Chapter 5

The Generalates of Dominique Salhorgne and Jean-Baptiste Nozo
The Threat of Suppression

In February 1829, the general council was addressing the issues raised by the papal postponement of the general assembly. The minutes of the 15 February meeting also reveal that another crisis was emerging. This situation was potentially even more serious for the community's future than the continuing struggle with Baccari. Étienne recorded the news that "The Chamber of Deputies has received a petition proposing the suppression of the Congregation of the Lazarists... claiming that they exist illegally in France." He also noted, "This petition is preoccupying the political parties. All indications are that it will lead to a spirited and serious debate." Dominique Salhorgne asked the council if, given the political circumstances, they should consider further postponing the assembly. The council members said that despite the risks, it should meet as scheduled.

In his account Étienne again mixed fact, fiction, careless, and premeditated error. He stated, for example, that Salhorgne's election took place on 20 April 1829. In actuality, the general assembly did not begin until 15 May. Salhorgne's election took place on 18 May. According to Étienne's chronology, after Salhorgne's election "the struggle between political opinions did not wait long before raising new inquietudes... Some months later the opposition liberal party attacked the Congregation's legal existence in the Chamber of Deputies." However, the struggle to which Étienne was referring actually took place in early March. This was more than two months before Salhorgne's election. In addition, Étienne passed over his own key role in the political maneuvering responding to this threat. Instead, he gave all the credit for the successful outcome to his mentor Salhorgne.

In 1828, in the Bourbon Restoration's declining years, the anticlerical liberals in the Chamber of Deputies had been strong enough to...
force the Jesuits’ dissolution upon a reluctant Charles X. In early 1829 François Isambert, a Parisian lawyer, submitted a petition to the Chamber. He “alerted the government to the existence...of various religious congregations devoted to preaching parish missions.” Isambert highlighted the “deleterious effects of these missions in the kingdom's principal cities, denounced their existence as illegal, and demanded the execution of the dissolution laws in their regard.” The Chamber’s commission on petitions recognized the charges’ merit and recommended forwarding them to the justice minister for action. If the Chamber of Deputies agreed to accept this recommendation, the government “would have found itself constrained to sacrifice these besieged congregations and order their legal proscription.”

According to Étienne, this attack on the Congregation was the result of “the public agitation provoked by a congregation called the Missionaries of France.” This Congregation's founder was Jean-Baptiste Rauzan. A royal ordinance had granted the community legal recognition in 1816. Étienne offers this assessment of the community: “Its members were respectable men of incontestable zeal and talent. Unfortunately, they mixed politics and religion in their hymns and in their public preaching. This led the liberal party to consider them as propaganda instruments employed by the government to support its interests.” According to Étienne, the liberal party planned to stop this partisan preaching by challenging the missionaries' legal existence. However, the liberals also mistakenly believed that the Lazarists "shared the same spirit, and should share the same fate.”

Rosset gives the following description of the lobbying undertaken by the twenty-eight-year-old Étienne: “Attentive to the danger that menaced the Company, M. Étienne worked zealously to prevent it. He made many visits to the rightist deputies who would naturally oppose

---

2 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 45.
3 Ibid.
4 See François Isambert, Observations sur les Missions de l’Intérieur et les congrégations illégales de religieux et religieuses. Extraites de deux petitions soumises à la Chambre des Députés dans sa session de 1829 (Paris: Ladrange, 1829).
5 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 46.
6 Étienne, Notice, 27.
8 Étienne, Notice, 27.
9 Ibid.
such a proposal. He excited their zeal and did not fail to leave them, in writing, the arguments that he judged would be most effective in defeating M. Isambert’s petition.”

The two principal points that Étienne worked to establish in his lobbying efforts were, the Congregation’s utility to France and the legality of its existence. To illustrate this point he highlighted the services rendered to the state by the Lazarists. Secondly, he noted the impossibility of preserving the Daughters of Charity if they lost their “natural guides.” Étienne also provided a summary of the jurisprudence recognizing the Congregation’s legal existence from Saint Vincent’s time.

Rosset noted that Étienne “was not content with furnishing solid arguments to the orators of the right. He also attempted to establish support for the Congregation among those of the opposition party who had resolved to destroy it.” One influential opposition deputy was Alexandre-Louis-Joseph, comte de Laborde. Laborde was a distinguished orientalist. During an earlier trip to the Middle East, he had become acquainted with the work of the Congregation. After this trip, he wrote an account “in which he greatly praised them [the Lazarists], spoke at great length about the good that they were doing in these countries, and of the influence they were thus obtaining for France.” Étienne gives this account of his meeting with Laborde.

I reminded him of his previous praise of our Congregation, and asked if he would be willing to repeat this again in the Chamber of Deputies. He welcomed me in the most gracious manner, and put himself entirely at my disposition to defend our cause. He fulfilled his promise, and his opinion eventually was shared by all the members of his party. At the session at which the Chamber

---

14 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 46-47.
15 The opening paragraph of the Note relative à la pétition de Monsieur Isambert, acknowledges that “It would be difficult, just by examining the memorandum of Monsieur Isambert, for a right-thinking person not to agree with his conclusions. However, one can discern a prejudice in his reasoning that reveals he has an ardent personal desire for the Congregation’s suppression rather than this being a logical consequence of the legal principles he is trying to establish. Thus, it is necessary to expose to everyone the true nature of his attacks. The simplest explanations will suffice to reveal the malignity of his intentions. See Isambert, ACMP.
16 Ibid.
discussed this question, he managed to arrange that our Congrega-
tion would be considered separately from the Missionaries of
France. Thus, the vote that would have gone against us, was
unanimously in our favor.19

Laborde's influence on the leftist deputies must have been pri-
ivate, since he did not speak in the Chamber during the debates.
Conservative deputies who spoke closely followed the text of Étienne's
utilitarian and legal justifications.20 The liberal deputies recognized
the strength of the Lazarists' defense. They made a motion to separate
the vote on Rauzan's community from the Lazarists and the two other
communities under challenge. Rauzan's missionaries were their real
targets. Rightist deputies opposed this division since they wanted to
preserve the Missionaries of France. The Chamber voted in favor of
this separation and then successfully demanded the suppression of
the offending congregation.21

Relics, Apparitions, and the Fall of the Bourbons

A year after the Chamber of Deputies' debate, and almost a year
after Salhorgne's election, there occurred an event that Étienne de-
scribed as "a great consolation for the entire Company, because it
marked the opening of the beautiful apostolic career that it was des-
tined to travel."22 This seminal event was the translation of Saint
Vincent's relics to the new mother house chapel.

In his Notice, Étienne asked this rhetorical question: "Is it not aston-
ing that since the sack of Saint-Lazare in 1792...[these relics] remained
hidden in the shadows without being displayed for public veneration?23
This took place although public worship was possible in France after
1801...and while the Daughters of Charity enjoyed a high place in
public opinion."24 Étienne described how this delay was "inexpli-
cable" unless seen "in the light of providence's mysterious designs
that events later revealed."25

19 Étienne, Notice, 28.
20 "Chambre des Députés, Présidence de M. Royer-Collard. - Séance du samedi 7 mars 1829,
Discussion sur l'existence légale des Lazaristes," Actes du Gouvernement, 190-216. See also the article
21 Chambre des Députés, 212.
22 Étienne, Notice, 28.
23 Here is another Étienne inaccuracy. The sack of Saint Lazare took place in 1789, and not 1792.
24 Étienne, Notice, 28.
25 Ibid., 29.
Étienne served as a witness at the canonical authentication of the relics that preceded their translation. When officials opened the reliquary, they found previous authentications. Everyone present examined these papers as the officials inventoried them. Among these documents was a letter dated 18 July 1806 in which François Brunet had entrusted the relics to the Daughters of Charity. He stipulated that the sisters were to return the relics at the request of the superior or vicar general. He also imposed the condition that "the said relics are never to go on public display." As a witness, Étienne would have known the reason that the community had not displayed the relics.

According to Étienne, the moment providence chose for the translation came "as France prepared an army to attack Islam in Africa (Algeria] by conquering the Barbary coast. This was the area that for many centuries had been the source of the piracy that had been such a great trial to Christianity." Archbishop Quelen, "who had a great devotion to Saint Vincent," came to the conclusion that this was the moment for the long delayed translation of the relics. This timing made sense since "Saint Vincent himself had been a slave in Algeria." After his escape, "The saint had undertaken marvels of charity toward those unfortunate Christian slaves who suffered the same fate that he had suffered." It was the archbishop's intention, according to Étienne, that the translation would establish Saint Vincent as the patron of the French army. Then, through his intercession, God would grant France a "glorious victory." Less than three months after the April translation, an invading French army "triumphantly occupied the city of Algiers and planted the cross of Jesus Christ and the French flag." For Étienne, this was the proof that the "prelate's hopes were realized."

