

4 December

## Fr ALOYSIUS LEBOEUF 15 February 1858 – 4 December 1926



‘The most humble and unobtrusive man you could imagine, working away silently and steadily, and at the finish going off the stage scarcely noticed.’ So spoke one who knew him well. Leboeuf was born in St Ours, Quebec, and entered the novitiate in Canada in 1877. He did his philosophy at St Mary’s Hall, Stonyhurst, as the French philosophate he began with was abruptly closed when the French government exiled the Jesuits. He then taught for four years at St Aidan’s before going to theology in Jersey where he was ordained in 1891.

In 1893 he was at Fort Victoria (Masvingo) and was called to Salisbury the next year. He stayed at Hartmann Hill until the first rising made it unsafe, to say nothing of the lion he met on the path to town one day. A self-taught architect he planned and supervised the building of the first church in the town at the convent and was developing his pastoral work there when he was moved to Empandeni where he stayed for twenty years. There were droughts in 1914/15 and 1916/17 and people and animals really suffered.

Br Haupt was the mission’s architect and builder up to his death in 1921 and it was then that Aloysius Leboeuf took over. His first building had been a pigsty at Vleishfontein, made of stone and dagga, and his last was St George’s College built, like the Cathedral, of synthetic stone. Between these two materials, he made *pisé de terre* (pounded earth) popular. He designed the tower and chapel at St Aidan’s, the church at Empandeni, another one at Umtali (Mutare), the Cathedral and Campion House in Salisbury.

But his sight was damaged and he had to draw with his eyes close to the paper. He asked for photos to be taken of the work in progress because he could not see it. Yet he made countless drawings, especially details for the Cathedral. Each day he would begin with the Angelus and the bell would be rung and the workers, Catholic or otherwise, heard him pray that no one would be injured that day and they bowed their heads in understanding. No one ever was injured even though the towers were so high.

On 2 August 1925 the Cathedral was opened and blessed and Leboeuf moved to concentrate on the new St George’s but he died without warning while the work was in process.



of  
all

