



Draft of a letter to Leo XIII concerning the journey to Jerusalem (between 3 and 6 August 1885)

Yet, most Holy Father, the consecration of the church of Saint Anne, as interesting as it may be in itself, is perhaps less so than the second mission that I am giving myself. Next to the church of Saint Anne, the Missionaries of Algiers have founded, at my request, a seminary destined exclusively for Greek Catholics. Propaganda has given its approval to the rules of this seminary, which I had submitted to it. They are all focused on a double aim: that the Greek priests formed in this house may be solidly attached to the Apostolic See, and to persuade them and all the Christians of their rite that their usages and privileges are in no way under threat, as the enemies of the papacy are constantly telling them. Absolutely on the contrary, Latinizing tendencies are completely banished from this seminary and the offices are celebrated only according to the Greek Catholic rite.

In that there is, most Holy Father, a seed of resurrection and return which it seems to me must be carefully cultivated and encouraged. I wish therefore to see things with my own eyes, to become aware of the improvements that could be made in such an undertaking, the resources that would be necessary for this, and also to hear directly from the head of the Oriental clergy in Palestine and in Syria, and come to know what can be expected of them in this regard.

The difficulties for union are great, without doubt, and it cannot be done in a day, but this is no reason for not working at it with courage and charity. This is what Your Holiness is already doing in Constantinople and this example can never be followed too much by those who are aware of the pontifical zeal and the exalted nature of your vision.

Favourable circumstances have been offered to us recently for increasing further our influence and our activity in Jerusalem. Independently of the shrine of Saint Anne we have acquired, partly by buying and partly by free gift, the ruins and the sites of two ancient shrines, first the Probatic Pool on which a church had been built before the Crusades, and then that of the Credo on the Mount of Olives where also a church had been built, in the early centuries [of the Christian era], on the site where, according to tradition, the Apostles, gathered together, recited for the first time the Credo. I would like to restore

these two shrines for the [greater] honour of the Catholic Church, which, as Your Holiness is aware, is strongly combatted by the efforts of the Russians and the Protestants. I believe that it is possible to hope that the material resources will not be lacking as a result of practical steps that I have just taken with this end in view.

That, in short, most Holy Father, is the aim of my next journey, which will last about six weeks. My greatest wish is that, according to the weak measure of my strength, it may serve the good of the Church and of souls, in a country which saw the beginnings of my priestly ministry and for which I have retained a true love. But for that, most Holy Father, I need the special blessings of Your Holiness. I dare to ask them from a distance, placing myself at the sacred feet of Your Holiness, Most Holy Father, as your very humble, very obedient and very devoted servant and creature.

The present Director of l'Œuvre des Écoles d'Orient, the missionary, Reverend Father Charmant, will accompany me on this journey in order to give it its true import which is solely religious. He will have the honour of passing through Rome in order to prostrate himself at the feet of Your Holiness, arriving a very few days after this letter. I make bold to ask for him the favour of an audience and then he will assume the duty of bringing us the paternal blessings that I solicit for myself, for the prelates and the priests who accompany me, as also for all the Catholics who will attend the consecration of the church of Saint Anne and Saint Joachim.

