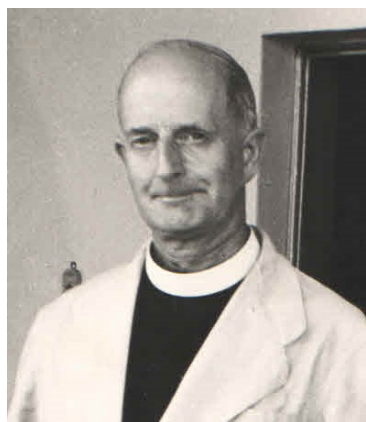


June 9

Fr THOMAS SWIFT

6 June 1901 – 9 June 1960



One fifth of the missionaries who went to Zimbabwe and South Africa were from Lancashire in NW England where there have always been strong Catholic roots. Tom Swift was one of them. He grew up on a farm in Windleshaw and worked there after leaving school with the de la Salle Brothers and only joined the Society when he was 25, old for those days. Tom used to say the difference between transporting produce to market at Windleshaw and Chishawasha was that in the former he could allow the horses to find the way home while he could sleep in the wagon whereas in Chishawasha, he had to drive the truck home from town.

As a 'late' vocation, Tom did two years to catch up on his studies with Fr Lester King who started Osterley near London airport as a college for people to supplement their Latin and Greek. After entering in 1926 and ordination in 1934 he joined the staff at the Seminary in Chishawasha two years later where he taught philosophy and worked on the land. He used to spend the week-ends in Bindura on pastoral work.

In 1944 he moved to Holy Cross and, two years later, to Driefontein until it was handed over to the Bethlehem missionaries. He was beginning to have trouble with his legs and had to have treatment. Later he went to Mount Mellary in the NE which he developed the mission in preparation for the Carmelites' coming.

In 1950 he became superior at Chishawasha and again was working on the farm. He would be on the tractor and then go into do Benediction and hear confessions and then go out again to continue with the tractor.

But his legs kept bothering him and he had to return to England for treatment.

In 1954 he was back at Chishawasha but could not manage and had to settle down to a retirement job at Martindale where he died of pneumonia and pleurisy.