

June 17

Fr FRANCIS van WERSCH 20 May 1830 – 17 June 1888



Born in Kirkrade, Limburg, Francis van Wersch entered the Dutch province in September 1857 and joined fellow Dutchman, Fr Arnold Widdershoven, in South Africa in 1875 in response to the request of Bishop Ricards for two priests to minister to the Dutch Catholics at Graaff Reinet.

Widdershoven and van Wersch duly came and purchased a house and some land for their parish. They started a school but it was poorly attended by Catholics and they extended it to Protestants. But it was not with the whites – Dutch, Irish, Belgians and English – or the blacks - who were mainly Calvinist, but with the coloureds that most could be hoped.

In 1885 he became a teacher of philosophy at Dunbrody and two years later extended his labours to theology. He died there suddenly in 1888, aged 59.