

16 November

## **Bp GEORGE GORDON** 5 March 1831 – 16 November 1911



Born in Edinburgh, George Gordon came from a noble Jacobin Catholic Scottish family. One of his ancestors fought in the rebellions of 1715 and 1745. He inherited a large estate from his father and set about becoming a progressive farmer, building drainage ditches, rearing cattle, reclaiming land. He might have continued in this peaceful existence if the French had not suddenly withdrawn their support for the Papal States in 1867 and left the pope exposed to the ambitions of the Piedmontese. He raised an 'army' of sixty men, mainly from

Glasgow, and went to join the Papal Zouaves in Italy. They saw some action but were ultimately unsuccessful. However it exposed George to a Pamplona moment and he joined the Jesuits in 1869. He was 38.

In 1880 he was in Graaf Reinet and wrote a long letter to the provincial giving us a first-hand account of what life was like there. The roof leaked in their small house and they had to sleep under umbrellas at times. They had a small church that could fit 140 people and a school with 53 boys and girls. The Catholics were the only church that welcomed all people to their church. Others had separate arrangements for different racial groups. There were 175, mainly Irish, Catholics in the parish and they had seven out stations.

George Gordan was there less than two years as he was recalled to England for his tertianship and was made superior of Glasgow in 1882. In 1889 he became Vicar Apostolic (Bishop) of Jamaica where he was highly esteemed by Protestants and Catholics alike. Again he returned to his old trade and promoted agriculture among the people.

By 1905 his health was failing and he returned to England where he spent his last and difficult years at Roehampton. His memory went and he suffered from dementia.