

therefore, to read that as early as 1648 he had been selected by the Sacr. Congregation for nomination to the bishopric of Agra in India:

“ . . . At the session on 28.7.1648 the Cardinals considered that a bishop should be sent “to reside in Agra (India), and that Fr. Dionysius, partly on account of his knowledge of “Persian—which was used at the Court of the Mogul—should be appointed bishop. . . .”

Like Fr. Dimas, however, the stalwart Fleming would have nothing to do with a prelacy, being too devoted to the quest for souls. This is the tone in which he notified the Sacr. Congregation, 3.8.1649:¹

“There has arrived here some news or other that the Sacr. Congregation has been “discussing (what I can hardly write without blushing) making me Bishop of Agra. With “all humility I now beg that that may not come about: I do not put forward my inaptitude “for so great a charge, which I feel in myself to be greater than I could express or another “credit, because perhaps it might be that your Illustrious lordship out of your innate “goodness might think it came from some humility, which would be the simple truth.

“Only, with all due reverence I submit that God of his infinite goodness has been pleased “to open for me here a gate by which I can daily save some souls, which I fear would not “be the case elsewhere. On another occasion I wrote how throughout all the villages and “settlements near here (they are not less than 80 in number) these poor infidels admit me “to read the holy Gospel over their sick, and sometimes with such respect that it astounds “me, and on such occasions I am able to baptize as many infants as are sick to death. “At present I have rather more liberty from my superiors here to go and seek them out, “than I had in the past, and, were they to give me more, very willingly I should work “even harder. Just as they give me permission for a day, if they were to be pleased to give “it to me for several days, far more souls would be saved, because usually I happen to “find myself obliged to abandon everything when most promising, in order to return with “all possible haste (as I am instructed) towards the city. Were I to have permission for “a period of several days I should be able to go everywhere, to the more distant villages; “for here the poor peasant folk, who are the farther removed from the city, are of greater “simplicity and natural goodness and on the other hand this is a land of such security that “day and night one can go everywhere: and, too, these poor infidels usually offer me a “lodging with much display of kindness.

“On the contrary I have no acquaintance with India: they are people of a different “character and other tongues; nor do I feel I have the skill to learn them. But not even “in Persia would I wish to be charged with any other duties than those of a simple mis- “sionary: . . . those higher positions would do nothing more than entangle my conscience.² “ . . . However, so as not to take up more of your time, I implore you once more with all “humility, for the goodwill you have for me (without my meriting it), that you will not “allow me to become loaded with a burden for which I have not the strength.”

A noble letter! He died at Isfahan, 25.5.1661,

“having lived about 27 years in the mission . . . and always given examples of rare “worth. . . .”³

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¹ S.R., vol. 135, p. 217.

² See in Fr. Dominic of S. Nicolas, 17.1.1649, O.C.D. 237 g, the curious trait in Fr. Dionysius:

“Except for baptizing the children he detests dealing with adult Armenian and Persian men, on account of his “narrow-mindedness and scruples (lest it should make him blaspheme against them) he is neither tractable nor “adaptable. . . .”

³ Fr. Felix, 25.6.1661, O.C.D. 238 p.