

May 29

FR GERALD McCABE 26 November 1932 – 29 May 2009



Gerry was born in Leith, near Edinburgh, educated at Stonyhurst and he joined the Society, aged 16 (!), in 1949. In regency he was in Mhondoro, the Seminary and Mutoko and after ordination in 1962, he served in Musami (ten years), Makumbi (five), Rhodesville, St Albert's, Champion House, Braeside, Richartz and Canisius House as well as being Socius twice.

Gerry blossomed in support service roles and loved providing the details while others made the big decisions. Who else would actually enjoy being secretary of the Conference of Major Religious

Superiors? One of his last acts was to draft a letter for Joe Arimoso, socius at the time, who had asked his help. After Gerry's sudden death, Joe was astonished to find the letter in his pigeon hole. If a provincial struggled to fill commitments, Gerry would draw up an elaborate plan involving moving people around. Gilbert Banda remembers the care Gerry took to prepare letters for him going to Guyana. When Ken Spence, as provincial, wrote to him, as socius, a 15-page letter in long hand during the 33rd GC, Gerry wrote back an equally chatty 12-page typewritten reply.

Gerry wanted to know what was going on – not just for the newsletter – but out of genuine interest. Isaac Masara, secretary at Champion House, had to weather each day a series of questions about what commuters were talking about on the way! And Clyde Muropa recalled his questions trying to understand Murambatsvina.

Gerry shone as a teacher and he took great interest in all his students. Mrs Julia Marumahoko and Sr Letwina Musekiwa recalled his 'round the clock presence at Makumbe'. And he would devise some 'non-violent' methods of punishment, like being confined to one's room or standing on one leg for a while by the fish pond.

Again, as a parish priest at the Cathedral and Braeside, he was attentive to everyone. This writer once witnessed him meeting a family at their home and he knew the names of all the children and their schools. Gerry loved people and was still corresponding 40 years later with people in Chadlington where he used to catechise while at the old Heythrop. He had a group of friends in the Society - Ken Spence, Jim Berry, Joe Wareing, John Byrne and others - with whom he kept up through the years.

But he suffered from diabetes and angina and had been in hospital and had operations so many times that anyone else would lose count. Not Gerry, he remembered with the detail of one keeping a cricket score. But eventually his body gave out and he collapsed across the desk in Joe Arimoso's office and died on the spot.