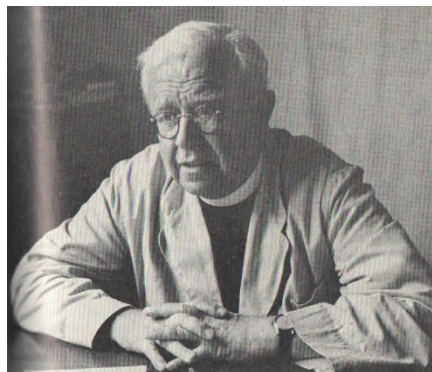


22 February

Fr LUDGER BOEKENHOFF

5 January 1905 – 22 February 1963



Born in Schermbeck, Westphalia, Germany, where the Boekenhoff family have lived for 1000 years, Ludger took some years before he entered the novitiate in Silesia (now in Poland) in 1929. In 1938 he came out to Zimbabwe and spent time learning the language at St Joseph's Chirumanzi, before going to Triashill as a pastor in the villages. In 1941 he transferred to Monte Cassino where he did the same work and in 1944 helped in the founding of Loretto with the Dominican sisters.

1948 found him at Musami and three years later he was asked to found the mission at Hwedza, something the people had long been promised. He had only £20 but within ten years there was thriving mission. He was a jovial person, a man of 'ebullient humour', who made friends easily both with the local people and the white farmers in the district. He was generous and once gave away his rain coat – when it was actually raining.

He begged for funds from Germany to help local people go to school. He gave all his energy and enthusiasm to Wedza (as it then was). A great boost came in 1954 when the 'Blues' – the Little Company of Mary – decided to open a hospital at the mission and they provided everything. He worked closely with Sr Dominica LCM in choosing the site and in all the details of building.

To his initial annoyance, but eventual amusement, he was chosen to star in a film, *The Man Eater*, about a missionary who is mauled by a lion.

In 1962 he was tired and left Wedza. He had diabetes but was also diagnosed as having Burgher's disease. He retired to Monte Cassino and a German visitor asked about his future plans. They happened to be passing the cemetery and Ludger pointed to it. There was a huge outpouring of affection at his funeral. A companion later recorded that he took great consolation from Ignatius' advice to 'seek God in all'. He was 'much extended in service to the people but his life had been a search for God and he found him in the people. And in doing so he had made it easy for them to find God in him.'