26 Mandement de Monseigneur l'Archeveque de Paris, qui ordonne que le Te Deum sera chanté dans toutes les Eglises de son Diocèse, en actions de graces de la Translation solennelle du Corps de saint Vincent de Paul, et qui publie les Proces-Verbaux dressés à l'occasion de cette Solennité (Paris: Adrien Le Clerc, 1830), ACMP.
27 Ibid.
28 This refers to the traditional story of Vincent's captivity as a slave in Tunis. This legend, which played an important role in traditional Vincentian hagiography, now is rejected by most scholars. For accounts of this apocryphal event see Abelly, Life, 1: 42-46 and Coste, Life and Works, 1: 26-43. The attacks on this myth began in 1929 with an article by Pierre Grandchamp entitled "La prétendue captivité de Saint Vincent de Paul à Tunis, (1605-1607)," extrait de La France en Tunisie au XVIIe siècle, 1651-1660, t. 6, reprinted in Cahiers de Tunisie (1965): 53-70. For a summary of the question and the arguments involved, see Stafford Poole, C.M., "The Formative Years of a Saint: Vincent de Paul, 1595-1617," Vincentian Heritage 13, no. 2 (1992): 90-103.
29 Étienne, Notice, 29.
30 Ibid. Rosset also asserts that this was the motivation of the archbishop of Paris. See Vie Étienne, 55.
31 Ibid. Rosset also asserts that this was the motivation of the archbishop of Paris. See Vie Étienne, 55.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Rosset mentions that Quélen’s faith gave him the courage to ignore the capital’s anticlerical climate, “the clamor of the press and the timidity of the government,” and go ahead with the ceremony. The archbishop conducted the translation with the greatest possible pomp. However, in his public Mandement the archbishop made no mention of the upcoming invasion of Algeria. He also did not invoke the saint’s protection over the French armies as claimed by Étienne. Quélen stated a very different justification for the translation than the glory and triumph of French arms. Instead, he said it would be for the glory of religion and the monarchy:

Yes, it is our hope, it is the fondest wish of our heart that by Saint Vincent’s patronage, protection, and intercession...God will receive greater glory and that people will more fully practice their faith. We hope that it will be the motivation and source for greater and more abundant alms, and that it will lead to the multiplication of good works. Because of it, may charity perpetually reign among us. May we soon see the divisions among us, the bitterness that irritates us and the passions that divide us disappear. May it affirm our beautiful homeland in a solid and durable peace under the shadow of a beneficent and revered scepter, that all true Frenchmen will be always jealous to preserve without change or alteration.

The ceremony took place on 25 April. Salhorgne gave the following brief description of this event:

I am happy to have the opportunity to give you an account of one of the most glorious events in the Company’s history! The public and solemn translation of the precious remains of our Holy Founder was done with a pomp that contrasted marvelously with the humble and modest character of this servant of God. Along the route an immense crowd filled the streets without obstructing them. Spectators filled the windows of all the houses along the route. What was most astonishing to those who saw this was that the procession took place without noise, without confusion, and with a respectful silence which the spectators only broke by singing hymns. The celebration...lasted for eight days, and even this length of time was not sufficient to accommodate the piety of the faithful who from sunrise to sunset visited our church to touch the reliquary with crosses, medals, images...One day, this pious crowd was honored by the king’s presence [Charles X] and the presence of the two princesses who are his daughters-in-law. This scene

---

34 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 57.
35 Ibid.
36 Quélen, Mandement, 7, ACMF.
Dominique Salhorgne, CM., superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, 1829-1835

M.° Salhorgne, Dominique
IX° Supérieur
Elu le 18 Mai 1829, Mort le 25 Mai 1836

Dominique Salhorgne, C.M., superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, 1829-1835
moved all to tears. Everyone blessed God for having conserved the precious gift of faith in the hearts of this great city's inhabitants.37

Étienne's Notice does not go into detail about the ceremony. However, he thought one detail warranted special mention; this was the presence of priests and seminarians representing the Lazarist foreign missions. Participating in the ceremonies "were an Armenian from Constantinople, a Greek from Smyrna, and four Chinese seminarians sent to Paris by the superior at Macao."38 According to Étienne, it was providential that these foreign Lazarists were in Paris. In being present, they witnessed the event that opened "the mysterious future reserved for the Company."39 This mysterious future was the establishment of a far-flung missionary enterprise.

According to Étienne's creation myth, the year 1830 would be a turning point in the Congregation's history. This is how Étienne described the state of the community before these April days:

In the fourteen years since the mother house had been opened, it remained completely sterile; vocations were both rare and of poor quality; attempts at foundations at Soissons, at Sarlat, at Montauban and other places had run aground. In addition, the education of the new generation of Missionaries was incomplete. Despite the virtue of the ancients, the spirit of our vocation underwent changes; certain points of the rule went unobserved; confreres abandoned many traditions and pious practices. One sensed that the community was a body awaiting a soul that would give it being, movement, and life.40

According to Étienne, it was only when the "body of our Holy Founder was placed in the midst of his family that the soul returned to the community's body." From the moment that the relics came home "a comforting and powerful influence spread throughout the mother house, and we felt our hearts fill with hope." From this moment, the new generations "possessed an ardent desire for the return to the Community's primitive spirit, a desire that continued to grow and attract increasing numbers of vocations."41

37Salhorgne, Circulaires, 2: 442-43.
38Étienne, Notice, 29.
39"Ibid.
40Ibid, 30.
41"Ibid.
According to Étienne, two thoughts dominated this new generation of missionaries. The first was “to establish the mother house exactly as it was under Saint Vincent.” The second was the conviction that the foreign missions represented the great apostolic work that was the Congregation’s future. However, given the internal difficulties that would plague the Congregation for at least the next thirteen years, Étienne’s mystical insistence on the 1830 date as the turning point for the community’s renewal rings decidedly hollow.

Étienne gives this description of the translation and the days that followed. “All of Paris was in movement. More than three hundred thousand people of all ages and ranks stood along the procession route. During the novena that followed, from four in the morning until nine in the evening, people filled our chapel to venerate Saint Vincent’s precious remains. This great gathering was something wonderful to see. On the surface it appeared to be only a magnificent and consoling religious experience, but in God’s designs a hidden reason was present.” God’s “hidden reason” according to Étienne, was to provide “society and religion with an efficacious preservative against the great evils that menaced it.” These great evils were the result of “a revolution that overthrew the throne and chased three generations of kings from French territory.” It was “the destiny of our two families to exploit this situation to their advantage.”

The 1830 revolution not only overthrew the Bourbons, but also unleashed a new wave of anticlericalism. Étienne gave the following description of the attacks: “These were not just directed at the monarchy, but the faith itself also was subjected to its rigors: churches were profaned, crosses thrown down; religious communities invaded, devastated, and their members dispersed, and priests pursued and mistreated when caught. The archbishop of Paris became the object of the populace’s furor. The situation obliged him to hide to save his life. We thought that the horrible days of 1793 were again upon us.”

At the mother house on the rue de Sèvres, the confreres removed Saint Vincent’s relics from their silver reliquary and spirited them out of the city. The community returned the reliquary to the artist who

---

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Adrien Dansette compares the anticlericalism and antireligious nature of the 1830 revolution with the French Revolution in this way: “if one compares the terrible excesses of the great revolution with the violence [of the 1830 revolution] the comparison is that of a cyclone to a squall” (Histoire Religieuse, 1: 286).
45 Étienne, Notice, 31.
created it. The funds collected by the archdiocese to pay for the piece were lost in the sacking of the archbishop’s residence. The superior general, students, novices, and all nonessential personnel left Paris for the provinces. Étienne remained behind. The new mayor of Paris was the comte de Laborde, the liberal deputy whom Étienne had previously recruited to defend the community. Étienne sought an immediate audience and received his assurances that “our Congregation had nothing to fear.” Both mother houses remained undisturbed during the July revolution and afterward.

During the worst of the July days Étienne and another missionary, Jean-Marie Aladel, dressed in lay clothes and mixed with the mobs in the streets. They wanted to know of any developments that might threaten the safety of the Lazarists and sisters remaining in the city. The two missionaries visited the houses of the Daughters of Charity. Étienne even discovered the archbishop’s hiding place. He met with him and provided a firsthand account of events. According to Étienne, these July days also witnessed spiritual events that were just as remarkable as the political events then taking place. In the Notice, he mentioned that the “three revolutionary days that produced such disasters” occurred during the octave of Saint Vincent’s feast. At this time, a retreat was taking place at the Daughters of Charity’s mother house.

