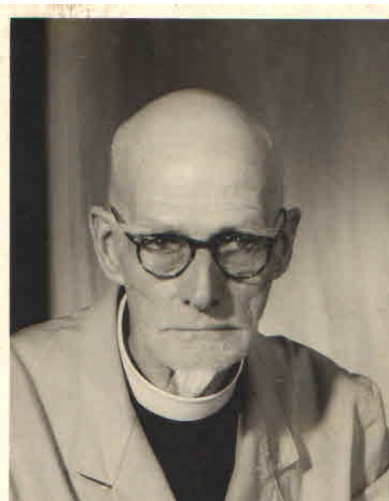


May 20

## Fr KENNETH TASMAN

13 June 1889 – 20 May 1968



Kenneth Tasman was born at Streatham in Surrey, England and was educated in Dulwich and Keble, Oxford. He proceeded to Ely Theological College and was on the way to ordination in the Anglican Church when the war broke out. He had already enlisted in the London Scottish regiment when he went down with the first of five attacks of TB. Ordained in 1916, he served on a parish in Somerset in the SW of England for a while.

In 1918 he was received into the Catholic Church and the following year entered the Society of Jesus.

Two years later he had a further attack of TB and it was decided he go to Southern Africa for his health. But before he could do so he had a further attack, his third and, in 1927, he had a fourth. However he was ordained in the new Cathedral in Harare in 1928, the first Catholic priest to be ordained in the country.

From 1925 to 32 he was at St Aidan's, Empanjeni, Driefontein and Kutama and in 1933 suffered his fifth attack. He continued to serve at different missions until he finally settled at Monte Cassino for his last 21 years (1947-68). He shut himself away to protect others and himself and lived a semi-eremital life. He read the newspaper to keep abreast of what was going on and noted all visitors without actually meeting them. The present write did not even see him when he was at the mission for two weeks in 1967.

He was 'very tall and thin, rather bent and helped himself along with two gnarled walking sticks, very silent and uncommunicative ... his grey eyes were shrewd, and he obviously had a good brain and an unexpected sense of humour... he was always anxious to get back to his own private thoughts and occupations and prayers.' He not only followed the Jesuit rules but the rules of sanatorium life for TB patients: taking his temperature four times a day, not brooding on his misfortune, etc. ... He kept a record of his annual retreats in which he sought solace for his trials. He was ordered by his superiors *not* to work and not to worry and tried to abandon himself to God in all his weakness and pain.

He used to keep the rainfall figures and was commended by the Federal Meteorological Department. He became an expert in herpetology, the study of

snakes, and kept accurate details of host of specimens. Dr John Hewitt of Albany Museum in Grahamstown wrote to him, 'I am much interested in your observations of the habits of *Hadogenes Gracilis*, which ought to be published.'

His obituarist notes that just as Tasman's ancestor 'discovered' the island called Tasmania, off Australia, so he discovered three new species of animals in Rhodesia; *Homopholis tasmani*, *Graphiurus murinus tasmani* and *Hemidactylus tasmani* and he published various articles on snakes, etc, in scientific journals. The school children were sad at his parting. 'Who is going to pray for us?' He used to pray for their special needs, especially to get through exams and 'a notably high pass rate was achieved over the years.' There was a large gathering for his funeral at Monte Cassino, including two bishops and the whole school.