



1879: Lavigerie writes to Father Deniaud, in Tabora. He complains that his diary is desperately dry. He reminds the missionaries that they are not explorers, but apostles.

Letter to Father Toussaint Deniaud and the missionaries of Tanganyika (22nd November 1879)

My dear Son,

I cannot tell you what dreadful worry such a long period of silence has caused me. I have received not a single word from you since 2nd December last year. In fact, I was informed a number of times from Zanzibar and even from Lake Victoria-Nyanza that you had safely arrived in Ujiji. But this news, while calming my fears about your fate and that of your confreres, in another way only served to increase my worries. Since news about you came from the coast, which came from the caravans from Tanganyika: why did you not benefit from them by writing? Why have you not sent the next part of your diary which finished on August 23rd? It was published by Les Missions Catholiques who had to end it abruptly. I had placed you under a solemn obligation to keep this diary and send it to me. Why have you failed to do this?

When you receive this letter, your new confreres will no doubt have been with you for some time already; they will have told you the sorrow this absence of news has caused us. In this same post, I am writing to Father Ganachau in Tabora to advise him to set up a regular service of porters between his mission station and yours. This will enable you more easily to correspond with us regularly and, I beg of you, to send us the diary which I have given you the responsibility of keeping. Only by reading this can we judge your true situation and give you some useful advice.

Let me say, my dear Son, that I did not find expressed in what you have sent us from Tabora those feelings which one expects to find in the heart and in the pen of an apostle. It was despairingly cold; and with regard to those poor Africans, it showed feelings of repulsion and contempt which are unthinkable in a missionary who has left everything to go and haul them out of their sorry state of barbarism and ignorance. You knew full well when you left

that you were going to poor savages. You also knew that you would not be short of difficulties and dangers. That you should speak of it when some extraordinary circumstance comes about, I quite understand. But that your diary should contain every day irritated lamentations; that you never, or hardly ever, raise up your thoughts to God; that St Paul's *supera-bundo gaudio in omni tribulatio nostra* is not once to be found in your heart or in your pen, that is what saddens me immensely.

My dear Sons, you are not explorers; you are not common travellers, and yet you seem to be copying, in all your behaviour and your feelings, what the Stanleys of this world or the envoys of the Belgian Geographical Society are doing. You are apostles, nothing but apostles; or at least anything more must come simply as an extra. I beseech you, bring back to life in you those great thoughts of the apostolate; awaken with vigour the spirit of faith and devotion which seems to have fallen asleep in your hearts.

For this, I advise the greatest faithfulness to your devotional exercises, especially your prayer. Superiors would be found seriously guilty if, through their negligence, they omitted any one of the exercises ordered by your Rule: prayer, particular examen, spiritual reading and visits to the Blessed Sacrament. For I think that your first concern was to have a small chapel built in which to keep Our Lord. He alone can be your strength and your light for the fulfilment of your great work.

