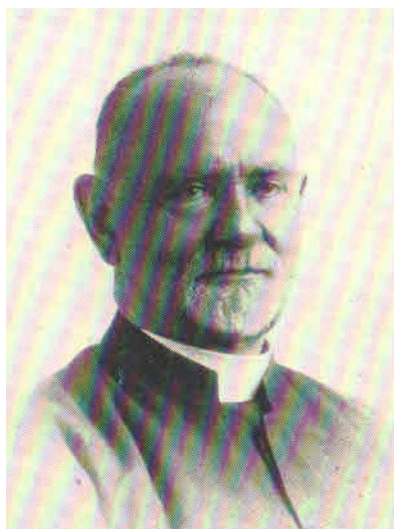


27 March

Fr ISIDORE LALLEMAND 8 April 1862 – 27 March 1945



Isidore Lallemand himself tells the story of his early days when, run over as a small boy, by a passing carriage, his wound would not heal. His mother was wont to give beggars a welcome and a meal, and a poor woman with a child came one day. After the meal, the woman asked Lallemand's mother why she was always so sad and she explained about her child. The woman replied, 'do not trouble any more about doctors. Just apply a little nut oil.' The wound was soon healed. To her dying day the mother believed it was our Lady and her Child that had come to her.

Born in Alsace (Issenheim), Isidore went to the local Jesuit school in Amiens until the Ferry laws drove them out of France and they settled in Littlehampton, in England. Though he was an only child, his mother was delighted when he announced he wanted to be a Jesuit though she did not want him to go to Japan as they martyred Jesuits there! He reassured her he would only go half way as he wanted to join the Zambesi Mission. He spent a lot of time in bed in the novitiate but the sunny climate of Southern Africa saved him. He started his philosophy there but finished it in Europe. He was sick again in Europe but a cousin, who was a theology professor, coached him privately and told his provincial, 'a live donkey is better than a dead lion.'

His first posting was to Gweru where he was a great success; on one occasion he accompanied three Indians to the scaffold where they died baptised and at peace. In 1905 he became superior at Dunbrody. He was to be there until 1927. His own mental and physical suffering widened and deepened his compassion towards others and he made the place a welcoming one for other religious, diocesans and lay people for retreats. He led a happy and united community of nine, from seven different countries. It helped that Br Caulfield followed Teresa of Avila's advice about *bona culina, bona disciplina*. Homemade bread, butter, wine and spirits, etc, meant they never had to send for doctor for the whole 22 years. Br John Matzke too was star running the farm. Ostrich feathers were the main income but the market collapsed after the war and Dunbrody faced harder times. To make matters worse a complicated crisis arose over water rates. A settlement was in sight but Fr Buckland, trained in law before entering the Society, intervened and contested Lallemand's 'mild compromise of a private and informal settlement.' The result was Dunbrody more or less went broke and had to be sold at a price way below the going rate. Morale plummeted. Lallemand remembered the words of Weld to him years earlier, 'After doing your best you must be prepared to see all work destroyed.' In 1934, Dunbrody was sold and Lallemand moved to Claremont (Cape Town) where he worked with great effect for the last ten years of his life on missions and retreats, staying at Wynberg and at the Marist Brothers'.

David Dryden relates that when he began work at the Marist Brothers' College in Cape Town 50 years later, Fr Lallemand's reputation as a holy man and a wonderful confessor for the clergy of Cape Town still lived on. His ill health continued all his life and in 1932 he had two operations, without anaesthetic, for gall bladder and kidney conditions.