



**1840:** Lavigerie, accompanied by his father, meets the bishop of Bayonne. He asked to enter the seminary to become a priest. The bishop accepts.

### Letter to the Members of the 10th General Chapter (24 August 1889)

My Dear Sons in Our Lord,

As the General Chapter, together with the elections to take place during it in extraordinary circumstances, is drawing near, I feel impelled to address to you at least my paternal advice. In point of fact, I shall not be able, for reasons of health of which you are already aware, to be in your midst, and I cannot resign myself to not let you hear my voice.

"This Chapter, according to all human probability, is the last one which you will hold during my lifetime. According to the decisions which you took three years ago, you should in fact only be meeting for a Chapter every six years. However, bearing in mind my infirmities and the extreme fatigue from which I have been suffering for more than a year, it is probable that within those six years provided for by your last Chapter the Lord will have called me to himself. I hope then, with the help of your prayers, to merit his mercy and, in reward for what I have been able to do and to suffer, to gain repose in the bosom of Our Lord.

But since your next Chapter, on this account, is of decisive importance, I must make an effort, together with you, and as far as I still am able, to see that it bears abundant fruit of salvation. To this end, it is important that your choice of those who will be your Fathers and Directors be made under the influence of Divine Wisdom and Enlightenment, as well as in the light of an exact knowledge of the persons to whom you will give your votes.

It is because I wish to help you in the accomplishment of this duty that I wish to observe a different style in this Chapter from the one I have adopted hitherto. I had never, in fact, accepted to say a single word to you, whether in private or in public, to recommend to you those to whom I thought should go your votes. I would have feared to put an obstacle, without sufficient motivation, to the exercise of your freedom. Today, however, this fear must give way to

the duty of making sure through my advice the future of your Institute. It is obviously not a command that I am giving you. Canon Law does not allow me to do so. It is rather a piece of fatherly advice, which you are free to follow or not, but to which your filial piety and your good spirit will wish to attach due importance. I place myself therefore before God, asking Him to enlighten me regarding such an important matter, one on which depends the future of your Society. After long reflection and having consulted the oldest and the wisest among you, I am writing to you as follows:

After having noted, once again, that Reverend Father Deguerry, who at present exercises the role of Superior General, is requesting with more insistence than ever, to be relieved of this charge, and considering that among the missionaries who are presently members of the Council or superiors of the principal houses of the Society, there is no one who, in my judgement, offers as yet to a sufficient degree the qualities [necessary] for a Superior General in the present circumstances, I have thought that it is my duty to designate for you, as the person best able to fulfil this role in your Society, Monsignor Livinhac, bishop of Pacando, Apostolic Vicar of Nyanza.

This venerable prelate, in fact, unites in himself, to a high degree, piety, wisdom, knowledge and superior intelligence. Moreover, the fact that he is a bishop gives him the right and a special grace for the government of a society like yours. It is true that he cannot, without the permission of the Holy See, leave his Vicariate today and accept another jurisdiction. But I propose, if your opinion agrees with mine, to ask the Holy See myself to sever the links that bind him and allow him to accept the position of Superior General, where he will accomplish, it is evident, greater good still than in his present situation.

