



1871: The Arab junior seminary leaves Kouba and returns to St Eugene under the direction of 7 Fathers of the African Missions of Lyon.

Speech for the Consecration of the Chapel at Maison-Carrée (29th October 1874)

The Algerian Works that I entrust to you are far indeed from being the only ambition of your souls. You have devoted your apostolate to the whole of Africa, according to which the Holy See, into whose hands I have placed you from your beginning and whose slightest desires you have taken for a ruling, has already decided so and will decide subsequently. What has appealed to you in this Mission are the dangers it presents more than any other Mission on earth. Africa, in its still unknown depths, is we somehow know, the last bastion of infamous barbarism, of seemingly incurable mindlessness, of cannibalism, and of the most unspeakable slavery!

Nevertheless, you came and you committed yourselves by Oath, to live this life, to die this death! You are all looking forward to the time to enter the battlefield where your brothers went before you. It is a battlefield of charity, where your arms will be your daily good deeds, where your defence will be gentleness and patience, where your preaching will be the power of your example and your final triumph will be the heroic sacrifice of your life.

As I look at you, my dear Sons, I see on your foreheads all the brilliance of vigour and youth. I think on all you have given up: family, homeland, and earthly hopes - and all you can expect in return: insults, suffering, a cruel death. I look at you and I recall that you are the children of Catholic France. I cannot but refer to our homeland and have confidence for her, since God keeps there so many hearts that a heroic and pure dedication can still inflame.

Some months ago, a great and noble nation, which we see with joy coming daily closer to the truth, and whose representative today I am pleased to see among us to thank him, despite what separates us, for its constant and open sympathies, England organised the close-to royal funeral for a courageous man who gave his life to lift a corner of the veil that covers the African world and prepare for the abolition of barbaric customs. England, instinctively drawn to great things, was right to honour one

of its sons in this way for his dedication and bravery.

As for you, my dear Sons, you do not desire anything like this; no thought of self-interest or glory compels you. You often lack bread, and shelter; you die unacknowledged by the world, perhaps after some dreadful suffering. It is the only promise I made to you. However, you know, and it is enough, that you serve a Master who knows how to dole out rewards according to the worth of his servants.

Step out therefore in the name and with the help of God! Go and raise up the lowly, relieve those who suffer, console those who weep, heal the sick. It will be to the honour of the Church to see you gradually show works of charity to the very centre of this immense continent; it will be to the honour of France to see you complete its work in bringing Christian civilisation far beyond its conquests, in this undiscovered world where the valour of its captains has opened the gates.

If you find hostilities in this country itself as a result of the irreligious passions that drive a section of the colony, you will always have, do not doubt it, (if you continue to combine, as you have done to this day, dedication, and wisdom) protectors in the eminent men whose high quality and impartial justice do honour to them, to such a high degree, the government, the army, the judiciary and the administration of Algeria. It is in their disinterested love of goodness that I venture to place my trust for the time when, perhaps soon, my voice will no longer protect you.

For me, my dear Sons, whether God calls me soon to himself or if he still leaves me some time in this world, I will never cease to thank him for having made me the father of your souls! Above all, I will not cease to pray that he will maintain in your souls the pure flame that his hands have lit! Amen.

