

Appendix 9.

Emperor Flavius, Justinian, Alammanicus, Gothicus, Francicus, Germanicus, Anticus, Alanicus, Vandalicus, Affricanus, pious, fortunate and renowned victor and triumpher ever Augustus, to John, Praetorian Prefect of Africa.

It is known to us that some persons in the province of Africa, paying no attention to our orders which we made regarding the reclamer of rustics, do not cease to bring unjust suits, seeking to bring back serfs, or rustics or their children, who are shown to have left their property before the advent of our army. We know that we issued imperial orders in this matter in which we stated that male or female rustics might be (only if they left land) reclaimed during a specified period. We, therefore, direct Your Magnitude to put an end in every way to unjust suits for reclamer in Africa, and we permit no one to reclaim anyone as a serf, either men, women or children, except (the left land) from the time on that, as stated, our fortunate army recovered Africa, with God's help, for our empire. Clergymen (said to be serfs) must be reclaimed as of the time fixed by our imperial orders, and not as of an earlier time; for we do not suffer ancient suits and contentions to be prolonged. But since we learn that the men of eloquence (lawyers) do not give preference to the said orders over the general laws, we direct that the past orders made in connection with this matter and the present order shall have the force of law in Africa, and cannot be set aside by any general law, but shall be made known by Your Magnitude by published edicts, so that all people of Africa may know under what protection as to time they may bring actions to reclaim serfs or clergymen. Persons attempting to violate this order will be punished by a fine of five pounds of gold. May the Divinity preserve you through many years
Given Sept. 22, 558.