

Letter to Father Bouchand at Laghouat (27th November 1872)

My dear Son,

You will notice by the date of this letter that I am with Father Deguerry and Father Paulmier. It is from there I write to you, although a little late. I was unable to do so in Algiers because I have been too busy. I am happy, dear Son, with your healthy attitude and zeal. You must add three indispensable qualities for mission: regularity, perseverance and prudence. All three of you are still quite young and if you allow your imagination to run riot, even in good pursuits, you will suffer, as much in yourselves as for the work. Be therefore only what you should be at this moment; i.e., a good priest and schoolteacher. On the one hand, pray and give good example, on the other, apply yourself as best you can to make your pupils progress. The rest will follow in God's good time.

I note with pleasure that you are rather put out by the presbytery at Laghouat. It would be deplorable if you were more at ease on mission than we would have been if you had not become missionaries. My dear Son, may God let you taste the joy there is in following him in his poverty and charity for souls and that it will always be beneficial for you. If you want to know how your confrères are doing among the Attafs from where I am writing, I would say in two words that Fathers and Brothers are doing very well. The Fathers have begun classes for only two pupils. They distribute lots of medication, go to visit the sick and are well regarded by the Arabs. The village is being finished only slowly because the contractor is ill. We will not be able to inaugurate the buildings until the end of January.

Letter to Father Charmetant, Superior at Laghouat (27th November 1872)

My dear Son,

Not knowing about your presence at Laghouat or your journey to the Mزاب prevented me from replying sooner to your letters. The one I received from Father Paulmier, giving me the certitude of your departure and your expected return, gives me hope that these lines will find you at your residence.

My dear Son, I regret all the useless commotion made about your journey. Your multiple telegrams, your approach to the Commandant Superior, all this was enough to bring about a major storm. It was nipped in the bud, but do not do this again. Never send me telegrams about the Mission. All your telegrams are read at Laghouat by the Commandant, at Médéa by the General, at Algiers by the General, Head of Arab Affairs, and by the Governor.

It is a miracle that all these people agreed. Our Lady of Africa performed the miracle this time; but don't count on it anymore! You are young, my dear child, and I am not surprised by this lack of experience, but at least you have learned the lesson. I hope you finished your journey safely. I wish to receive the detailed account of it, and I ask you to write it immediately. If suitable, we will place some extracts in our Bulletin de Sainte-Monique.

As for your plan of purchases and Arab college at Laghouat, you will have to give it up completely. Content yourself in your little presbytery. It is not our aim to buy splendid buildings; we have too many of them. Moreover, for a boarding school such as you are proposing, we need staff and expenses we cannot meet. Just do your classes as best you can. If some child appears who can be sent to us at Saint-Eugène, accept him from his parents and nothing more.

Finally, dear child, consider Laghouat as only a first stage. The African interior is our objective. It is there we have to reach out to with all our might. I am confident that Our Lord will enable the means for you to enter into this Promised Land of our apostolate.

