

“at present there is nothing but a most unseemly and small chapel which the unworthy
“‘American’ priest Emmanuel Caro (who has made himself a soldier slave of Karim Khan)
“ . . . has in his own dwelling. Fr. John son of Aratun, an ocular witness, wrote a short
“while ago to that priest a fatherly letter of admonition, but till now no effect has been
“seen. . . .”

It was the Dominicans who of the several Orders strove most at the end to fill the breach at Julfa, and keep the Latin missions alive: so that a portion of what little remains to be told of the general situation of Catholics in Persia in that century is bound up with them, although the Sacr. Congregation, as a last resort before the final withdrawal of the Catholics from Julfa in 1791, fell back on Armenian Uniat priests, former pupils of the Urban College in Rome. Already in 1752 Bishop Sebastian had welcomed news from Rome that a

“Dominican Father was to proceed to Julfa to be companion to the aged and gouty Fr. Raymond Berselli, O.P., a request several times made by the former Bishop Philip Mary to the Sacr. Congregation; but the Congregation had bidden the Religious in question “wait at Smyrna till the disturbances in Persia ceased.”

They did not cease, and the relief did not arrive. In 1754 in another letter the Bishop was fervently hoping that¹

“those few Christians who remain in Julfa along with four Religious and missionaries—
“one of my Order, another a Dominican, another a Jesuit, besides a good (Armenian)
“priest—may also be able to escape from a country, which at present has become so evil,
“and so dangerous both for the soul and for the body, a country I can truly say where
“iniquity is at present at its height, a country of hell. Poor Persia!”

In May 1758 the Congregation were again told through Fr. Lanza, the Dominican at Mausil,² that Fr. Raymond Berselli was

“repeating his request to be given the help of at least one Father who would learn the
“language from him and something about the country, serve the remnant of the Christians
“and, above all, preserve the House and mission, until God dispose otherwise the state of
“this desolated country. . . .”

It was 16.3.1760,³ however, before Fr. Leopold Soldini, O.P., wrote from Aleppo that he had been entrusted with 100 scudi by the Sacr. Congregation for Fr. Raymond and asked for clear instructions whether the Sacr. Congregation thought it well that he, Fr. Leopold, should proceed to Julfa to recover the little there might be in the hands of Fr. Raymond, and help in that mission. None the less Fr. Raymond had received that money by 8.11.1760 and was thanking his Eminence the Prefect for the

“extremely welcome grant of 100 scudi, which you had the kindness to make me: I received
“it at a most opportune juncture. A Georgian Christian, my creditor, intended to carry
“me off to Basra, but there was no money to pay him. In August of this year the sum in
“question was received through Fr. Leopold Soldini, and my other, ordinary allowances
“in Basra . . . the former through the English consul: my creditor took his hands off me,
“and went alone to Basra to take the money owed him: and so I have escaped four months’
“risky travelling and am able to remain at the mission in Julfa for our Catholics. If I
“had left I should have returned here, but it was better both for me and for the people
“of Julfa. . . . I long for the arrival of the new Bishop, the most illustrious Mgr Cornelius:
“he is needed both spiritually and to give temporal aid. . . .”

¹ S.R., vol. 759, p. 248.

² S.N.R., VI, p. 392.

³ *Idem*, p. 574.