

21 November

12 November 1866 – 21 November 1930

Fr JEAN BAPTISTE LOUBIÈRE



Jean Baptiste was a cousin of Laurent Loubière whom we met on 18 September. He was born in Calmont, near Toulouse and entered the Society in 1886. He was immediately exiled through the Ferry laws and found himself in England. After his formation and ordination in 1897, he went to the Lower Zambezi, at Chupanga or Shupanga. He worked there with some adventures with crocodiles and lions up to the time of the Portuguese Revolution in 1910 which led to the exile of all religious. For a second time he had to move but not before he was able to introduce his SVD successors to the mission.

Then he simply crossed the border into Southern Rhodesia, away from the Portuguese, and settled at Kutama for the rest of his life. Kutama was not long founded that time (1914). Fr Richartz had begun at Murombedzi in 1909 with one catechist and then at Kutama with another. The response was positive enough to call for a resident priest and Jean Baptiste was the one. He was full of energy though he never seemed to be in a hurry. He was driven by his plan to separate the Christians from their pagan environment on the model of the Paraguay reductions and he build a model village (see photo). So impressive were the results that when the prefect wanted to start a school for training catechists Kutama seemed to be obvious place to do it. (The policy of Christian Villages did not outlive Loubière and the model of outstations became the norm in the country).

Loubière was also interested in the material development of the people and in this he worked closely with a Mr Keigwin



of the government. The ZMR has a full transcript of the ten-page letter, Latin and Greek quotations included, of Fr Loubière to Keigwin outlining his methods. Keigwin was so impressed he wanted them replicated countrywide. The account contains an amusing story of land abandoned by the local people as useless which he turned to good use by ploughing deep. When a great crop resulted, the locals came back to claim it.

St Thérèse was his patron and he turned to her for help in all his projects and she made sure his plans succeeded, ‘not without persecutions.’

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Born in Calmont, Alto Garona, France, on November 12, 1866, he entered the Society of Jesus on October 23, 1886, in England, when he was already connected to the Zambezia Mission. In 1892, he was sent to the College of Campolide, in Lisbon, for his regency. In 1894, he went to Jersey (British island between England and France) to study theology. He was ordained priest on August 24, 1897, in Jersey. In 1898, he was sent to Mozambique where he always worked in the mission of the Immaculate Conception of Chupanga, as a superior. He took his final vows on March 20, 1899, in Chupanga. He left Mozambique in 1914 and went to the mission of Chishawasha, in Rhodesia, where he died on November 21, 1930.

(Cf. APSI, Necrológio; Cartas Edificantes da Província de Portugal, XIII (1933), p. 350 – 354;
Mon oncle d'après ses Lettres, Béziers, 1935).