



1879: Letter to Lavigerie announcing the death 3 days apart of Fathers Facy and Ruellan, members of the second caravan.

1892: Lavigerie dies at 1 a.m.

The Spiritual Testament of Cardinal Lavigerie

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. This is my spiritual testament. I begin it by declaring, in the presence of the eternity, which is opening up ahead of me, that I wish to die in the spirit with which I have always lived, namely in obedience and unlimited devotion to the Holy and Apostolic See and to our Holy Father the Pope, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth.

I have always believed, and I do believe all that they teach and in the way they teach it. I have always believed, and I do believe that apart from the Pope or against the Pope there can only be in the Church trouble, confusion, error and eternal loss. He alone has been established as the foundation of Unity, and consequently of life, for all that pertains to eternal salvation.

I have the high honour of belonging more closely to the Holy and Apostolic See through the fact of being a priest and a bishop, and through my title as Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. Without doubt these honours, far above my wretchedness and weakness, have been bestowed on me for my confusion especially at this moment when I am contemplating presenting myself before the tribunal of God. Yet I see in them a cause for even greater gratitude and fidelity toward the See of Peter and towards our Holy Father the Pope who has showered on me the marks of his trust and his goodness.

I have served to the best of my ability, as long as I have been able. Not being capable any longer now, I ask Our Lord to accept the sacrifice that I make to him of my life, and of the suffering that will accompany my death, for the lengthening of the precious days of the life of Leo XIII and for the triumph of his noble designs.

I join my devotion to the Holy See with that which I have always felt for Christian France and for the Missions of Africa at the head of which I have been placed. The peace, the glory, and even the life of France are closely bound up with its Catholic faith and consequently with its fidelity towards the Holy See. It is above all with reference to it [i.e. to France] that it has been possible to say on each page of its history *Sacerdotium et regnum cum inter se consentiunt, bene regitur mundus. Cum autem non concordant, non tantum parvae res non crescunt, sed etiam magnae miserabiliter dilabuntur.*

I have done everything I could, with the strength and the intelligence given me, to maintain this so desirable concord. I can say in all truth that this is bringing about my death, for the sickness that is leading me to the tomb is the consequence of the superhuman fatigue that I imposed upon myself last Summer, in Rome and in Paris, in order to prevent the evident breach which everything seemed to be making inevitable. There, in a way, I was working more for my poor dear country than for the Church. For the Church has the assurance of immortality, whereas France has no other promises than those made by Providence to the nations of the world, having against it, alas, this divine threat: *Omnis civitas contra se divisa non stabit.*

Oh, if only I could still speak to it from the depth of my tomb! If only, with that detachment from everything that is characteristic of the life to come, I could put before it one last time, as I have done so often before those who govern it, that which can give it peace! I see it with bitter sadness decline from the degree of power and honour in the world where it had been placed through the faith and virtues of our fathers, the wise and persevering policy of our kings.

I am not speaking about its internal system of government. I have never become involved in the action and above all in the passion of political parties. My life, since becoming an adult, has been spent almost entirely outside [this domain]. It is from this perspective that I have been able to gauge its decadence and that I have seen, as it abandoned its faith and its national traditions, how its voice was less listened to and less respected.

Is France coming to an end? Is God going to withdraw from it the mission He had entrusted to it, to defend and to protect with generosity the cause of justice and truth in the world? My supreme prayer is that it should be spared this misfortune, but what is the prayer of a man in the face of divine justice?

It is to you that I come now, O my dear Africa! I sacrificed everything seventeen years ago when, urged by an interior force which came visibly from God, I left all things to give myself to your service. Since then, how many troubles, how much fatigue, how many sorrows! I recall them only in order to forgive them, and to express once more my unutterable hope to see the portion of this great Continent that of yore had known Christianity return fully to the light, and that which remained plunged in barbarity come out of its darkness and death.

It is to this work that I have consecrated my life. But what is the single life of a man in relation to such an enterprise? I have hardly been able to sketch out the task. I have been only a voice in the desert calling those who are to prepare the way of the Gospel. I die therefore without having done anything other than suffer for you and, through my sufferings, prepare for you apostles!”

When Cardinal Lavigerie wrote his last testament on 8 June 1890, he added:

I have recorded in my spiritual testament my feelings and thoughts regarding my duties and the judgment that awaits me before God. I am content to repeat here that I die full of regret for my faults and full of confidence in divine mercy and in the maternal protection of Mary whom I have always loved dearly. I also recommend myself to the prayers of all, and particularly to those of my spiritual sons, my priests, my missionaries, my daughters the Sisters of our various congregations, especially the one I founded.

