

May 19

Fr JOSEPH FRIEDRICH

29 March 1906 – 19 May 1998



‘Freddy’ was born in Essen-Borbech and joined the Society in 1926. His father had doubts about his desire to be a Jesuit in the hostile atmosphere in Germany at the time towards Jesuits but finally he agreed. Freddy’s first thoughts were to respond to the General’s request for volunteers for Japan but he was among those from Germany whose compass was change to Africa. After ordination in 1936, he went to Triashill for seven years with a year in the middle at St Benedict’s.

He wrote later; ‘For 21 years I was doing work I did not like – managing schools, pressing teachers to improve their work and enforcing government regulations – but he consoled himself that it was the price to be paid to learn more about the people and serve them pastorally. He usually spent two days at a centre, one day at the school and one day on pastoral work.

He returned from a holiday overseas in 1948 to Monte Cassino and complained in a letter to his Superior, ‘I have to go back to the blessed Salisbury Vicariate!’ It was a complaint based on his irritation with British Jesuits! But, he went on, ‘I hope, after six months, I will feel happier.’ We can hope he did, especially after the founding of the Sinoia Mission in 1958. But before that, he went to Gatooma (Kadoma) and it was three years before he joined the Sinoia Mission, working in the farms and mines around Manghura. In 1966, he moved to Marymount and later Kangaire. The seventies saw him at St Boniface and Murombedzi. So Freddy’s life was one of continual pastoral work in a variety of places. At his funeral Bishop Reckter singled out two qualities; his thoroughness in instruction of people for baptism and his desire to promote vocations.

By 1980 he was at the House of Adoration and later moved to Canisius House where he laid the foundation for what was to be St Canisius Parish at Marlborough. He was one of the first in the newly opened Richartz House in 1998, the last of houses of retirement he lived in. He was often lonely in his old age and once, when asked how he was, replied ‘miserable’ but with a smile!