



Letter to Father Charmetant about a preaching programme in France (24 April 1885)

My Dear Friend,

Your letter reached me yesterday, a few hours after my arrival. I shall be preaching here on Sunday at [the church of] Saint Joseph and my time is completely taken up preparing invitations, articles for the newspapers, etc. On Monday I shall be leaving for Lyon where I wish to be on 1 May. On the 2nd I shall leave for Paris. I am giving you the details of my journey so that you can take any necessary action. Your idea of making appeals in well-endowed parishes is excellent and I think it could be prolonged, as did Don Bosco two years ago, because of the month of May. But one must go solely to parishes that are rich and, because of my health, I can only say a few words after the preacher has delivered his sermon. The exception would be the Madeleine where I would preach myself. As for making the appeal myself, I shall try here this coming Sunday and see if it is too tiring for me.

For the time being it would be necessary to know if the parish priests of Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Germain-des-Prés, Sainte-Clotilde, Saint-Philippe, Saint-Augustin, Saint-Roch and La Trinité, as also of the other important parishes, and those who are to preach, will accept the combined operation that I am proposing. But I would not want more than ten parishes in all. I could not do more in a month without becoming completely exhausted. In order to fix the dates, it will be necessary to await my arrival.

As regards the subscription, it is necessary to maintain it by publishing in the newspapers everything that can attract attention, repeating all the time that this is to be done at 12 rue du Regard. People forget easily. I am in receipt of a letter from Fr Pidoux in which he tells me that he does not know where the subscription is done. He sends me 100 frs. I am sending you a telegram with my sermon; give it to the press. Send me by telegram the name of the church in Lyon in which it would be best to make an appeal, and which would be most sympathetic towards our cause.

Preaching in the church of Saint Joseph in Marseilles (26 April 1885)

I hope that Saint Joseph and Marseilles will forgive me, for Africa has been in the past hospitable to Saint Joseph and has given to Marseilles, seven years ago, the best, the most worthy, the most learned and the holiest of its bishops. Here I shall stay away from politics. We are only seeking the Kingdom of Heaven. I am not going to deliver a discourse. Of what use is a discourse when things speak for themselves? The Catholic Church, because of the cuts made recently in the budget for religious affairs, is threatened with disappearance in North Africa. It is this that brings me here today in your midst and offers you this spectacle, which has its aspects of greatness and eloquence, of an old bishop, a Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, stretching out his hand to the Catholics of France as a beggar.

“What do we ask for?” said the eminent prelate. “Only what is necessary, a roof for shelter, clothes to wear and daily bread. What is one going to say to me? That it is humiliating to beg? Ah! How sweet is this humiliation when one bears it for those one loves! No, these hands are not being dishonoured when they stretch out to you. Rather they are engaged in a holy work when they are providing bread for those children who are lacking everything; they will allow my Christians in Africa to be born, to live and to die with the blessing of the Church; above all, they will save France this supreme shame of destroying religion with its own hands, in a country where influence is almost entirely of a religious nature.

