



Letter to Father Guillet, appointed Pro-vicar Apostolic of Tanganyika (4th July 1881)

You will also notice how, almost constantly from the start, one confrere after another at the Tanganyika Mission has failed to obey that essential Rule of our Society which is to be always three confreres together, except in rare and exceptional cases. It is important that this abuse stops. Under no circumstances, except in a case of danger of death, must you ever allow a missionary to travel alone or to remain alone in a mission station. You will not allow this for yourself either, and except in cases of momentary necessity, you must never be only two alone, but always be three, since this is what the Rule commands.

A last piece of advice, of a serious nature, is necessary. The Foreign Office in London, that is to say, the British government, has just made some official complaints to the French government saying that the French missionaries who have set up the mission in Tanganyika have become slave-traders. They are accused, not of ransoming children to rescue them and bring them up, as I had authorised and committed them to do, but also of buying adults to keep them as slaves and use them as such. If such an accusation were to be proven, it would cover us with shame before the whole of the Christian and the civilised world. I am certain that this is completely without foundation and that none of your Fathers has been unfortunate or stupid enough to commit such a crime. But nothing we are seen to do must give rise to such accusations. You must watch this most carefully and remember that I shall strike with absolute excommunication, incurred by the very act, all those who dare to buy slaves for any purpose other than setting them free and treating them as brothers ransomed by the blood of Our Saviour.

Letter to Father Bresson (4 July 1886)

My dear Child,

I am leaving for Rome tomorrow morning to deal with a matter relating to the Congo missions and I would like to ask you in these few lines to intervene with General Strauch and through him with His Majesty in view of obtaining a response which favours our rights.

You will recall that during my last stay in Brussels, His Majesty himself deigned to express to me the desire to see us remain in the Belgian Congo to serve the missions there. Now the Holy Ghost Fathers claim to have obtained from the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide, instead of us, the whole area of the Belgian Congo extending to beyond Kwarmouth where our three fathers Merlon, Schynse and Dupont are already at present; the last-mentioned being destined for the French Congo. I would like to know very explicitly whether His Majesty favours these allegations of the Spiritans who are using to support them, it must be said, extremely disloyal arguments [lit. "weapons"]. I would therefore be very happy if Colonel Strauch would formally declare to you that he is not in favour, as far as he is concerned, of these attempts of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers to dispossess us, so that I may be quite sure of his and the King's opinions and may use them if occasion arises against our competitors.

In my name ask my canon Loyer to help you in this matter with his usual intelligence and write to me as soon as you have an answer, addressing your letter to Father Burtin, procurator of the Missionaries of Algiers at Saint-Nicolas-des-Lorrains, 19 via Torre Sanguigna, Rome. Take care to use two envelopes, one outside bearing the name of the father with his particulars, and the other inside bearing my name alone.

I was very pleased with the good news you gave me about the house in Woluwe, but I am still waiting for my dog and my car.

