

15 January

## Br JOSEPH GOBERT

16 May 1842 – 15 January 1925

Joseph Gobert was a Belgian who joined the French Foreign Legion as a young man and imbued all its instant unquestioning

obedience. When he later joined the Society, he transferred the inner motivation but his outward behaviour remained permanently coloured by the strict modes of the legion. He



arrived in South Africa with Fr Alfred Weld in 1882 and was sent for two years to the lower Zambezi (Mopea and Quilimane) before spending seven years in Dunbrody trying to make that barren soil (see photo) productive. The Marianhills had tried for some years but moved away to Natal in preference.

Andrew Hartmann wrote in the *Zambezi Mission Record*, (Vol IX, January 1931):

Joseph Gobert was squarely built, his straight back, smart step, short manner and a somewhat truculent beard and look, reflected his former training. He had served in North Africa in the legion and the stern discipline of that famous corps had drilled into him a quick, precise and unquestioning obedience, of which the rather different spirit of Jesuit obedience had no doubt sanctified the inner intention without very much altering the external execution.

When Fr Weld slipped and fell on the ship on the way out, he had to stay in his cabin and Br Gobert stood sentry at the door the whole day, and at night, lay on the floor in front, ready to answer the slightest call of the patient to whom he had vowed deep reverence and affection. The Superior's word was *la consigne*...

Joseph's attitude to the English language showed a touch of good-natured contempt (and) he credited most people with sufficient education to understand his own. The wonder is how the workers managed to make him out but they very soon did, so expressive were his eyes and hands, so clear cut and imperative was his tone of voice. Even his oxen – on which he conferred the names of prominent politicians of the time - answered to the call of 'Gladstone', 'Salisbury', etc – with a promptness that spoke well of their intelligence.

Br Gobert was recalled to Belgium in 1891 and died in Tronchiennes in 1925.

15 January

16 May 1842 – 15 January 1925

**Br. José GOBERT**

He was born in Molinfaing, Luxembourg, on May 16, 1842, and entered the Society of Jesus on November 12, 1880, in Belgium. He was sent to the Zambezia Mission (Mozambique) in 1882, where he worked in Mopeia and Quelimane. He returned to Europe in 1884 and died on January 15, 1925, in Tronchiennes, Belgium.

(Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970)