



1868: The orphans of Bouzareah are transferred to Ben-Aknoun, under the protection of the Sisters of Christian Doctrine of Nancy.

1889: Foundation of Our Lady of the Exiles in Nyegesi (Tanzania). The station was suppressed in March 1891.

Letter to Father Charbonnier on the question of the baptism of Muslim children (5th January 1884)

Dear Father,

I am sending you by post along with this letter the text of the rule of the Sisters which I have corrected. Have it printed, after having checked that the corrections I have made have been put right and there has been nothing added or removed. You will see that I have taken into account almost all the wishes that were expressed to me; I have even amended the text of page 14 concerning the religious instruction of non-Christian children.

In this regard, I must nevertheless make two observations. The first is that the text of the rule in no way forbids giving children a notion and even some knowledge of what the Catholic faith is. Special reasons for caution at this time compel us to desist from many things in Algeria for fear of seeing all our activities wiped out in one fell swoop; outside of Algeria, however, the same reasons do not pertain and that is why the text of the rule is broad enough to include all possible cases, even one in which the most total freedom exists.

But even in this case of total freedom, the Church expressly forbids, out of fear of perversion or apostasy, always very probable, the conversion to Christianity of non-Christian children so long as they remain under the control or authority of their non-Christian parents.

This is a rule which in no way contradicts the different statements of Benedict XIV and the other theologians as well as the decisions of the Roman congregations which you quote to me. These decisions and authoritative statements speak uncompromisingly of the right children have to freely embrace the truth as soon as they reach the age of reason, that is from the age of seven, if not earlier. Nothing is more true. However, from the point of view of Christian prudence, everyone is still obliged not to make Catholics children who are even older than seven who might be exposed later to perversion and apostasy. This will always happen when they have been converted to Christianity against the wishes of their parents and when they remain under the authority of those parents. This is what the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office decided in a statement which I quoted in a special letter I wrote on this topic to the clergy of Algiers. We have seen only too well in some of our children who have gone back to their family after baptism how wise this ruling imposed by the Holy See was.

