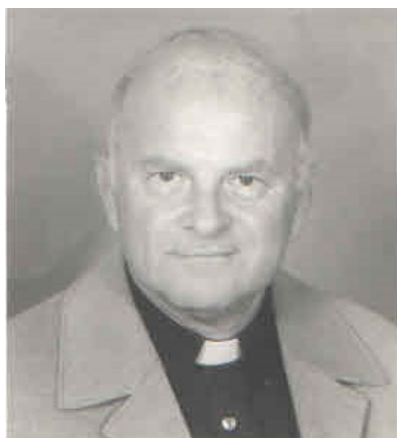


10 March

## **Bp HELMUT RECKTER** 24 October 1933 – 10 March 2004



Born in Arenberg near Koblenz, Germany, Helmut first entered a diocesan seminary in Trier, but, keen to be a missionary, entered the novitiate in 1956. He did his regency at Hwedza for two years (1962-64) before doing theology in Dublin where he was ordained in 1964. Back in Rhodesia, he became Parish priest of Sinoia/Chinhoyi where he developed a 'methodical approach to pastoral work' (Oscar Wermter). He taught RE regularly in the schools, visited the hospitals and the homes

and spent time with the youth twice a week – weightlifting and the like! He also developed a card index.

He became mission superior, aged 36, in 1969 and soon found it involved 'crisis management' as the war developed. Full of energy and organisational ability, he became prefect in 1974 for the new prefecture. The killing of two Jesuits in Makonde in 1978 affected him terribly and he took an active part in the bishops' efforts to bring peace to the country, travelling to Lusaka in 1978 to see the guerrilla leaders.

When the Jesuit province was formed in 1978, he intensified efforts to promote vocations in the diocese. He also built St Peter's Training Centre for the training of lay leaders. He also started a new parish in Mutorashanga and, in Chinhoyi town, Musha weBetania. Oscar mentions his 'green hands' and his joy in laying out the garden in his house, introducing exotic plants. Asked why he was so keen on plants, he replied, 'They don't answer back!' He was a strong character, sensitive to criticism. 'It was best not to provoke him.'

Besides his work for Justice and Peace in the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference, he was chosen to head the Church's role in Social Development and youth work in the country. He opened the Rural Training Centre in the town with Br Hubert Simon.

Fr Richard Randolph, who was Secretary General of the Zimbabwe Bishops' Conference for a time, found him 'a most sympathetic and considerate person with whom to work, taking his full share of responsibility and encouraging all those who worked with him.' At the end of his life Helmut wrote to Dick, 'I seem to thrive on troubles, considering not only the political and economic situation around us but the growing pains of the diocese and beyond.'