---

*Early in 1831, the community’s procurator general to the Holy See, Giuseppe Ferrari wrote to Étienne telling him that as soon as Baccari heard that Salhorgne had fled Paris he had gone to work behind the scenes in Rome:

Monsieur, I would like to bring to your attention a matter which could have the most unfortunate consequences. The other day Monsieur Cuomo told me that when Monsieur Baccari heard the news of the superior general’s departure and of the difficulty in communicating with him, he approached the Holy See asking that he be named vicar general. Since the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Msgr. Conali, is very devoted to him, he expects to be successful. I find it necessary to warn you of this, Monsieur, so that in your prudence you make take some preventive action. In the meantime, I have taken the opportunity of warning Cardinal Odescalchi. My contacts have been personal and secret. No one knows that I have contacted you or that I have contacted the Cardinal. I think that I have been able to convince this good man to stop the creation of a new schism which would be greatly prejudicial to our Congregation’s unity.

Ferrari to Étienne, 26 January 1831, Administration Générale: Procure Générale près le St. Siège: 1832-1849, APGR.

*Étienne, Notice, 28.

*Once, when a crowd appeared outside of the mother house and threatened to tear down the exterior cross from atop the chapel, Étienne rebuked them and took the precaution of rushing to the local prefect of police. Rosset notes, “immediately the police stopped this odious plan and dispersed the rabble.” Vie Étienne, 63.

*Aladel (1800-1865) was a close friend and ally of Étienne. He later served as an assistant general and as director of the Daughters of Charity. For a biographical notice see Relations Abrégées, 3: 313-33.

*Rosset, Vie Étienne, 64.

*During this era, Saint Vincent’s feast was celebrated on 19 July rather than on its present date of 27 September.
house on the rue du Bac. Étienne noted that the retreat continued "calmly in the midst of cannon fire and the clamor of delirious people." As was customary during such retreats, the community exposed a reliquary of Saint Vincent for the sisters' veneration. Étienne gives the following account of the events that surrounded this retreat:

A young seminary sister was frightened to behold what appeared to be a somber and sad red heart as she contemplated the reliquary. An interior voice made her to understand the following words: This is the heart of Saint Vincent, who is profoundly afflicted by the great evils that are breaking out in France. Every time she entered the chapel, she saw the same vision and heard the same words spoken to her. This experience took place during the entire octave. It was only during the last three days that the color of the heart changed to a ruby red and the interior voice gave a new message: The heart of Saint Vincent has been consoled, because he has obtained from God, by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, the promise that our two families will not perish in the midst of these misfortunes and that God will use them to reanimate the faith. She was quick to reveal all this to her confessor.

The young sister's name was Catherine Laboure, and her confessor was Jean-Marie Aladel. Étienne said that at first, the sister's confessor paid little attention to these accounts. They "contrasted strongly with the situation in France, at a time when the nation was still celebrating the French victory in Algiers and when the government seemed secure." The octave of Saint Vincent's feast ended on 27 July "and on the next day the revolution broke out spreading terror throughout Paris." Étienne noted, "our two mother houses were untouched. Revolutionaries visited ours, but they caused no trouble or damage. The young seminary

---

52 Étienne, Notice, 31.
53 Since the Daughters of Charity are not religious they traditionally have referred to their year of initial training and introduction into the community as the time of the "seminary." A "seminary-sister" is a sister who is in this phase of initial formation.
54 Étienne, Notice, 31.
55 The visions of Saint Vincent's heart reported by Catherine Laboure were only one part of a series of visions extending over several months which included one of Christ the King and a series of Marian apparitions which culminated in the creation and distribution of the "miraculous medal." These latter apparitions in which the prayer "Mary conceived without sin, Pray for us who have recourse to you" appeared, played a prominent role in the devotional movement leading in 1854 to the Immaculate Conception's solemn definition. For more information on Catherine Laboure [canonized 1947] and her visions see René Laurentin, Vie de Catherine Laboure, Voyante de la rue du Bac et servante des pauvres, 1806-1876, Récit et Preuves (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1980). See also, Jean-Marie Aladel, C.M., Notice Historique sur l'origine et les effets de la Nouvelle Médaille frappée en l'honneur de l'Immaculée Conception de la Très-Sainte Vierge, et généralement connue sous le nom de Médaille Miraculeuse (Paris: Libraire d'Adrien Le Clerc, 1842).
sister had predicted all this to her confessor."

In two successive paragraphs in his Notice, Étienne first said that the visions took place simultaneously with the revolution’s outbreak. In the next paragraph, he says that the revolution began after the visions. Étienne’s versions of the chronology and content of these visions are erroneous. Both Étienne and Aladel mistook the “feast” that the young sister was talking about as the saint’s July feast day. In actuality, the “feast” she was referring to was the feast of the translation in April.9 Years later in 1856, Catherine testified that she had three successive visions of Saint Vincent’s heart. She said these took place in the period from 26 April to 1 May 1830:

> It appeared to me three different times on three successive days in the following order: with the color of flesh announcing peace, calm, innocence, and union. Then I saw it colored red. It was as red as the fire with which charity must illumine our hearts. It seemed to me that the entire community would experience a renewal and spread to the world’s limits. Then I saw the heart colored dark red. I felt this represented the heart’s sadness. This reminded me of the pains that I would have to overcome. I do not know how this sense of sadness was related to the change of government.60

With regard to the two messages that, according to Étienne, the young sister received interiorly, René Laurentin points out that “If we carefully read Catherine’s accounts these explicit messages did not come until later, during the apparition of Our Lady. These took place on Monsieur Vincent’s feast, the night of 18-19 July.”61 From the start, both Étienne and Aladel confused the two sets of apparitions. They constructed their own “synthetic stylization.”62 This confusion continued in subsequent semi-official accounts.63 Laurentin observes:

> One comes to the conclusion that Aladel and Étienne combined all the predictions concerning the July revolution contained in various ways in three different apparitions: first the vision of the heart of Monsieur Vincent [the only one mentioned by them but incorrectly cited as that of July]; that of Christ the King; and finally that of the Virgin on the feast of Saint Vincent [the night of 18-19 July]: an apparition about which Aladel and Étienne are silent. They did

---

9Ibid.
10Laurentin, Preuves, 171.
11Laurentin, Récit, 73-74.
12Ibid., 75.
14Ibid.
Louis-Philippe, King of the French (1830-1848)
Corbis Bettmann
this to show the protection afforded by God through the double intercession of Saint Vincent and the Virgin. Their account generally conforms to the messages Catherine testifies to having received from the Virgin Mary during the apparition of 18-19 July.64

The content of Mary’s message during the night of 18-19 July, as recounted by Catherine, is worth quoting at length.

The times are evil. Misfortunes will befall France. The throne will tumble. The entire world will be upset by misfortunes of all sorts. But, come to the foot of this altar. Here, I will spread graces over all persons who ask for them with confidence and fervor: both the great and the small...My child I particularly love to shower these graces on the community. I love it very much ...Yet I am pained. Great abuses against regularity exist. The rules are not observed. There is a great relaxation in the two communities...The rule must be observed, in all its rigor...Avoid the reading of inappropriate materials, the waste of time, and useless visits. When the rule is observed again in all its vigor, another community will want to unite with yours...Great misfortunes are about to take place. The danger will be great. Nevertheless, do not fear! God’s protection will always be with you in a particular way, and Saint Vincent will protect the community. I myself will be with you. I will always watch over you and grant you many graces. The moment is coming when the danger will be great. It will appear that all is lost. There, I will be with you! Have confidence. You know of my visit and the protection of God and that of Saint Vincent for the two communities. Have confidence! Do not be discouraged! Then I will be with you, but it will not be the same for other communities. There will be victims even among the clergy of Paris. The archbishop will die...My child, the cross will be scorned. It will be thrown down to the earth. Blood will run. The side of our Lord will be opened again. The streets will be filled with blood. The archbishop will be stripped of his vestments. My child, the entire world will be sad.65

Étienne commented that at the time of the revolution “all seemed lost for Religion and for us.”66 Yet all was not lost, and according to Étienne, this era marked the opening of the “beautiful apostolic career of our Company.” In 1870, he reflected:

64 Ibid., 146-47.
65 Laurentin, Récit, 84-87.
66 Étienne, Notice, 31.
Who today does not understand that because of the upheaval produced among all the peoples by this explosion of democracy he [God] would elevate the flag of charity in the midst of the revolutionary movement, as a sign to oppose its ravages? Just as God had an image of the serpent raised in the desert as a sign of salvation for those who saw it, he replaced in the midst of the great capital the body of Saint Vincent, as the symbol of the salutary influence that would heal the evils caused by democracy...and turn its principles into benefits for the peoples.

