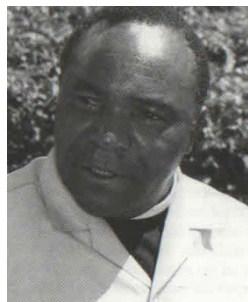


24 January

Br HERMAN TOMA 1 September 1936 – 24 January 2008



Herman Toma was born at St Michael's, Mhondoro, and joined the diocesan congregation of Peter Claver Brothers in 1956. His contribution as a boarding master in the evolving school at Musami in the early 1960s was considered by Gerry McCabe as when he was at his best. 'He knew the boys and had a good working relationship with them.'

In 1968 the congregation was dissolved and its members were invited to make new choices. Herman and three others opted for the Jesuits and, starting at Mazowe, he completed his second novitiate in Lusaka, where he was active in establishing Xavier House. He planted the trees that still grace the periphery.

On returning home he went to the Seminary to help Fr John Berrell, recently appointed rector. It was a charged atmosphere as the liberation struggle heated up. The seminarians were sensitive to every move and Berrell did not seem to grasp their deep-felt frustrations. In fact he exacerbated them by his high-handed discipline. Ignatius Zvaravashu, a Jesuit scholastic at the seminary then, took the seminarians side while Herman felt he had to side with Berrell. It was not a happy situation.

Eventually Berrell was moved and Herman went too. He did his tertianship at St Beuno's in Wales where Gerry W. Hughes found his spontaneous sense of fun delightful. Back in the country, Herman went to Marymount to hold the mission together when Karl Steffens had to be withdrawn after the killing of Gerry Pieper in nearby Kangaire. It was 1979 and the war was still hot. The guerrillas came to the mission and abducted a number of people including Herman and ten female staff: six sisters, two candidates and two nurses. Herman asked for the workers to be allowed back to switch off the lights and turn off the pumps but was refused. They were marched over the hills to Mozambique and eventually reached Maputo. The sisters later recalled how Herman had kept up their spirits and told them not to be afraid as 'our Blessed Lady is always with us'. He used to hold services for them on Sundays while on the March.

They were eventually released in Maputo and flown back to Salisbury where they made world news. Herman made his final vows and was posted to Chishawasha as administrator. In 1984 he went to St George's as a base for a ministry to the sick at Parirenyatwa Hospital. He was not happy at St George's and they were not happy with him! He tended to bate them! Later he was at Prestage, Canisius, St Peter's and Makonde before finally retiring to Richartz when his health began to fail. He was overweight and had diabetes. He remained cheerful to the end and died in 2008.