

This project was one of extreme danger. He met with opposition from both the officers and the Indian chiefs. The latter, especially, tried to dissuade him, telling him that the hostiles, who had sworn to take the scalps of all whites who crossed their path, would sacrifice even him to keep their sacred oath.

But De Smet told them that a thousand children were praying in St. Louis and other places for his safety and that he thought the protection of heaven would be granted to one for whom little children prayed. The bravery and the faith of the priest made such an impression upon the chiefs that they asserted their intention to accompany him upon his hazardous mission and to protect him from the hostiles if necessary. The hostiles had proclaimed war upon any of the tribes who remained friendly with the whites, so that the chiefs who accompanied Father De Smet were themselves going into danger.

On the morning of June 3, 1868, a strange and impressive scene was enacted at Fort Rice. Preparations for the expedition in search of the camps of the hostile Indians were completed and the start was about to be made. In a large circle of Indians, among whom were a few officers and white men from the fort, Father De Smet stood. The early morning sun shone upon his uplifted face, as, with hands pressed together in the attitude of prayer, he consigned himself and his escort of Indians to the care of the Great Spirit.

De Smet was old and ill. He could no longer endure long days in the saddle. He rode in a wagon with Charles Galpin, and his Sioux wife, and the driver, Blue Thunder, was also a Sioux. Charles Galpin was an Indian trader and well known to the chiefs of the hostile bands. He was to act as interpreter. His wife was also well known among the Sioux and it was thought that there might arise as an emissary. Blue Thunder was chosen to drive the team because he was a Sioux brave of great courage, and a man worthy of the confidence and faith of the missionary priest.

The party progressed toward the country in which the hostile Indians were hiding. After six days' tedious travel brought no sign of the hostile Indians, four groups of Indians were elected from among the 80 who were following, and each group was detailed to scout the surrounding territory. They were given a present of tobacco which was to be offered to the hostiles should they come upon them. The route of the main party was agreed upon so that in case of news the scouts could come ~~back~~ together again. Thirteen days after leaving Fort Rice one of the scouting parties returned with the news that they had come upon a large camp of the hostiles; that their present of tobacco had been accepted, which ~~meant~~ meant that the scouts were to be permitted to talk with the hostiles.

The scouts explained their mission, saying that they had brought Black Robe who wished to speak ~~to~~ with them. The Indians sent back word that Black Robe would be welcome in their camp, that the chiefs would listen to any word that he had to say to them, but that he must come alone. The camp of the hostiles was a three days journey from the main body of the expedition. Without hesitation Father De Smet accepted the terms of his invitation, only sending word that as he was old and ill he would need to bring with him Blue Thunder to drive his wagon, and his interpreter, Galpin. This was agreed to by the hostiles.