Étienne claimed that “during the fifteen years of the Restoration the voice of charity was silent in France and elsewhere.” Then, “when the storm of social upheaval was giving birth to a new world the name of Vincent so long forgotten, reappeared. This name appeared like the spirit of God over the waters from which creation sprang at the beginning of time.” As an example, Étienne recalled the foundation of the “beautiful institution” of Frederick Ozanam’s Saint Vincent de Paul Society. This movement “has spread from France throughout the world to relieve the poor in their own homes...The consolation of charity has given birth everywhere to works that heal the miseries of humanity and regenerate all peoples.” According to Étienne, it was the “general movement toward charity that explained the providential protection experienced by our Company during these grave events.”

A less mystical explanation of why the community remained unscathed was that it did not meddle in politics, and was committed to obey whatever government held power. In his 1830 circular Dominique Salhorgne noted,

Saint Vincent de Paul is our protector in heaven. His intercession for his children will be far from unsuccessful. This is if we, by the exact observance of the rules that he has left us, practice the virtues of which he has been our model. By this we will prove ourselves worthy to belong to him. He too lived in times of troubles and of civil dissensions. Because of his rare prudence, he forbade...

---

68 Étienne, Notice, 32.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Founded in Paris in 1835 by the layman Frederick Ozanam. See Massilien, seu Parisien. Beatificationis et Canonizationis servi Dei Friderici Ozenam, Patris Familias, Primarii Fundatoris Societatis Conferentiarum S. Vincentii a Paulo: Disquisitio de vite et auctositate servi Dei (Romae: Sacra Congregatio pro Caussis Sanctorum Officium Historicum, MCMLXX).
72 Étienne, Notice, 32.
73 Ibid.
all involvement in political questions. He wanted us to be faithful to God, submissive to the Church, and solicitous to pray for the good and salvation of all men and those who govern us. Until now that rule has guided our conduct, and we will not depart from this.\textsuperscript{74}

Étienne noted that the “little Company still had to pass through a crucible of rude tribulations to prepare itself for the grand mission reserved for it by providence.”\textsuperscript{75} Throughout the 1830s and into the 1840s, this crucible would not result from external factors such as revolutions and changes of government; it would, however, be a “furious internal tempest.”\textsuperscript{76} “Without a manifest intervention of heaven this tempest would have destroyed the community forever.”\textsuperscript{77}

The General Assembly of 1835

In his Notice, Étienne set the stage for his account of the internal troubles that were to beset the community in this era: “I have already spoken of Monsieur Salhorgne’s repugnance in accepting his election to the generalate. Afflicted with gout, and many other infirmities aggravated by his advanced age, he found his charge to be very heavy. Arriving at the age of seventy-six, he was surrounded by assistants who were weighed down by their years. They could not help in the

\textsuperscript{74}Salhorgne, Circulaires, 2: 444.

\textsuperscript{75}Étienne, Notice, 32.

\textsuperscript{76}Despite their fears about the Congregation’s fate, under the new regime of Louis-Philippe the community enjoyed relations with the Orleanist government that were closer than those that existed under the Bourbons. In November 1830, François Guizot, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Public Instruction and Cults, wrote to the new king recommending that because of the budget crisis the annual Lazarist subsidy be reduced from 15,000 to 10,000 francs. Yet, there was no doubt that the community would be favored by the new government. Guizot observed to the king:

The services of the Lazarists consist in acting as superiors and professors in many seminaries and other educational establishments. According to the statutes of their founder, Vincent de Paul, they also direct the Daughters of Charity, servants of the poor. Besides their religious contributions they can also be considered to be providing a public service because of political and commercial considerations. They serve the French establishments in the Levant, in northern Africa, and in China where they are chaplains to consulates, prisons, or schools. The superior general must be French and reside in France. This practice has always been observed. These pressing considerations have always led us to show the most encouragement possible to a congregation which has been judged to be of such utility, particularly by superiors in the Ministry of the Marine, our ambassadors to Constantinople, the consuls, and successive Ministers of Foreign Affairs. There can be no doubt that the government should continue to afford the society of the Lazarists its protection.

\textsuperscript{77}Étienne, Notice, 32.
Ml. Jean Marie A LADEL,
Prêtre assistant de la Congrégation de la Mission

Jean-Marie Aladel, C.M.
company's administration. He felt that he had satisfied the debt of his devotion to the community. He resolved to resign from the position that he had held for six years."

The community already had a sexennial assembly scheduled for 1835. Salhorgne made known his intention to resign as general and convoked a general assembly in place of the sexennial assembly.

In Étienne's opinion, Salhorgne's resignation could not have come at a worse time for the community: "As I have remarked, if no external threats to the Congregation's existence arose at this time, there was still much that was lacking as to the spirit that animated the community. Many confreres of the new generation were totally lacking the community's true spirit, because they had been admitted without sufficient screening and had received an insufficient formation. Many of these confreres took part in the general assembly, exercised a harmful influence over it, and were responsible for its unhappy outcome."

In his last circular letter as superior general Salhorgne spoke critically of the failings that he observed in the community.

Immortification is leading us rapidly to relaxation. Regularity is a difficult task...for those who love themselves and do not want to make any sacrifices. A desire for a liberty has motivated these men to be without restraint...This is to the prejudice of the order prescribed by the rules dictated by the Spirit of God...This opposition from some spirits is often the cause, and always an unfortunate symptom, of relaxation. If the contagious example of these unsubmissive spirits finds other imitators, regularity will necessarily be affected. Relaxation will claim its place unless the firm vigilance of superiors constructs a dike to hold back this devastating torrent...Messieurs and

78 The assistants general were, Pierre Le Go, age 68, Joseph-Mansuet Boullangier, age 77, and Jean-François Richenet, age 76. The position of the Italian assistant general remained unfilled during Salhorgne's administration.
79 Étienne, Notice, 33.
80 At the general council meeting held 1 June 1835, Étienne presented a financial accounting of the Congregation during Salhorgne's time as superior general. A fascinating footnote to this report was the Council's decision to authorize that two sets of books be kept:

Taking into consideration present circumstances the Council decided that it was appropriate to take measures to ensure that the community would always have a sufficient amount of cash in hand and the resources necessary to survive political changes and it authorized:
1. That there will be established two registers of receipts, one to record the ostensible receipts which could be handed over if required by the civil authorities and the other recording the particular receipts that it is necessary to regard as secret.
2. That there be established a fund of 40,000 francs to take care of the needs of the Congregation in the face of grave events.
3. This sum is to be hidden in a chest; one set of keys is to be entrusted to the superior general and one set to the procurator general.

General Council Minutes, meeting of 1 June 1835, 1: 66. ACGR.
81 Étienne, Notice, 33.
dear confreres, I say to you with all my heart: let us mutually encourage each other in our own conduct to follow the example of the first disciples of our Holy Founder. Let us renew in ourselves the spirit that animated them.82

Étienne claimed that the prevalent hope in the community was that the upcoming general assembly would resemble that held in 1642. At this assembly, Saint Vincent had offered his resignation as superior general. The offer edified all concerned, but the assembly wisely had refused to accept.83 As Étienne pointed out with evident scorn, "This assembly did not resemble the one presided over by Saint Vincent."84

The eighteenth general assembly convened at the mother house on 15 August.85 According to Étienne, "A certain number of missionaries formed a party bent upon changing the direction that had been set by Monsieur Salhorgne."86 These delegates believed that "our century required rules and maxims other than those received from our Holy Founder." Since these missionaries "had not been formed in the spirit of our state they were incapable of appreciating it." These priests felt that the Congregation's future lay in founding new establishments in France. They opposed the direction set by Salhorgne in sending so many French Lazarists to the foreign missions. These missionaries formed a "powerful party that sought to gather support before the assembly's opening." This strategy was successful.87

Gabriel Perboyre sheds some light on the conflicting currents of opinion within the community that collided at the 1835 assembly. According to him, one party wanted "to abandon the primitive works and spirit of the company."88 They advocated concentrating on establishing successful lay colleges in imitation of the Jesuits. This group preferred these colleges to the traditional works in seminaries, and the missions. The leading representative of this "party of progress," ac-

---

82Salhorgne, Circulaires, 2: 458-59.
84Étienne, Notice, 34.
85In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, the French superior at Macao, 22 May 1835, Étienne wrote, "On all sides we are preparing for our coming assembly which begins in three months. At this moment it is impossible to foresee what will be its results....We do know that the Congregation faces a moment of crisis. What we do not know is whether the crisis will be harmful or salutary for the Congregation. God alone knows." Congrégation de la Mission, correspondance du M. Salhorgne et M. Étienne, lettres importantes aux externes, 1836-1873, Dossier, B: Nov. 1834-May 1836, Letter 7b, ACMP.
86The eighteenth general assembly was composed of twenty-nine members. Because of political conditions in their countries the Polish and Portuguese provinces were not represented. Of the twenty-nine delegates, eighteen were French, nine were Italian, and two were Spanish. For the acts of this assembly see Acta XVIII Conventus Generalis Congregationis Missionis: 1835, 793-803, ACGR.
87Étienne, Notice, 34.
88Ibid.
89Perboyre, Note, 4, ACMP.
according to Perboyre, was Ferdinand Joseph Bailly. The other party, which strongly opposed this position, represented those who “wanted to recapture the primitive spirit and again take up the works of our ancestors.” Perboyre claims that this party represented the “bulk of the Missionaries,” and included men like Jean-Baptiste Nozo.89

