

When I arrived at our village, nearly all the Savages had gone: they were scattered along the Mississippi. I immediately set out to join them. Hardly had I gone six leagues when I found three cabins, in one of which was a poor old man, very sick. I heard his confession, gave him some remedies, and promised to come again to see him, thinking indeed that he had still many days to live.

Five or six leagues farther on, I found a great number of cabins, which formed a sort of village; I halted there a few days, in order to perform my accustomed functions. In the absence of the Missionary, they do not fail to meet together every day in a large cabin; and there prayers are offered, the rosary is recited, and hymns are sung, sometimes far into the night,—for it is chiefly in the winter, when the nights are long, that a great part of that time is spent in singing the praises of God. We are careful to appoint one of the most fervent and most respected of our Neophytes to preside over meetings of this sort.

I had already remained some time with these dear Neophytes when some one came to tell me that there were, eighteen leagues still farther down the Mississippi, sick people who needed prompt assistance. I immediately embarked in a pirogue: this is a kind of boat made of a large tree, hollowed out to the length of forty feet, and which is very heavy; this gives a great deal of trouble when it is necessary to ascend the river.⁴⁷ Happily, we had only to descend; and, as the rapidity in that place equals that of the Rhone, we made those eighteen leagues in a single day.

The sick people were not in such urgent danger as