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A Letter of M. Le Vasseur

Frédéric Le Vasseur

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A LETTER OF FATHER LE VAVASSEUR *

We are happy to be able to publish the following letter (as far as we know, it has never been published before) from Father Le Vavas seur to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda. It was found in the Archives of the S.C. for the Evangelization of Peoples, and it is somewhat interesting in relation to the ends of the Congregation and the Mission in Mauritius.

* * *

A few years ago, in 1836, when I was about to receive tonsure and enter the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice in Paris as a young man far away from his homeland in the Island of Bourbon, I asked Your Eminence for permission to receive Holy Orders from the Archbishop of Paris. Soon I shall have the happiness of being ordained a priest. Then I ought naturally to return to the Island of Bourbon. But, according to advice I have received from wise and well-informed persons, it seems to be more in line with the will of God that I renounce the feelings which draw me back home and offer my services to Bishop Collier of Milève, Vicar Apostolic of the Island of Mauritius.

Here are the reasons which lead me in this direction, if Your Eminence is willing to authorize it. The first is that the Island of Mauritius is entirely without priests, whereas the Island of Bourbon has a considerable number of priests by reason of the efforts of Holy Ghost Seminary which has charge of staffing it.

The second reason is that several of my confreres, both in the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice and outside it, have been touched by the great misery and the almost total abandon-

* S. R. C. Missioni, vol. 20, fls. 45r-46v. Archivio di Prop. Fide.

ment of the Negro slaves in the Colonies and feel drawn to join with me in consecrating ourselves together to the instruction of those poor souls. As I was brought up in the midst of these slaves and have for a long time seen with my own eyes the magnitude of their suffering, I have always had in my heart a desire to help them and to bring to them the enlightenment and the consolations of the faith. In order to succeed in such an endeavor, however, my confreres and I wish to try to bind ourselves together under a rule and in a kind of life which will help to maintain our fervor in such a difficult ministry.

The slaves in the Island of Mauritius have been recently set free and, since Bishop Collier seems to be fully disposed to support our project, it seems to us that this is a good time to make a beginning on that island where the needs are so great rather than in Bourbon where the slaves have not yet been freed. In addition, the Prefect Apostolic of that Colony would not be well disposed to have there a small community of missionaries of the type we would like to form.

The third reason is that Bishop Collier inspires great confidence in me because of his virtue and his knowledge. Since he shows me greater affection and interest than the Prefect Apostolic of the Island of Bourbon, I hope to find in him a solid counselor and a father capable of easing the initial difficulties of the ministry.

These are, Your Eminence, the reasons which lead me to desire and to await from you with the greatest submission your permission to go and work in Bishop Collier's Vicariate. I shall be infinitely grateful if this can be granted.

I am, with deepest respect and greatest submission, Your Eminence's most humble and obedient servant,

Le Vavas seur,
Pierre, Louis, Frédéric,
Deacon.

Paris, Seminary of Saint-Sulpice,
February 15, 1841