At the general assembly’s opening session, Salhorgne asked the delegates to accept his resignation. He gave as his reasons “his advanced age, bodily debilities, defective memory, and the many other infirmities under which he labored.”90 After offering his resignation, Salhorgne left the assembly to give the delegates the freedom to discuss the issue. The only person who spoke was an assistant general, Jean-François Richenet. The account Étienne gives of Richenet’s speech is consistent with that recorded in the assembly’s minutes:

He testified to his personal veneration of the respectable superior general and his profound regret at his decision. He then argued that the general’s infirmities were not a sufficient justification for the assembly to accept his resignation. The reason for this was that these infirmities did not affect his moral faculties. Thus, in this regard he was as capable of governing the Congregation as he was at the time of his election. He acknowledged that if administration of the Congregation had become impossible for him it was because his assistants were not aiding him. The election of new assistants could remedy this situation. Consequently, to urge the adoption of this measure he resigned and urged the other council members to do the same. Unfortunately, the others did not imitate this act of courage and devotion to the Congregation.91

At the assembly’s second session, without further debate, the delegates accepted Salhorgne’s resignation by a vote of twenty to seven.92 In his Notice, Étienne attacked this action and the assembly’s legitimacy. He said that the decision “immediately produced consternation in our two families. It was considered a portent of a disastrous crisis that threatened to subvert the company. Events would very soon confirm this fear.”93

The only previous resignation of a superior general was that of Nicolas Pierron in 1703.94 In Étienne’s view, this resignation also “had been the

---

89Ibid., 5.
90Acta XVIII, 778, ACCR.
91Étienne, Notice, 33
92Acta XVIII, 796, ACCR.
93Étienne, Notice, 54.
94See Chapter 1. While there was a crisis following Pierron’s resignation and the election of François Watel, this was only part of the long-standing Italian-French antagonisms.
occasion of a crisis that had threatened the Congregation’s ruin.”95 He believed that the assembly’s acceptance of Salhorgne’s resignation was “a flagrant constitutional violation.”96 The constitutions foresaw the possibility of a superior general becoming incapable of governing because of “physical infirmities or the alteration of his moral faculties.”97 In these cases, “the superior general or a general assembly should name a vicar general to govern and conserve the Congregation until his [the general’s] death.”98

Étienn[e] was adamant in maintaining that the Congregation could not act contrary to the constitutions without “shaking the edifice to its foundations.”⁹⁹ The assembly had the opportunity, according to Étienn[e], of acting legitimately by electing a vicar general instead of accepting Salhorgne’s resignation.¹⁰⁰ He said that the assembly did not adopt this course of action because the party of progress “wanted to inaugurate a new administration that would have nothing in common with its predecessor.” He also acknowledged that even those who did not belong to this faction thought that Salhorgne could not survive long “and they did not want to have to pay the cost of another trip to Paris.”¹⁰¹

Étienn[e]’s view of the consequences of this irregular decision is clear: “To violate the constitutions has the consequence of depriving oneself of the blessings heaven attaches to them and of traveling down a path that can only lead to a dangerous precipice.”¹⁰² This first illicit decision led immediately to another. In Étienn[e]’s opinion this lapse was so serious as to “render radically null all the assembly’s proceed-

---

95 Étienn[e], Notice, 34. Perboyre admits to being baffled by Étienn[e]’s reasoning on this point. In Perboyre’s view, a superior general had the right to resign and a general assembly had the right to accept such an act since there was nothing specific in the Constitutions which prohibited this. Perboyre refers to the example of Saint Vincent who felt moved to offer his resignation in 1642, even though it was not accepted. At the time of Pierron’s resignation, no one claimed that such an act was contrary to the Constitutions. As Perboyre also noted, a cardinal, bishop, or even the pope can resign. Why could not a superior general resign? Perboyre agreed that the Constitutions provided for the case of the election of a vicar general instead of a resignation but said again “that which he [the general] is not forbidden, he possesses.” Perboyre, Note, 8-9, ACMP.
96 Ibid.
97 Étienn[e], Notice, 35. Constitutiones, II, §5, 13-14.
98 Ibid.
99 Étienn[e], Notice, 35.
100 In a letter to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, 5 January 1836, Étienn[e] commented, “Everyone here is doing well with the exception of Monsieur Salhorgne who has become more and more infirm. For the last month he has not been able to lie in bed. He is now confined day and night to a chair. He correctly understood that it was time to submit his resignation. If he had not done so, we could find ourselves today in a very difficult situation.” See Étienn[e] lettres, Dossier b, ACMP.
101 Étienn[e], Notice, 35.
102 Ibid.
Louis-Philippe entering Paris after the Revolution of 1830.
Corbis Bettmann
ings."\textsuperscript{103} The recent Spanish revolution had prevented the province from holding its provincial assembly to elect its two delegates.\textsuperscript{104} However, the visitor, Juan Roca, was able to come to Paris. Miguel Gros, a senior missionary accompanied him. The Spanish visitor requested that the assembly seat Gros as an unelected delegate to give the province additional representation.\textsuperscript{105} Roca told the assembly that, in his opinion, had the province been able to hold a provincial assembly that Gros "very probably" would have been elected as a delegate.\textsuperscript{106} The assembly voted to admit Gros as a "quasi-delegate" representing the province of Spain. Étienne complained about this decision because the new superior general would be elected by one vote.\textsuperscript{107}

Despite his rhetoric about the constitutions' unchangeableness Étienne does not mention another change that took place. According to the constitutions, the secretary and procurator generals were not eligible to vote in the election of a superior general. These officials entered the general assembly, with the right to vote, only after the general's election.\textsuperscript{108} This question vitally concerned Étienne at this assembly since he then was serving both as secretary and procurator general. The assembly, at its second session, considered a motion to amend the constitutions to allow the secretary and procurator generals to participate in the general's election. By a secret vote, the motion passed with fifteen out of a possible twenty-seven votes.\textsuperscript{109} Étienne took his seat and participated in the election.

Étienne's criticism of the general assembly included another point. According to the constitutions, after his election a superior general was secretly to name two men whom he judged to be worthy to serve as superior general after his death.\textsuperscript{110} He then was to seal these names in a

\textsuperscript{103}Ibid. It should also be noted that at the end of a general assembly it was the duty of the secretary to read aloud the acts and decrees. Each delegate was then required to sign these to testify to the assembly's legitimacy. At the end of the 1835 assembly Étienne, as a member and as assembly secretary, read and signed as required. If at that point he had any doubts as to the assembly's validity, or that of any of its decrees, he would have been morally bound to indicate these. In this case, he did not. See Acta XVIII, Sessio X, "Lecta et probata acia omnia quae in Precedentibus sessionibus gesta et decreta fuerunt. Tunc Convenlus conclusus est et solus. Hac ultima sessione et Congregati declaratione facta quod suppleat omnibus defectibus quae accidere potuisse in decursu hujus Conventus." 803, ACGR.

\textsuperscript{104}Visitors were delegates ex officio to a general assembly. See Constitutio, “Caput V: De Conventibus Provincialibus mittendi causa ad Conventum Generalem pro eligendo Superiore Generali,” 29-45.

\textsuperscript{105}Acta XVIII, 795, ACGR.

\textsuperscript{106}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107}Étienne, Notice, 35.

\textsuperscript{108}“Caput VIII. De iis quam post electionem Generalis fieri debent,” “Caput XII. De Conventu Generali cogendo ad tractanda negotia,” Constitutiones, 79, 117.

\textsuperscript{109}Acta XVIII, 794-95, ACGR. See also, Constitutiones, Declarationes a Conventibus Generalibus ad apertorem Constitutionum intelligentiam faciæ, et ex Conventus Generalis decimi precepto in unum collectae ac Constitutionibus subjectae, 29° Ex Conv. XVIII. Sess. 2. -1835, 154.

