

7 January

Fr ANTHONY PARISH 21 March 1940 – 7 January 2013



Tony ‘hit the ground running’ when he entered the novitiate in London in 1958 and he never stopped running throughout his Jesuit life. He was intense in what he was doing to the point where it damaged his health. He learnt to pace himself and develop other interests but even these interests – golf and tennis, for example – he approached with a seriousness that unnerved his companions and competitors and seemed to defeat the purpose of ‘relaxation’. He always came second in class at his Jesuit school in Leeds and developed a love for the ‘classics’, Latin and Greek.

After philosophy, Oxford beckoned and he developed a tight schedule of study and relaxation. Later he went on to Rome for scripture and Denis Blackledge was his companion on memorable outings to Venice, Ravenna, Pisa and Siena. David Dryden was shown around Rome by Tony, ‘who had read up the background of all the places we saw. What a wonderful guide!’ David also played golf with him many times except when his passion for the game led him out at the old Heythrop when there was a sprinkling of snow on the course. But Tony had a severe breakdown from overwork. Lithium is the classic treatment for Bi-Polar Disorder but it has side effects and Tony’s dosage had to be constantly monitored. When he took up teaching it was under this heavy shadow.

He worked in secondary education for five years before it was considered safe for him to enter the tertiary field he was so well prepared for. But he had a second breakdown. As he again struggled to recover, an invitation came from the Regional Seminary in Chishawasha which Tony eagerly took up. He approached this new world with his usual commitment and passion though he could get angry when things did not work as he felt they should. He came with over 1,500 books and left them all to the seminary.

He developed interests outside the seminary and became the National Director of the Biblical Pastoral Apostolate and helped at Wadzanai Catechetical Training Centre. Sr Carmel remembered him there as ‘the nicest confessor you could go to.’

In 2003, at the age of 63, the first signs of Alzheimer’s appeared. Stephen Buckland remembers his good humour and ‘rather wonderful smile’ but he was ‘highly strung and carried with him a kind of tension.’ Stephen refers to what has been mentioned already; his enthusiasm for golf which wound him up rather released his tension. His interest in archaeology, developed in Italy, flowed over into Zimbabwe and he visited the remains of Khami, Dlodlo, and Nyanga, carefully preparing his visit with reading the night before.

He managed his chronic medical condition with great courage and dignity though with a certain panic when he felt too much was being asked of him or his medicine supply was not assured. It was painful for him to be told he could not return to Zimbabwe and his final ten years must have been a great trial for him. Denis concludes, ‘Tony was a gentle, shy man, serene and peaceable.’