



1875: First oaths of the Brothers at Maison-Carrée (Fr. Jean). The first Chapter of the Society had decided that the vows pronounced by the Brothers should be replaced by the oath.

**Letter to Father Charbonnier, Superior general
(17th January 1883)**

Dear Father,

We really do not understand what is making you bitter and upsetting you in this way, making you see the situation of our work in so distorted a manner and in such a dim light. You speak of our trials, our discouragements, etc. We do not see things here in the same light as you do. Except for the matter of Father Leroy, which you knew about before I left and were wrong in not informing me about, because I should have dealt with that on the spot in a different way, the trials we have had to undergo do not seem to be anything out of the ordinary. In Tunis, at Saint-Louis, in Malta, in Jerusalem, in Equatorial Africa, in fact in all the houses we know, everything seems to be running more smoothly than usual. It is really only in Algiers where people are getting worked up and especially at the Mother-House, just the opposite of how it should be. It is very unfortunate that Father Roger should have stayed there so long without a job. Those same phrases he served up to me a year ago are those you use in your letter: «deep mistrust on the part of the superiors, any good will stifled, desertions in prospect». They are the same expressions with which he wore out Father Deguerry when he visited Jerusalem.

Dear Father, or rather Dear Fathers, since you have surprised us, each one of you as much as the next, by the last minutes you sent and by your letter, you are on a really deplorable slope; you no longer see things as they are in reality; you are letting yourselves slip into forming impressions which are based neither on faith nor on reason. Let us look at your last deliberations in order.

1) My wish to reconstitute your Council temporarily was only in response to the complaints that Father Bridoux and you had made to me in your letters of December concerning your isolation and your difficulties. Since you feel the status quo should be maintained, I have no objection to that and consequently I shall not consult community superiors, as I would have done if that had suited you. I shall appoint no-one and everything will remain as it is. 2) As for the

changes you have been speaking of since September as having been implemented in all houses, I really do not know what you mean. All changes of any importance, meaning changes of superiors, were voted on in September. Only one has come about since then, that of Father Leroy. But it was most definitely against our will here that he left Maison-Carrée; it was only in answer to your repeated requests that we agreed to let him go, so as to spare you the trouble he was causing you. Of course, Father Leroy's departure led to a change for Father Gerboin.

3) In an amazing contradiction, while complaining of too many changes, changes which, apart from those I have just mentioned, do not in fact exist, you are asking me to change the director of the scholasticate and the seminary in Tunis in the middle of the first year! This is what no-one could understand and we have unanimously refused this. Furthermore, you propose that Father Coulbois or other novices should be brought here before they have finished their time at the noviciate, as laid down by our most recent decisions. That is another really inexplicable and impossible change, unless you want us to be thought of as no longer knowing what we are doing. Father Dausbourg is asking for Father Coulbois and I told him officially a few days ago that I will not give this project my blessing, even if you would approve. Another no less important change you propose I make in that same Council is the transfer of part of the minor seminary in Tunis. If the presence of Tunisians has caused some disturbance, it means that the rules laid down by me have not been kept, namely, to expel any child who gives cause for complaint. This is all that can be done at present. Please delegate Father Bridoux to look at the marks of these children in my place and to expel without mercy all those who have been put forward for Tunis who might harm the community. The Tunisians must value the others in every respect, otherwise they must be sent away. As for setting up the minor seminary of Tunisia, this is impossible from every point of view at present. We have neither the premises nor suitable candidates.