\textsuperscript{110}“Caput III. De Superioris Generalis Schedis nominationem Vicarii Generalis et Electionem Superioris Generalis in locum demortui, Spectantibus,” Constitutiones, 18-19.
locked box. At the assembly called to elect a new superior general this box was to be opened and the names announced. The assembly then proceeded to the election. The delegates were free to choose one of the men recommended by the late superior general or another qualified candidate.\footnote{Caput VI. De Agendis in Conventu Generali ante diem electionis Superioris Generalis,\textit{ Constitutiones,} 48-50.}

According to Étienne, the delegates asked that Salhorgne’s sealed recommendations be opened and read. The superior general replied that no such document existed.\footnote{The assembly minutes record that Salhorgne claimed to have burnt the paper containing the names that would have been announced in case of his death. \textit{Acta XVIII,} 797, ACGR.} When the assembly asked him which two candidates he would endorse, he declined to answer.\footnote{There is evidence, however, that Salhorgne held Bailly in high regard. The general had taken refuge at the seminary in Amiens during the 1830 revolution. In his annual circular letter issued from Amiens in 1832, Salhorgne had this to say about Bailly, “The superior of this vast establishment is Monsieur Ferdinand Bailly. It was he who before my election received many votes. Why did not the Holy Spirit inspire a few more votes? I would have been happy to have continued to live without this responsibility, and the Congregation would be better governed.” Salhorgne, \textit{Circulaires,} 2: 445.} Salhorgne’s position was that since he had resigned and had not died in office, this constitutional provision was not applicable. Étienne explained that Salhorgne was aware “the [opposition] party had already made its choice. He knew that the assembly’s majority would not have followed his advice. Since he was a man of consummate prudence, he preferred to keep completely silent on this subject.”\footnote{Étienne, \textit{Notice,} 36.}

Again, Étienne failed to mention a fact that would have weakened his mythic arguments. After accepting Salhorgne’s resignation as general, the assembly unanimously agreed to invite him to return to the assembly not only with the right of precedence but also with voting rights.\footnote{\textit{Acta XVIII,} 795, ACGR.} The constitutions had no provision for such actions. However, the assembly felt that since these actions were not specifically forbidden it was within its power to accord these rights and privileges to Salhorgne. The superior general’s reluctance to reveal his preferences for candidates is understandable, since he was also now an elector.

According to Gabriel Perboyre, the three candidates were Étienne, Ferdinand Bailly, and Jean-Baptiste Nozo. For some, Bailly and the progressive party seemed certain to win. Perboyre observed, however, that Bailly “conscious of his own insufficiency” did not want to be elected.\footnote{Perboyre, \textit{Note,} 6, ACMP.} He also said that in place of Bailly, the progressives would have been willing to go with Étienne. They perceived him as belonging to the \textit{coterie Bailly.}\footnote{Ibid} Perboyre believed that this identifica-
tion with the progressives cost Étienne the election. Étienne later told Perboyre that although Bailly was a close friend, he had never shared his views.118 This left only one candidate, Jean-Baptiste Nozo. According to both Perboyre and Étienne, Nozo enjoyed a “reputation for his personal holiness.”119

The election took place at the assembly’s sixth session on 20 August. Étienne dryly comments in his Notice that “The choice fell on Monsieur Jean-Baptiste Nozo who was then the visitor of the province of Champagne.”120 Étienne also pointed out that “because those who were in the minority had very little confidence in him, his [Nozo’s] margin of victory was only one vote. It is certain that if the assembly’s majority had known him better, he would never have obtained a victory.”121 Thirty-five years later the venom that characterized the relationship between Étienne and Nozo was still present. His opinion of his rival is devastating:

Many who voted for him allowed his exterior simplicity, piety, and modesty to influence them. He designed these to make this impression and attract support. Those of us who had entered the community with him knew that he secretly hid his ambition below an edifying exterior. He was supremely self-confident and believed in his superiority over others. These faults would have serious consequences after his election to the generalate. Among his many weaknesses was a false sense of judgment. This would lead him to undertake the most disastrous measures when he possessed supreme authority in the Congregation. It was not long after his election that this judgment about him came true.122

Étienne and Algeria

Within three months of Nozo’s election, Étienne was maneuvering to extricate himself from what was a very difficult position. He now had an unfriendly rival as superior general. As procurator general, Étienne was responsible for the Congregation’s foreign missions. He dealt directly with the French government and the Congregation of Propaganda Fide on missionary matters. With the establishment of Algeria as a French colony, the government recognized the “necessity

118 Perboyre accepted Étienne’s statement, since as general the direction he gave to the Congregation was opposed to that which had been advocated by the progressives. Ibid.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 36.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
of organizing the exercise of the Catholic cult.”123 This process would begin “by replacing army chaplains with a regular ecclesial establishment appropriate to the colonial population’s needs.”124 The French government’s and the Holy See’s initial plan was to establish the colony as missionary territory under the French Lazarists.125 Étienne represented the Congregation in the negotiations with the various ministries of the French government, and the Holy See.126 This plan also called for the superior general to nominate a missionary to serve as vicar apostolic, subject to governmental and papal approval. The general also could replace the vicar apostolic, under the same conditions. The government agreed to provide for all the mission’s expenses.127

In November 1835, Étienne wrote to the government informing it that the first missionaries were ready to depart for Algeria. He also made this request:

We are still awaiting, Monsieur, the letter from the Minister that will request our superior general to name the missionary designated to be the vicar apostolic of Algeria. You are aware that Rome must approve this nomination before the missionaries’ departure. If they are to arrive in Algiers before the first of January, there is no time to lose. For our part, we are ready. It appears all but decided that the community has chosen me to organize the African mission. I will gladly accept this post to give the government evidence of our good will and our desire to comply with its wishes.128

---

124 Ibid.
125 The Holy See’s chargé d’affaires and internuncio in France, Monsignor Antonio Garibaldi, persuaded everyone to agree in principle that the best solution would be that of entrusting the mission to the French Lazarists. As Garibaldi wrote to Cardinal Franzoni, the prefect of Propaganda Fide, “What is most important is to send ecclesiastics of quality to Algiers. Ecclesiastics who are willing and capable of doing good, and the Lazarists are these ecclesiastics.” Quoted in Jacques Paul Martin, La nonciature de Paris et les affaires ecclésiastiques de France sous le regne de Louis-Philippe (1830-1848) (Paris: Beauchesne, 1949), 244.
127 “22 juillet 1835-Le Ministère de la Guerre renvoie à celui des Affaires Étrangères le susdit projet d’organisation du culte catholique à Alger, avec les modifications suivantes,” AN.F19.6223.412. See also, “25 novembre 1835-Directeur des Finances, Alger à Gouverneur Général,” Ibid., 6223.465. In this letter, the director of finances for Algeria wrote that he had arranged for the purchase of a suitable residence “for the Lazarists who will be charged with the administration of worship.”
128 “Lettre de 11 November 1835-M. Étienne, procureur général des Lazaristes à M. Paravey, chef du bureau d’Alger au Ministère de la Guerre,” AN.F19.6233.454. On 14 December, Étienne wrote to a confrere, “Without a doubt you have heard that we are about to begin an enterprise which is of the greatest importance, the foundation of three houses of our Congregation in Africa. It appears that Divine Providence wishes that I, myself, be dedicated to this work. It is probable that I will leave next month with three confreres and two brothers in order to found the Mission at Algiers.” Ibid., 6233.479.
Almost a year later, however, Rome and the French government still were arguing over who would control Algerian ecclesiastical affairs. In July 1836, Étienne wrote to Jean-Baptiste Torrette, “God only knows when I will go to Algeria. This affair is a struggle between cabals, and is full of difficulties.” Early in 1837, Étienne would write again to Torrette, “The whole Algerian affair is an enigma far from a solution.”

According to Rosset, the difficulties among the three parties finally were ironed out and the Holy See named Étienne vicar apostolic. The king was about to confirm this appointment when another complicating factor arose. Rosset says that the French clergy in the new colony had protested against an arrangement that would only give them the “temporary and incomplete” ecclesial status of a foreign mission. They instead requested the creation of a see at Algiers under regular French ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The government agreed with this proposal and asked the Holy See to establish a see at Algiers. The king supposedly was ready to name Étienne the first bishop.

Rosset notes that “while Monsieur Étienne had welcomed the opportunity of being named the vicar apostolic of Algeria to escape the difficulties surrounding him, he did not hesitate for a moment to decline this new dignity.” To have accepted the Algerian see would have “condemned him to live outside the Congregation, and nothing would have persuaded him to make this sacrifice.” Étienne did not want to offend the king by declining his offer. However, the government “interpreted his reserved attitude as a refusal.” In August 1838, Louis-Philippe named Antoine Dupuch the first bishop of French Algiers. The Lazarist presence in Algeria did not come until 1842.

