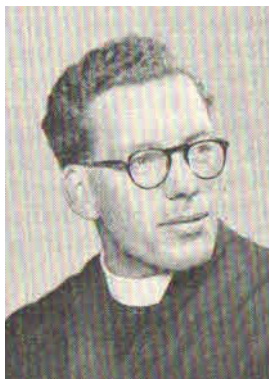


7 January

Fr CHARLES O'NEILL 5 November 1916 – 7 January 1977



Born in Glasgow, Charles O'Neill – known as 'Chick' – was one of six children in their family. Three of the four boys became Jesuits and one girl became a nun! Chick entered the Society in 1935 and first came to South Africa in 1944 as a scholastic teaching at St Aidan's and, while there, played soccer for Grahamstown against the Royal Air Force stationed nearby.

He had a reputation as good teacher, conscientious and methodical and he could keep order, firmly and fairly. 'The boys knew where they stood with him', wrote Fr Richard Copeland. He did not take kindly to the new Maths introduced in the mid- sixties but adapted.

He coached hockey and was an outstanding coach. His teams used to beat everyone in Grahamstown. He used to put a gilded frame around the photos of his 'undefeated' team to distinguish them from the others in their plebian black.

Warm and sensitive, he reached out to girls and women 'in a sound and healthy way.' Copeland said, as rector, he sometimes differed with Chick about a case concerning a boy but the latter accepted his decision without fuss or talk of resigning.

He was one of the small group who witnessed the closing of St Aidan's in 1973 and he found it hard, as they all did. He moved to Port Elizabeth as chaplain to the sisters.

In his later years, he gave many retreats, both preached and later, when he learnt how, directed.

Towards the end of 1976 he had a coronary and it was clear he was dying. He thanked everyone - the sisters, the nurses, the Community and the boys before departing. Archbishop Markall was with him when he died and reported that his last words were, 'Dear God, take me.'