



**1837:** Birth of Léon Bernard, Lavigerie's brother

**1884:** Blessing by Lavigerie of the new hospital in Tunis

**Letter to Father Charmetant on the death of his mother (10th January 1882)**

My dear Son,

A letter from Monsieur Poulet gave me the sad news for which your previous letters had prepared me only too well. I wish to tell you, dear Son, how much I share your sorrow as a son. I have experienced this myself and I know that, for a priest, the most bitter of sorrows is the loss of a good mother. Nothing can replace this in life. From the heights of heaven, she will continue to love you and to pray for you and there will be times when you will feel her protection in a very real way; but you will no longer find her on earth, and this will be a great void in your life. I shall pray for her and for you, my dear Son. Tomorrow I shall celebrate Holy Mass for her intentions. Out of respect for your sorrow, I shall not speak of any business matters today. I shall write to you in the next post to tell you of them.

**Letter to Father Charmetant (17th January 1883)**

My dear Son,

Your last letter, which I received the day before yesterday, causes me real grief, since for the first time it shows me where your thoughts truly lie. Up to now, you have only ever spoken to me about the running of the Œuvre des Écoles d'Orient as a means to serve our African operations better. Nor had I ever thought otherwise, since that is its most important purpose.

In light of what you tell me, I see that I was completely mistaken and that you are completely mistaken, that the situation is more demanding than your willpower and that, absorbed by so many details, visits, ties, you no longer have the time necessary to carry out your mission work properly. Everything has suffered, everything has languished this year; our lottery has turned into a disaster, and I would be blind not to have seen it, and guilty, too, if, having

seen this happening, I sacrificed the African operations for which I am directly responsible in favour of those of the Écoles d'Orient from which I have now distanced myself.

When I tell you of these thoughts and the resolutions, we are forced into because of them, you change your tone and tell me that it is for you and not for our operations that you want to run the Écoles d'Orient, for this is what your letter is really about.

My dear Son, I cannot follow you along this path. I can, and I must, recognise the service you have given to our work, but I cannot yield by depriving them of your help. I take everything into account as I have taken it all into account in the past. I shall certainly reward you as I promised and assure your future, but I cannot and must not give up your exclusive help because this help is vital to our activities and because I am responsible for providing it using the means the Providence itself has given me, that is by those who canonically are under my authority.

You speak of honour, my Son, but you must be quite blind if you cannot see that you have a greater benefit in remaining loyal to your father and to the special tasks your life requires of you, than in abandoning them to run after a more prestigious position. If the two things had been able to work together, that would be fine, but, I repeat, we have seen what happens, they simply cannot.

I am not at all in favour of Mr Millot nor of anyone else. I am writing to Mr Wallon this very day, asking him to consider null and void what I have already written. If you have a candidate, let him prevail, as long as you no longer have anything to do with the Œuvre in any shape or form during my lifetime. This is all I want. On my death, which is near, you may do as you wish.