Rosset’s account of the Algerian episode is erroneous. Nozo and the general council had designated Étienne to serve as the vicar apostolic of Algiers. Rome said that it was willing to accept this nomination. Late

129 “Note pour le conseil des Ministres; 13 avril 1836 (rédactions des 7 et 9 avril),” AN.F19.6223.
130 Étienne to Torrette, 23 July 1836, Correspondance Étienne, dossier b, lib, ACMP.
131 Étienne to Torrette, 19 February 1837, ibid., 18c.
132 Rosset, Vie Étienne, 92-93.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Ibid., 93.
136 For more details see Gabriel Perbyore, C.M., Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission; À Tunis et à Algier, vol. 3 (Paris: À la maison principale de la Congrégation de la Mission, 1864), 706-61.
137 The minutes of the general council meeting of 9 November 1835 record the following decision, “After having prayed to God since the last meeting on this important question, and after having examined the list of the Company’s subjects who would be able to fill the post of vicar apostolic of Algiers, the council knowing that Monsieur Étienne, the procurator general, has volunteered to found this mission...agrees to his request and designates him to occupy the post of vicar apostolic.” General Council Minutes, 1: 76, ACGR.
in 1835, when the Lazarist missionaries and Étienne were ready to depart, the king received the final agreement for his approval. Louis-Philippe refused to sign, and the plan fell apart. The nuncio, Monsignor Garibaldi, wrote to Cardinal Fransoni in Rome to explain what had happened. Throughout the long course of these negotiations, neither the Ministers of War nor of Foreign Affairs had consulted the king. Louis-Philippe, who was “very agitated,” did not believe that the appointment of a vicar apostolic sufficiently protected his rights.138 He also did not think that “confiding the care of the entire Algerian colony to one congregation was prudent.”139

Contrary to Rosser’s account, the colonial clergy were not the ones who were interested in the establishment of a regular diocesan structure in Algiers. At this point, the only Catholic clergy in the colony were a handful of army chaplains.140 According to J. B. Martin, Louis-Philippe agreed with his Minister of Cults that establishing a diocese in Algiers was preferable to sending the Lazarists.

At first, Gregory XVI was unwilling to erect a see. A new see would fall under the 1801 Concordat, giving the king the right of episcopal nomination. The nuncio convinced Rome that the only other alternative was the continuation of the “anarchy in which the African Church presently finds itself.”141 The Holy See asked the government to name a cleric who was “young, active, and healthy.”142 Rome approved the choice of Antoine Dupuch. After considerable delay, the Chamber of Deputies voted the necessary funds to support the new colonial diocese.

No evidence exists to sustain Rosset’s claim that Étienne was the first choice of the king. In a letter of June 1838, Étienne responded to the rumors that were circulating in Rome. These intimated that he had been soliciting the appointment as bishop. Étienne wrote Giovanni Guarini, “I defy whoever made this accusation to cite one example of anything that I have done directly or indirectly, or to cite any words that I have spoken, which would lead anyone to suspect that I was seeking the episcopacy... Even if I were named as a bishop, whether to this or any other see, I would not accept.”143 Meanwhile, Étienne

138Martin, Nonciature, 252-53. Étienne in a letter to the procurator in Rome said that the collapse of the Algerian proposal “was the result of ill will neither from the Chamber of Deputies nor from the governmental ministers but from a higher authority.” Étienne to Giovanni Guarini, 13 June 1838, Corrispondenza: P. Étienne, Jean-Baptiste, Super. Gener. 30 marzo 1836-3 febbraio 1874, APGR.
139Ibid.
140Martin, Nonciature, 237.
141Ibid., 260.
142Ibid.
143Étienne to Giovanni Guarini, 13 June 1838, Corrispondenza, APGR.
realized that his escape route from Paris and Nozo was closed.\footnote{144}{Actes du Gouvernement Supplément, 128-29.}

**Nozo and the “Most Disastrous Measures”\footnote{145}{Étienne, Notice, 36.}**

According to Étienne, not even a year had past under Nozo’s leadership before “the assistants had agreed among themselves that the path that he [Nozo] was taking could only lead the Congregation to certain ruin.”\footnote{146}{Ibid., 38.} One of Nozo’s early targets was his rival, Ferdinand-Joseph Bailly.\footnote{147}{Bailly also charged that he was not the only “senior and important member of the Congregation that Nozo had expelled” since 1835. He cited the example of Pierre Vivier “who for fifteen years had been the superior of an important house of the Congregation [Montolieu],” but who fell afoul of Nozo and was dismissed from the Congregation. Perboyre identifies Vivier as being a member of the “progressive party.” See “Affaire Bailly contre Nozo, & Chambre du tribunal civil de la Seine, conclusions de M. Charancy, substitut du procureur du roi,” undated, AN.F19.6240.2.210. In the minutes of the general council meeting of 22 February 1841 there is the following note: Until now not enough care has been taken to ensure that dispensations from vows (or those who leave or who are dismissed from the Congregation) are recorded in the council’s deliberations. This recording is in line with the spirit of the Constitutions requiring that the assistants are consulted and have given their advice about these matters. This omission could be the cause of grave difficulties as recent experience has shown. To remedy this, the superior general proposed that in the future all such actions be recorded in the minutes of the general council, and that for all those in the past mention be made now to demonstrate the validity of these actions. The council agreed to Nozo’s proposal and the minutes listed the names of twenty-two confreres either dispensed or dismissed from the French provinces. At least one other member of the progressives named by Perboyre was among those dismissed. See General Council Minutes, 1: 132, ACGR.} Étienne described Nozo’s attitude toward Bailly: “M. Nozo, who believed that he [Bailly] posed a threat to his authority, conceived an ill-concealed animosity toward him that he translated into acts of deplorable gravity.”\footnote{148}{Etienne, Notice, 37.}

After a period of continual harassment, Nozo escalated his attacks on Bailly by “publicly expressing doubts as to his honesty.”\footnote{149}{Nozo’s harassment of Bailly began as early as the third council meeting of the new administration on 15 September 1835. While the harassment began with regard to relatively petty matters it soon escalated. See for example, General Council Minutes, 1: 73, ACGR. At this time Bailly was also serving as the vicar general of Amiens under Bishop Jean-Pierre de Gallien de Chabons. Nozo requested Bailly to resign from this position since it was contrary to community custom. While Bailly claimed he was willing to do so, he said that Chabons refused to accept his resignation. Bailly, 5.} He charged that Bailly had “used the Congregation’s funds to enrich his own family.”\footnote{150}{Étienne, Notice, 37.} According to Étienne, these charges led to an “increasingly acerbic” correspondence between the two. This phase ended with Nozo ordering an audit of Bailly’s steward-
Jean-Baptiste Nozo, C.M., superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, 1835-1842
ship in the houses where he had served as superior.151 Later, in the middle of a "violent discussion," Nozo told Bailly "that he did not regard him as belonging to the Congregation."152 The general claimed that Bailly "had taken his vows at a time when no legitimate authority existed in the Congregation to receive them."153 Bailly angrily asked Nozo "to give him a formal declaration that his vows were null and that he had never been a member of the Congregation."154 With this written statement in hand, Bailly "used it to attack Monsieur Nozo and the Congregation to obtain an indemnity for the years that he had worked in the Company's service."155 Bailly filed suit and began an embarrassing scandal for the Congregation and Nozo. According to Étienne, this action received wide publicity not only in Paris but throughout France.156

Bailly's defense of his reputation and the righteousness of his financial claims against the Congregation was as spirited as it was effective. The suit sullied Nozo's reputation. In the end, after arbitration, the suit cost the Congregation a settlement of more than 100,000 francs.157 The arbitrator spoke about Nozo in his judgment:

151 Nozo's actions against Bailly were taken with the consent of the general council. See for example the minutes from the meetings of 15 September 1835, 9 October 1835, 23 July 1838, and 11 March 1839. General Council Minutes, 1: 73, 84, 107-08, 115, ACGR.
152 Étienne, Notice, 37. Bailly had been a diocesan seminarian at Amiens when it had been entrusted again to the Lazarists before their Napoleonic suppression. Dominique Hanon was a friend of Bailly's family and served as his mentor. During this time, the Congregation had no legal existence. Thus, Bailly lived informally as a Lazarist under the direction of the former Lazarists at Amiens, who expected that one day the community would again be legally restored. Bailly, who was already ordained, formally entered the community immediately after the Bourbon Restoration in 1816, under the authority of Charles-Vincent de Paul Boujard. On the basis that Boujard had not yet been recognized canonically as vicar general when he received Bailly's and others' vows, doubts were raised as to their validity. See Bailly, 5.
153 Ibid. The text of Nozo's dismissal read: "We the undersigned, superior general of the Congregation of the Mission also called the Lazarists, declare to those present that the vows pronounced by Monsieur Amable Ferdinand Bailly in the said Congregation are recognized as being null and that consequently he has no attachment to it. To attest to this we have delivered this notification to him signed in our hand and that of our secretary and sealed with our seal."
154 Ibid.
155 Ibid. In a letter to Louis-Florentin Leleu, a Lazarist missionary in Constantinople, 7 February 1840, Étienne commented with regard to the publicity attending the Bailly judgment:

In my last letter I already announced the results of the Bailly suit. I do not wish to speak anymore about it. You know enough already. I will only tell you now about its effect on the public which is not what you thought it would be. The bad newspapers have been silent about this affair, so that there is no publicity about it in Paris. I have heard nothing said about it in the government ministries. But in Picardy, the situation is not the same. In the end though, I think that the only damage will be the monetary judgment, and in a few months the case will be forgotten. I am more sorry for Monsieur Bailly than the Congregation.

