

May 30

## Fr GILBERT MODIKAYI CHAWASEMA

1926 – 30 May 1998



Gilbert was born of devout Methodist parents in Mhondoro. When he did his schooling at St Michael's Mission, he came under the influence of Fr Charles Daignault and was baptised a Catholic in 1940. He turned his attention to the seminary where he spent almost three

years ill from fever and TB. He went on to study at Kutama Teacher Training College and, after his ordination with Raymond Kapito in 1956 (seen here on the right of Bishop Chichester with Gilbert on the bishop's left), spent ten years as a diocesan priest in Harare, Murombedzi and Mhondoro. But from 1961 he was writing many letters requesting to be admitted to the Society and finally in 1966 his wish was granted. His novitiate was in Edinburgh and he did a course in Catechetics in London afterwards which he considered 'confusion' and advise Fr Ennis not to send anyone there unless they were well grounded in theology!

Back in the country, he served in Mabvuku, Chikwizo, Dzivarasekwa, and Chishawasha. In 1978 he became parish priest first at St Peter's and, in 1985, at Highfield and three years later, Mabelreign. In 1990, he went to Jerusalem and Loyola and in 1992 he was in Banket until 1997 in the midst of which he had a delightful sabbatical at Hekima. Many noted his 'quiet persistence' despite health problems and these finally caught up with him and he died a year after leaving Banket. He had a huge funeral where his 'strength of character and desire to serve God in his people' was highlighted. Emmanuel Gurumombe, who was an altar boy at St Peter's under him, noted his thoroughness in preparation for baptising. He had a gift for breaking into sung refrains as he preached and Manu described these as 'lingering'. He once preached at a service for Leopold Takawira and people later felt it was autobiographical:

The death of Takawira reminds one of the apparently futile death of John the Baptist... Takawira, like many, became a prisoner of an ultimate hope for better things ... This Christian way of involves a self-forgetful

concentration on the true well-being of others and so to live and love is to be an agent of God in his age-long purpose of transforming the world towards the ever more perfect humanization and divinization. ... As we gather here to commend Takawira, we are challenged by that ultimate hope which imprisoned him and made him dedicate his life for his countrymen.