



Annual report to the Cardinal of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide (1st December 1869)

Purchase of land and creation of farming establishments in Algeria, for the Mission. All the reasons I illustrated in the foregoing paragraph persuaded me, as I said, to open orphanages in Algeria on behalf of my Delegation of the Sahara for orphanages in Algeria. These orphanages are farming establishments where the children I have just mentioned will be brought up. For this, Algeria provided me with all the required conditions. The climate is healthy, the lands are fertile and abundant and although its desire is perhaps not lacking, its Government no longer dares to openly oppose my plans. At a stroke, I was therefore able to ensure the territorial establishment of the mission.

For this, I bought, admittedly for a very high price of one hundred and fifty thousand francs, nine different extensive properties, together comprising close to three thousand hectares of excellent land. On this, when everything is cultivated, our missionaries, our orphans, the mission itself will have abundant resources. This is where the children sent by the missionaries will be taken in and brought up by the communities I'll speak of in the next paragraph.

Foundation for the mission of two farming and medicalised communities. To direct the children's work, farm the land properly and even help in the settling in of the missionaries in these foreign lands, where they have to find everything for themselves by working on the spot, we need other evangelising workers whose nature and activities would be apt for this ministry. I felt I had to instigate and foster the creation of two communities, one of Brothers, the other of Sisters. They would be exclusively intended to help the missionaries in the directing of the separate farming institutions. The orphans, boys and girls taken in, would practice works of mercy towards the poor and the sick, separated by gender, and finally would cultivate the fields.

These two communities already exist. The female one has 27 Sisters and the one of the Brothers has taken in fifteen postulants. Faced with such results, we needed to think about providing some temporary rules for these communities. This is what I did while

waiting for them to become strong enough so that I could submit these rules for approval and correction to the Sacred Congregation and the Holy See. The faithful have given them the name of the Brothers and Sisters of the Foreign Missions under the patronage of the Venerable Arab martyr Geronymo.

I enclose a printed copy of their rules in this report. I cannot define them better than by stating that they are intended to achieve for our mission, as far their humble strength will allow, what, in the Middle Ages, the Benedictine Order achieved agriculturally and apostolically in barbarian and pagan Europe, which it opened up and converted. The novitiate of the Brothers is directed by the Jesuit Fathers while that of the Sisters is run by the Sisters of Saint Charles de Nancy.

Foundation in France and preparation in Belgium of Postulancies for the two communities of the Brothers and Sisters of our mission. The two communities I have just mentioned although founded in Africa and with their novitiates and headquarters there, would not be able to find enough new members. There are too few good Christians in this country. Divine Providence has kindly come to our aid by opening up for us the means to create Postulancies in France and Belgium. I made known the beginnings of these two little societies and the aim they set themselves to the Works of the Propagation of the Faith.

Soon afterwards, I received many applications from France. I did not feel obliged to take them all on, because of the problems of travel and distances; I asked them to wait. Meanwhile, Bishop Deleusy of Viviers, kindly agreed to the establishing of two Postulancies in his diocese, one for the Brothers and the other for the Sisters. I took advantage of his kind authorisation and rented two properties in the little town of Vans. Both Postulancies are currently in operation.