Étienne: Lettres, C. 40, H.3, 1 (39-73), ACMP.
156 Étienne, Notice, 37.
After a long and conscientious examination, I am completely in agreement with the conclusions presented by M. Bailly...Having examined all the evidence, I repeat the judgment given in the greatest of all trials, “I find no guilt in him.” I can understand and sympathize with what he has gone through...After Monsieur Nozo’s elevation, everyone could see that his [Bailly’s] position was becoming delicate and perilous...He lost everything, but would not lose his good name...May these words serve as a true homage and compensation for the evils suffered by M. Bailly...I know that for a long time Monsieur Nozo has been considered a model Lazarist because of his austerity and his virtue...One of his own friends has written, “What Nozo is now he was not before...Have honors changed his character?”...Monsieur Nozo is the same person he was before, but the immense responsibility that weighs upon his shoulders has changed him. From the high place he now occupies, he is no longer able to measure distances with firm and clear sight. He wanted to restore and renew the primitive life and the ancient severity [of the Congregation]. His belief that men and things were standing in the way of this desire irritated him. In desiring to do good, he ended by doing evil as this sad case proves. My words today may seem hard and severe, but perhaps when time has passed and the disturbance that is inseparable from a case like this has subsided and calm has returned to his soul he will come to see this judgment as a solemn and public expiation of his injustice and he will rejoice at what I in conscience have had to say.159

Étienne’s judgment of Bailly was as harsh as that he bestowed upon Nozo: “He exploited the unfortunate decisions and imprudence of Monsieur Nozo for his own benefit and tried to profit from the scandal that the two of them had made public.” Bailly’s actions “brought down a heavenly curse upon him.” Étienne recounted, with evident satisfaction, that Bailly had used his undeserved settlement in financial speculations. He ended by losing everything that he possessed. Thus, “This man, this former vicar general and dean of the cathedral chapter, underwent the humiliation of seeing his possessions put up to a public auction...Monsieur Bailly ended his life living in humiliation and misery.”

Diverted for a moment with his diatribe against Bailly, Étienne turned his attention back to Nozo. He noted, “Monsieur Nozo also was inclined

158 A reference to Pontius Pilate’s statement about Christ in John 19: 38.
159 Bailly, 32.
160 Étienne, Notice, 38.
161 Ibid.
toward financial matters. He did not hesitate to render himself guilty of
the same offenses of which he had accused Monsieur Bailly." Etienne
recounted how Nozo had become involved in a complicated financial
arrangement with a distant relative [Denis Hennecart] who then sued
him and the Congregation. This action continued the unfortunate pub­
licity begun by the Bailly suit.

Hennecart’s published attacks on Nozo’s character were devastating:

Others have had the experience of encountering unfaithful partners
who betrayed their confidence and caused the ruin of their partner and
his family. However, in these cases rarely does one find that the author
of this ruin is a relative, a priest, the head of a justly esteemed religious
order, and the successor of Saint Vincent...I would not have believed
it possible. I considered Monsieur Nozo to be a true friend and bene­
factor who in difficult circumstances had come to my assistance provi­
dentially. He promised to help my family and to be my son’s guide. All
my hopes collapsed when I discovered that he was the person respon­
sible for my destruction and was the spoliator of my possessions...In
my search for justice in the present circumstances, I am forced to bring
the facts to the public along with the documentation to prove my
position. This is not my fault. I tried every means to avoid a public
scandal by suggesting arbitration. He has forced me into this action.

Hennecart testified that Nozo had described himself as “the Rothschild
of the religious orders,” saying that “if he lost a million francs he would
still be rich.” He claimed that Nozo also said that he was “more
powerful than the king of France.” As superior general “he could count
on the absolute obedience of the world wide double family.” Unlike the
king, “he did not have to abide by a budget or a vote of the Chamber of
Deputies in deciding how to invest his capital.” Hennecart alleged that
“M. Nozo had a reputation in the Paris stock market as an able speculator
who heavily invested his capital, or that of his Congregation, in stocks
and other industrial issues.” He described Nozo as having turned the
Congregation into a “commercial agency” because of lending his name to

---

162 Ibid.
163 Nozo was a “distant relative” of the wife of Denis Hennecart, who was the merchant who
filed suit. For details of the legal quagmire surrounding these suits see AN.FI9.6240.209, “Exposé
pour M. Denis Hennecart, propriétaire, ancien négociant, demeurant à Roye, arrondissement de
Montdidier, département de la Somme, contre M. Nozo (Jean-Baptiste), prêtre, supérieur général des
Lazaristes.” See also, “Note additionnelle sur les négociations qui ont eu lieu postérieurement à
l’exposé de M. Denis Hennecart contre M. Nozo,” AN.FI9.6240.211. “Complément de la note
additionnelle qui précède par le détail ce qui s’est passé depuis son impression, Denis Hennecart,”
AN.FI9.6240.209.
164 Hennecart, 1-2.
165 Ibid., 11.
166 Ibid.
endorse several public stock offerings. Hennecart also charged that Nozo speculated with money that the Congregation received from the Lyons-based Society for the Propagation of the Faith. This was money designated for the support of the foreign missions.

Hennecart ended his account by observing, "it is impossible that the members of the Congregation of which Monsieur Nozo is the superior...are not afflicted by his conduct in this affair. We can assume that their sentiments of honor and honesty will not fail to motivate them to prevent him from ever straying again." The settlement of the Hennecart suit did not take place until after Nozo's departure from the scene. As Étienne noted, however, the Congregation eventually was successful in having itself dissociated from the lawsuits.

Étienne commented that anyone could easily have surmised the state of Nozo's internal administration based on how he handled external matters. According to Étienne, the assistants general had very quickly decided that only the protection of divine providence could keep the Congregation from "certain ruin" under Nozo's leadership. The assistants decided, however, to take their chances and ride out the intervening years until the sexennial assembly scheduled to meet in 1841.

The only other option open to the assistants would have been to convoke a general assembly, make formal accusations against Nozo, and seek his constitutional deposition. Unfortunately, the assistants decided against this option "since it appeared to be too extreme and would only have aggravated a situation that was in need of healing." They also felt that such an action "would have led to internal divisions in the Company, while also provoking another scandal that could not help but become public." To avoid this "greater evil," they took refuge "in prayer and patience, awaiting the day when heaven would end this lamentable crisis."

---

167 Hennecart also made a charge that involved Étienne. According to Hennecart, in early 1838 there were a series of public advertisements announcing the prospectus for a "remarkable opportunity" to invest in the *Exploitation générale des distilleries du nord de la France...one of the listed members of the oversight committee for this investment was M. l'abbé Étienne, procureur général des prêtres de Saint Lazare." Hennecart wondered out loud whether the bad example of Nozo had rubbed off on his subordinate. Ibid., 20.
168 Ibid., 8.
169 Ibid., 304.
170 Étienne, Notice, 38.
171 Ibid.
172 "Caput II. De cura auctoritate et potestate Congregationis erga Superiorem Generalem;" "Caput XII. De Conventu Generali cogendo ad tractanda negotia;" Constituciones, 15-17, 115.
173 Étienne, Notice, 38.
174 Ibid., 39.
Meanwhile, the assistants decided “to keep silent as much as possible about this painful situation and to do all they could to maintain unity.” In any case, they would “keep watch against violations of the constitutions.” According to Étienne, this “wise decision” meant that “the acts and decisions of Monsieur Nozo in his private life and in his administration of the Congregation remained hidden by inviolable secrecy.”175 Étienne claimed that the Congregation’s houses outside France remained unaware of what was taking place. Supposedly, the houses in France only knew what became public because of the lawsuits. However, it is unlikely that word of Nozo’s and the Congregation’s troubles could be kept completely secret from the foreign, or French provinces.

The general council thus waited for “the moment when the deputies from the various provinces would come together to discuss the state of the Congregation and save it from the menace that threatened it.”176 At the general council meeting held on 8 March 1841, “The superior general noted that six years had now passed since the last general assembly and that according to the constitutions it was time to set a date for the sexennial assembly.”177 The council agreed to schedule the assembly for the end of July.178

---

175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
177 General Council Minutes, 1: 132, ACGR.
178 Ibid.