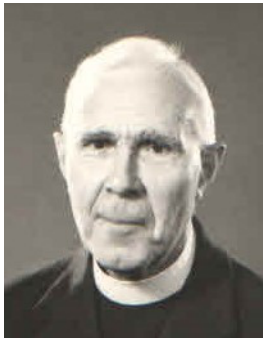


June 23

Fr LEONARD KENNEDY 23 May 1910 – 23 June 1994



Len Ken was born in Ronderbosch, South Africa, the youngest of ten. He entered the Society in 1930 and was ordained in 1940. A year later he was a chaplain in the RAF and used his time in Iraq to visit Ur and such places, often acting as unofficial guide to others. He seems to have collected ancient shards unhindered and produced them fifty years later for the bemusement of the juniors. Brian Porter, in his funeral homily, mentioned his jottings in the desert where he wrote of the skylarks and the bees. Reaching Southern Rhodesia in 1949, he spent around five years at a succession of places: Chishawasha, Marymount, the Seminary, St Ignatius, Mazowe, Chishawasha again, Campion House and Arrupe House.

At St Ignatius his classroom was noisy but he was a demanding teacher, particular about homework. He had a humorous quaint stream of consciousness always in evidence. Referring to the Queen's coronation he remarked on one of the guests: 'The Queen of Tonga went down well, you know. Of course, she was a very heavy woman.' He would invariably comment on the boys' work, referring to them as 'some people'. 'Some people do not seem to realise that the shortest distance between two points is a straight line.'

He had an interest in the stars and planets and invited Brian on one occasion to view Saturn on a promisingly clear night. Brian responded positively but was shocked to be woken in the early morning to come and see. He dutifully left his bed to view Saturn but rather perfunctorily and returned to bed. At breakfast, Len Ken commented, 'some people don't appreciate the planets.' Klara Nkhoma was the leader of Faith and Light in Zambia and once got so frustrated travelling to Zimbabwe for a formation session when she had to spend the night in the open at Chirundu, that she thought of giving up. On reaching Harare and meeting Fr Kennedy to whom she told her story, he simply asked her about the dawn stars and 'he named them all and how beautiful it is at night in the sky. He changed all my thoughts in a minute and, when I got home, Mike (her husband) could not understand how happy I was to sleep in the open gazing at the stars... I will live to thank God for having met Fr Kennedy...'

Wherever he went, he planted oranges and lemons and he treated the fruits as a shepherd would his lambs. Brian tells us, 'he would read the mottle and the patterns on the leaves and apply the appropriate trace elements.' Brian MacGarry once met some girls in the valley with some oranges and could guess where they came from but said nothing. Next morning, Len was heard to remark that 'some people had taken 13 oranges from the orchard.' Len Ken was not comfortable to be in charge but he was devoted to his tasks: planning lessons, correcting homework, hearing confessions, out stations, doing the accounts and tracking down details for baptism and marriage records. Meeting old pupils by chance later on, they would always ask after Fr Kennedy. He had a friendly way of arousing the interests of the boys.

