



1847: Lavigerie obtains the Baccalaureate and the “Licence ès Lettres.”

1850: Lavigerie defends a doctoral thesis at the Faculté des Lettres in Paris. Title: Historical Essay on the Christian School of Edessa. He also presented a secondary thesis on Hegesippus.

1873: Blessing of the foundation stone of the chapel of the Mother House.

1882: Baptism by Lavigerie of twelve pupils in Malta at the Church of St John of Valletta.

1886: Lavigerie meets the pope

1891: Consecration of Anatole Toulotte in the cathedral of Algiers.

1891: Departure from Marseille of the 10th caravan for Equatorial Africa.

Letter to the Archbishop of Malines about the opening of a seminary (12th July 1884)

Your Grace,

I have already had the honour of informing Your Grace indirectly, through the intermediary of Father Marlon, one of our missionaries who is at present in Belgium, of my intention of writing to you about founding a minor seminary in your diocese for the purpose of receiving candidates for the Society of the Missionaries of Algiers.

As Your Grace already knows, several Belgian priests belong to this small congregation. The excellent spirit which inspires them, their self-sacrifice, their dedication, leads us, quite naturally, to want to increase their number. His Majesty, King Léopold, has kindly shown me on several occasions and my representative in France, Reverend Father Charmant, how pleased he would be to see this project carried through and the number of our Belgian missionaries increase as much as possible in those parts of Equatorial Africa where those sent by the Association Internationale Africaine are already present.

The Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda to which I belong and which I also consulted about this matter in the person of its most eminent prefect

showed himself no less favourable to our proposal. It has only expressed to me its wish that our foundation should in no way affect the setting up of a seminary providing chaplains for the posts already occupied by the Belgian envoys. I share this wish myself, all the more so because I must confess in all confidence to Your Grace that some of these envoys have, up to now, been far from honouring their Christian faith.

The presence of a good priest, especially if he is sent by the king, will surely bring about a change in such a state of affairs, and if the Belgian missionaries in our Society come and occupy the neighbouring mission stations, they will provide some useful help to each other. They can be sure to find from our side, and from mine in particular, since the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in those regions is held by me, as delegate of the Holy See, my most fatherly support.

In this case, Your Grace, and in keeping with the kind assurances you have given to Reverend Father Merlon, I have come to ask Your Grace's permission to start, beginning next October, a minor seminary for the Society of the Missionaries of Africa in your diocese. This seminary would be established at Woluwé Saint-Lambert-lès-Bruxelles, in a property belonging to the Count of la Boëssières-Thienne here there is a small pilgrims' chapel in annex.

Its sole aim would be to welcome children and young people who applied to join our Society, either as future missionary priests or as future Brothers, so as to test them before sending them to the novitiate in Algiers. Once the period of testing is over (it would last at least a year for the most advanced among them), these postulants would be sent to the Society's novitiate in Africa. The majority of the missionaries in charge of this minor seminary will, from the month of October, be of Belgian nationality. All staff members, without exception, will be Belgians as soon as we have a sufficient number of Belgian Fathers among us.

Such then, Your Grace, is the little task for which I make bold to ask your agreement and your blessings. Please accept in advance my gratitude.