1873: Fr. Charbonnier is appointed Chaplain of Notre Dame d'Afrique. The Premonstratensians withdrew.

1878: Sending ceremony at Our Lady of Africa of the first caravan of missionaries to Equatorial Africa.

1887: Death of Giraud and one of the orphans and 4 rowers on the lake (Nyanza Mission).

Letter to Father Bresson, superior of Woluwé in Belgium (14 April 1886)

My dear Superior,

Before leaving Belgium, I want to tell you once again how happy I was with my visit to the little novitiate in Woluwe. Ten days ago, I saw the swarm of young novices who were crossing Paris on their way to the apostolic school of Saint-Eugène. All these young men had impressed me by their excellent manners, their devotion and that air of modest self-confidence which is so well suited to missionaries. I was no less charmed by those I saw in your house. In their presence I spontaneously remembered what St. Francis Xavier, that consummate model of the Apostle, wrote to St. Ignatius when he asked him for his best missionaries: Send me Belgians! he said to him, da mihi Belgas!

I can say the same thing of the Belgian missionaries I know in our missions. They have that right mixture of ardour and calmness, of lively faith and perseverance, of strength of spirit and vigour of body that make a man fit for these undertakings where one must overcome so many challenges, sometimes undergo so much suffering, accepting in advance the very sacrifice of life. May God, therefore, multiply vocations to the apostolate among them, and may your house always be too small to receive them. This is the wish I make for this house and the fatherly blessing I give to it as I leave.

I trust God will hear me him, for he does not leave his works incomplete. It is no coincidence, therefore, that he has just given Belgium, through its monarch, the glory of opening up the interior of Equatorial Africa to civilization and faith. This work is, in a sense, the greatest of this century. I see nothing in our (French?) history, higher than the truly royal initiative and perseverance that, between the two oceans, has finally opened up the African continent.

I am not just talking about the economic future of the most admirable and perhaps richest regions of the world. I am talking about the higher interests of the human race: a barrier now opposed to the brutal invasion of Mohammedanism, which over the last century has conquered a third of Africa and which was about to conquer the rest of it in order to subjugate it to its sterile yoke; the imminent abolition of the land slave-trade and slavery, which is even more dreadful than the sea-trade; the initiation of races which are now sadly debased but whose children, as we have experienced, are capable of education and sometimes remarkable progress.

This is what should arouse the gratitude of all and what arouses mine. I am not the only one. I have just returned from Rome, at this very moment. There I heard Leo XIII, that great Pope who has always remained attached to Belgium since he has known it closely, express before all the members of the Sacred College his profound joy at the great work which the King of the Belgians has begun, and his wishes that all will support it in the interest of religion. And in truth, the common Father of the faithful, of the small, the weak, the born promoter of true civilization and true light, was right to speak thus. He was responding to a Christian and royal word that I had heard in Brussels itself, shortly after Leopold II had addressed his first appeal to the elite of all nations to join him in this great and peaceful conquest. As I took the liberty of telling him about the difficulties, the perils, the heavy burdens of such an attempt, he said to me with an accent that touched me and which Providence should bless: "All that is non to me, but I must think of dying one day, and when I die I would like to be able, at least, to offer to God a work that is out of the ordinary and which may call down upon me his mercy. If I succeed, in spite of the obstacles, that is the one I will offer him. »

A truly beautiful word and one that deserved to be crowned, as it has been, even in this world, by the and support of all the nations of Europe; a word that must touch Belgian Catholics above all, and your novices in particular, by showing them that they owe their undivided dedication to a work that, in order to be fruitful, must be Christian and therefore supported by all that is Christian.