



1868: Letter from Lavigerie demanding the freedom of the Christian apostolate in Algeria. Conflict between Lavigerie and the Governor of Algeria, Mac-Mahon.

Letter to the Missionary Sisters regarding a return to their Primary Vocation (6 April 1885)

Dearest Daughters,

For a long time, the situation of your community has given us concern. The numerous difficulties arising from the new laws regarding public education are preventing the community from developing its activity in a fitting way. Moreover, the successive changes which have taken place in your Society, due to circumstances which are well known to you, have not produced favourable results.

It is not necessary to go into details on the serious inconvenience that has followed, but the various considerations just mentioned have led us to carry out something which has been in our thoughts for a long time. It is in fact evident to us that in causing you to abandon the prime aim of your Congregation through making you adopt new rules, instead of those which you followed originally as Sisters of the Venerable Geronimo, you have been placed in a situation in which you could not carry out the good work for which you had been founded.

Consequently, my dearest daughters, we have come to the resolution that you should return purely and simply to the observation of your first Rule, that according to which you pronounced your vows. It is true that there are some among you who entered your Society after the adoption of the new Rule. For these, we are ready, in accordance with the law, to give them complete freedom. We therefore declare that, from this moment, we free from their religious obligations all those among you who so request, and that we shall facilitate the entry into a teaching Congregation those who have the necessary qualifications and the vocation for teaching.

For these reasons, and after having invoked the Holy Name of God, we have decided and do decree as follows:

Art. 1 – From 1 October next, the Sisters forming the Society of Religious Sisters of the Missions of Africa and of Algiers, will return purely and simply to the observance of the rules of the Congregation of the Agricultural and Hospital Sisters of Saint Geronimo, as approved by us and observed by the Sisters at the beginning of the Society.

Art. 2 – To allow them to fulfill the aim pro-

posed by the Rule of the Geronimite Sisters, we shall transfer the centre and the Mother House of their Society to the Attafs, within the terrain that shall be donated to them for this purpose by the civil society of the agricultural orphanages.

Art. 3 – This community will provisionally have no novitiate, except for the novices and postulants who are already present and who wish to enter into the Congregation as it has been renewed.

Art. 4 – We give complete freedom, from now until 1 October, to the professed Sisters and to the postulants who so desire to enter into another religious Society, facilitating their admission.

