

“I am ready voluntarily and in due form and by a proper document to give my resignation into the hands of His Holiness of the archiepiscopal see of Nakhchiwan. Next April there is due to sail for Ancona some ship, on which I shall take passage and, if it please God, I shall come (to Rome) in person to make the resignation as indicated, with all the legal formalities requisite. . . .”

Formerly just inside the main door of that great historic church of the Dominican Order on the Aventine in Rome, Santa Sabina, but since the repaving and renovation work of 1936 moved to the aisle on the left, the visitor will see in front of him the slab of a gravestone with the inscription plain for all to read:

D.O.M.  
Fr. Dominicus M. Salvini  
Archiepiscopus Naxivanensis  
Sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum  
Obiit X Decembris MDCCLXV (=10.12.1765)  
Aetatis Suae LXXVI

That was the end of a line of Latin archbishops in Asia, not *in partibus infidelium*, created in 1318 by Pope John XXII,<sup>1</sup> and of a mission four centuries old, which at one time had counted a whole district of the Armenian flank of the Caucasus, with thousands of peasants,<sup>2</sup> and numerous Dominican convents its own. The report made to the Sac. Congregation by Cardinal Pamphilj, 7.9.1778,<sup>3</sup> has the few, saddening words:

“In Nakhchiwan there are only some few poor Catholics in hiding and for long past deprived of any priest. . . .”

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Perhaps because of the very fact that the Uniat Catholics had become so dispersed, the missionaries so weak in numbers and disheartened during the last few years of Nadir's rule, at Rome they were prompt in filling the see of Isfahan after the death of Bishop Philip Mary Malachisi. The relative decree of the Sac. Congregation, dated 22.11.1750, reads:

“On his Eminence Cardinal Prospero Colonna di Sciarra putting forward the spiritual needs of the diocese of Isfahan, deprived of its own shepherd owing to the decease of Fr. Philip Mary of S. Augustine, the last bishop, the Sac. Congregation decided that His Holiness should be begged to promote to that bishopric Fr. Sebastian of S. Margaret, of the Order of Discalced Carmelites, an apostolic missionary and man greatly recommended by his piety, prudence, teaching and other qualities. That decision having been reported by Mgr Nicolas Lercari, the Secretary, in an audience given, 15.11.1750, His Holiness graciously approved and gave directions for suitable Apostolic letters to be issued on the subject, together with an indult so that the said Fr. Sebastian of S. Margaret can receive the conferment of consecration from one sole Catholic bishop in favour and communion with the Holy See—whomever he may prefer—together with the assistance of two secular or regular priests in place of two” (other) “bishops. . . .”

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Hierarchia Latina Orientis*, by Fr. L. Lemmens, O.F.M.

<sup>2</sup> As late as J. B. Tavernier, that French traveller saw it in the 1660's with 6,000 Catholics.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta* for 1778, p. 309.