



1891: The Apostolic Prefecture of the Sahara and Sudan becomes the Apostolic Vicariate. Lavigerie is appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Sahara and Sudan.

Letter to the Work of the Propaganda of the Faith (6th March 1882)

Sirs,

The time is approaching when, in keeping with the custom of your Council, you will be discussing and voting on this term's allocations. Allow me to remind you, therefore, about the long letter I had the pleasure of writing to you concerning Tunisia on 12th November last, a letter which you kindly found worthy of some interest. The needs of this vicariate are so pressing and my responsibility, from the Catholic standpoint, is so heavy that it does not trouble me to appear indiscreet in recalling my requests.

Besides, since then, several of the activities which were only being planned have now become realities. Our cathedral has come on quickly and is almost finished. I am hoping to inaugurate it on 25th March on the feast of the Annunciation. I am afraid that, as always happens, it is going to cost me more than the original estimate.

The presbytery, which will be my episcopal residence as well as that of the cathedral clergy, is also progressing well. The roof is being built now. The old people's home, for which I gave funds at the outset, has been open since 15th January. Everyone admires the wonderful charity of the Little Sisters, especially the Muslims who are extremely generous to them.

On 1st March, in the port district, the Ladies of Sion opened the hostel for girls from the wealthy classes of Tunisia. The same week, the building of the Catholic college in Tunis began. This college was desperately needed given the efforts made by the Italians to start a free-thinkers' college here. On Passion Sunday, I shall bless the new Catholic cemetery which has been established outside the walls so as to replace the former one which has become too cramped due to the rapid increase in the European population.

On Palm Sunday, the city of Tunis which, up to now, had only one parish runs by the Italian Capuchins will have a second one to be run by French, Maltese and Italian secular priests. It will serve the spiritual needs of all the faithful. At the same time, two temporary chapels will be set up in the two su-

burbs which are furthest away so as to enable those inhabitants to meet their religious obligations.

During Easter week, both the major and the minor seminaries of Tunis will open. Over the past two months, I have sent my secretary, Abbé Thévin, to make appeals in those seminaries in France which have the greatest number of vocations. I have received more than sixty responses, from both the major and minor seminaries, nineteen of them coming from the diocese of Ajaccio alone. It is these latter vocations which will be the most useful to us at present, given the fact that they know both Italian and French, the two languages which our population requires.

The Sisters of Saint Joseph of the Apparition have told me of the arrival next month of sisters who will set up new schools in three of our parishes. Finally, I have just set up a commission made up of five members, three French, a Maltese and an Italian, to study ways of reorganising and developing our Catholic hospital. It has only thirty beds and in no way meets the needs any more of a population as big as that of Tunis, since it caters for Europeans as well as local citizens. It is sad to report and something one does not see anywhere else, but in this hospital two patients have had to be placed in the same bed, so that they are not left abandoned to die in the street.

To provide for all these needs and for many more not mentioned here, the only resources I have are those of charitable donors, yours in particular. Please do not deny me your help.

