1871: The work has only 6 missionaries: Charmetant, Deguerry, Paulmier, Prudhomme, Soboul and Castex.

1873: Foundation of the mission station of Les Arifs. The station is suppressed on 8 April 1879.

1881: Lavigerie is received by Pope Leo XIII in Rome.

Letter to Pope Pius IX (6th July 1867)

Most Holy Father,

The Bulls for the erection of the Diocese of Algiers granted by Pope Gregory XVI and those of the Ecclesiastical Province of the same name, granted in the course of last year by Your Holiness, determine as boundaries the jurisdiction of the Bishops of Algeria and the boundaries of French possessions.

Beyond these possessions, there lies the great desert, or Sahara Desert, where a substantial population live in the oases. This population has a particularly interesting feature in that it is descended in part from the Kabyles of the coast, from the former Christian population of Africa, expelled from Numidia and Mauritania by conquering Arabs. According to accounts by very reliable travellers, these peoples, although they became Muslims, still preserve the memory of their former religion. They have also kept some practices from it, in particular monogamy.

Most Holy Father, it would be very beneficial for religion if Catholic missionaries could enter into contact with these desert peoples. It would be easy for missionaries who would firstly set up in the towns of South Algeria, where these Saharan tribes travel to for their commerce.

The major obstacle preventing anything being done in this regard is that the great desert is outside the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Algiers and its suffragants. Today, Most Holy Father, I therefore request Your Holiness, as I already had the honour of speaking to you about it, to please remove this obstacle by doing for the great desert what you did for Zanguebar (sic), in erecting it as a Vicariate Apostolic that would be provisionally entrusted to the Archdiocese of Algiers. This nomination would not incur any problem from the French Government because the Vicariate Apostolic would be outside its possessions.

The Vicariate of the Sahara would have boundaries: to the north, the French possessions of Algeria and Morocco, to the south, the (French) Sudan. To the East and West, it would extend to 10 degrees longitude east and west of the Paris meridian. The Archbishop of Algiers was to count on several Religious Congregations, in particular the Jesuits, to whom he had earlier revealed the proposal.