



**1886:** 9th General Chapter. Deguerry elected Vicar General. Father Roger was appointed Superior of the Jerusalem Establishment. Lavigerie proposed the creation of provinces. The Chapter accepted.

**1889:** 10th General Chapter: Livinhac is elected Vicar General.

### Letter to the missionaries (19 September 1885)

I will therefore speak to you of what seems to me to be most essential for any society, whichever it may be, namely the intimate union of its members, whosoever they may be, in a manner of thinking in charity and faith, under the direction of its leaders.

On a recent occasion, our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII, was obliged to speak out publicly to arrest the symptoms of discord that seemed to be showing up in the Church and even among those closest to his throne. With his wonderfully enlightened wisdom, and visibly assisted by the Spirit of God, according to the promises made to Peter and his successor, the Holy Father solemnly reminded all Christians of the condition which is always necessary in the Church, but particularly indispensable when, as in the present times, she is surrounded by so many enemies: I refer to the close harmony which alone makes it possible to gather all forces and direct them to where the danger lies. With no less force and clarity, the Supreme Pontiff emphasized that lasting union in the Church is impossible if the authority which God has established to maintain it is not equally respected by all, both small and great, and on this occasion he had no hesitation, in spite of all his sadness, to give a memorable lesson.

What the Supreme Pontiff thus declared necessary in the whole Church, my dear Children, I declare even more indispensable for your little Society. Close, intimate, fraternal union is the condition of its success and even of its life. And this union can only be achieved and maintained by complete, supernatural submission to the guidance of one's superiors.

There is nothing, it seems to me, that should be easier. The major superiors not only have a special grace from on high for the administration of the bodies entrusted to them, but they also have the exact knowledge of the whole, a perspective which permits them to make more enlightened and certain judgments than those who know only a few details and for whom the overall picture is therefore always elusive. Moreover, they have a right to recognition and docility on the part of the inferiors on account of the worries, the sorrows, and the labours that they have to endure in order to ensure the security, the freedom of action, and sometimes even the material existence of all.

If I remind you of these principles, my dear Children, it is because over these last years, and while threats from outside multiply around us, it has seemed to me that obedience, true and Christian, the acceptance without ulterior motive of the views of superiors, and to say the least, that good spirit which takes and interprets everything in good light, have been lacking to some. They have too easily made criticisms on points where they should at least have kept silent, since they had a duty not to interfere with the authority of their superiors and the respect due to them. As you stand before God and in silence, examine yourselves on these points. See if on more than one occasion, either with your confreres or sometimes in the presence of strangers, either out of malice or out of impatience caused by pride, or simply out of carelessness, you have not fallen into such a serious fault.

Have you always welcomed with respect and submission the decisions of the Council of your Society? On the contrary, have you not sometimes complained about the measures which concerned you, or even about those which, without touching you, did not go along with your personal ideas? Have you not allowed yourself to criticize changes, modifications for which you do not understand the need, and this because you do not consider that in a society that is beginning and developing like yours, the very expansion of its endeavours requires changes in personnel or of certain points of the rules that experience demands to be modified?