



1883: Departure of the 4th caravan for Equatorial Africa.

1866: Lavigerie brings innovations of rich ornaments to the cathedral of Nancy. The cathedral council opposed this and resigned.

1871: Lavigerie returns to Algiers after a long stay (6 months) in Europe.

1880: Lavigerie leaves for Tunisia, Malta, Italy and then France until the end of August.

Letter to Father Livinhac and the Missionaries of Nyanza (1st April 1880)

My dear Sons,

As you might well imagine, our thought and our hearts are often in Uganda. It is almost a year now since we had news from you; since it is now April and your last letters, those of both Father Livinhac and Father Lourdel, were dated June of last year. In such a long period of time, so much must have happened, and we try to guess what but without succeeding.

However, in the detailed notes which accompany this letter, you will see that we have thought more especially and in quite a practical way about you, since it is towards your mission that we shall send our next caravan in October. You will also see, in these same instructions, that we take a detailed interest in all that concerns you. Since these different points are dealt with by me in those same instructions, I shall not mention them again here. That would simply duplicate things.

What I wish to tell you in this letter, my dear Sons, is that the main object of my paternal anxiety for you – and this, as much for you as for the poor people to whom you are sent – is your spiritual good, the good of souls. There you are on the battlefield, in the midst of so many preoccupations, so many difficulties and all the necessities of life. Do not allow yourselves to get bogged down, as so often happens to missionaries, in external, material matters. Remember that you are apostles and that to be apostles you must be above all men of God.

But how to live the divine life, if that life is not kept alive within you? It is now, my dear Sons, that you must remain faithful to your devotions. If you had the misfortune to lose the spirit of faith, if you allowed yourselves to act simply as explorers or ordinary travellers, you would surely be lost. The spirit acts swiftly, and you have obeyed by setting out so generously, so heroically even, for a destination that is surrounded by so much darkness and so many dan-

gers. But if the spirit has done its work, make sure that the flesh now plays its part, for the flesh is weak. In the midst of all the evil situations which assail your eyes and your ears, if you are not constantly mindful of placing your heart in God's care, it will languish and will slowly be dragged down to earth, to the senses, under its own weight.

« That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift of God that you possess through the laying on of my hand ». This is what I have often told you during your retreats at Maison-Carrée and it is what I cry out to you once again from the top of the hill of Notre-Dame d'Afrique. You are in danger of going astray if you do not take as your top priority among all your preoccupations the practical means of maintaining and fostering the spiritual life within you. My dear Sons, if you are not men of God you will be men of the devil; and you will not be men of God if you forget your personal obligations, those imposed on you by your Rule, to Him.

I address these pleas and this advice particularly to your Father Superior, since observance of the Rules depends on him. He should consider as one of the most serious faults any act of negligence or weakness which might allow those under his authority to slacken in this matter. Never should personal prayer, the particular examen or spiritual reading be omitted when you are not travelling; and even when you are travelling, if you are unable to do everything, you must make up, as best you can, for whatever you are forced to omit.

