

6 April

Br EVARISTO MAPURANGA 1 January 1955 – 6 April 2004

Evaristo Mapuranga was from Chundo in Hurungwe and Wolfgang Thamm, his parish priest, was surprised when he entered the novitiate in 1973 as he never knew him before. He took his first vows in Karoi in 1975, the first, and only, locally born Jesuit to join the Sinoia Mission and so the East German Province. He worked in Makonde in 1975 and in Chitsungo from 1976-79. The German missionaries were evacuated in the last years of the war and he was left in charge of the mission. He almost had a breakdown as the comrades interpreted control of the area by acting as though they were above the law. Even after the ceasefire a person was shot, though not killed. He had to leave and he went to Murombedzi for a year. It seems he then went back to Chitsungo for a year before going to Ireland to study motor mechanics. He returned to work with the Christian Brothers in Bulawayo but the record is silent about what he did there. From 1985 -88 he operated the mechanical branch of the Motor mechanics section of Chinhoyi Rural Training Centre.



He then did his tertianship in America and studied Business Administration at Loyola University in New Orleans (1988-92). He made a great impression on Frs Joe Tetlow and Johnnie Stacer while in the States, the latter of whom later taught for many years in Arrupe College as it then was. They recalled how Evaristo accompanied them ‘back-packing’ on holidays in the high Sierra where Evaristo saw snow for the first time. ‘He was great company and his face was shining with glee and wearing a smile that would drive out anyone’s desolation.’ He accommodated himself to any situation. They noted that Evaristo would pick up the heaviest items and put them in his pack before the others had even noticed. Another anecdote was how Evaristo took care of the medication of the renowned Fr McNaspy in his old age in Loyola community in New Orleans. ‘His long retreat was a grace for him and for all’ (Tetlow).

On his return to Zimbabwe, Evaristo became administrator of Musami and vocations director and moved to Marymount, again as administrator, in 1997. But he became ill as did a number of his contemporaries. The medical and – can we call it – the sociological cause of his illness was deeply distressing to his fellow Jesuits and, much as we would like to move on from it, it is important to note it as it, too, is part of his, and our, story. He died in 2004, aged 49.