that there should be no possible resistance or division, I am giving Father Guillet the right to be in command of his confreres in accordance with holy obedience, that is, under pain of mortal sin; the right to exclude immediately from the caravan and from the mission any member at all.

4) However, Father Guillet must consult his Council in all cases not foreseen in the current Instructions or in any extraordinary difficult situations which might arise. This Council will be composed of five other missionaries, Mr Guyot and Captain Joubert. He will only be obliged to follow the Council's advice if there is unanimity among the members present. If there is no unanimity, but only a majority, the decision will be purely a consultative one and Father Guillet will remain free to act according to his wishes and to what he sees fit.

5) As bursar, Mr Guyot will be responsible for organizing the caravan, but he will be under Father Guillet's authority. He will act only according to the latter's wishes. Similarly, Captain Joubert will be in charge of his auxiliaries, but he, too, will be under the authority of the Father Superior and will do nothing other than his wishes.

