

June 25

## Fr PATRICK MOLONEY 16 April 1920 – 25 June 2011



Paddy lived in four countries and each one receded in his memory as he embraced the next. He was born in Clogheen, Co Tipperary, Ireland; found his feet in England where he joined the Society in 1941; moved on to France where he delighted in the intellectual stimulus provided by the pope's 'loyal opposition' in Fourvière (Chenu, Danielou, Congar, De Chardin) and finally spent his life as a priest in Zimbabwe where he embraced the struggle for freedom with passion.

Nigel Johnson preached at his funeral and gave a fulsome account of his life. The Irish bit we can pass over since Paddy never spoke of it. He relished his time in London where he worked with antiques and danced in the New Year of 1938 at the Chelsea Arts Ball. Later, after the war started and he was at Osterley, he attended a concert at the Queen's Hall – Elgar's setting of Newman's *Dream of Gerontius* - and, soon after leaving, the hall was flattened by German bombs.

He did his regency at Wimbledon but got TB and the doctor ordered a dryer climate. Fifty years earlier that would have meant Dunbrody, but in the 1950s, it was Fourvière, Lyons. He was stimulated by the questions about the Church in the modern world (later the title of a council document), reform of the liturgy, the role of the laity, new ways of viewing scripture and returning to the sources of Jesuit spirituality. Theology was joined by cheese and wine – 'superb' - as his great discoveries in France.

Aged 37, he arrived in Salisbury and was secretary to Chichester for a while before going to Marondera as PP. He built the church, arguing with the architect about the copper roof, and finally managing the Tridentine consecration of the altar with all its elaborate ritual ('a witches' Sabbath'). It was in this parish that he came face to face with racism and it shocked him and marked him for the rest of his life.

He was called to the seminary for which he was well qualified but he was not a success as a teacher. Like with his Irish experience, he hardly mentioned his time there in later life. But he did have a great influence on some individuals, Pius Ncube, later Archbishop of Bulawayo, for one.

He enjoyed trout fishing at Nyanga but he also went further into the mountains to bring relief to Chief Tangwena and his people whom Ian Smith was trying to remove from their ancestral lands. He was part of the Justice and Peace commission which included Bishop Lamont, John Deary, Arthur Dupuis, Fidelis Mukonori, John Gilmurray and Dieter Scholz. And he would visit Maurice Nygumbo in prison as well as supporting Moven Mahachi, Didymus Mutasa and Guy Clutton Brock – all names well known in the 1970s as the war raged in the country.

After independence Paddy jumped at the opportunity to visit Nigel who was at Solwezi Refugee Camp, Zambia, sharing his tent with the rats, living on rice and beans, listening to choirs and general participating in the life of the refugees. This was the kind of life Jesuits should be living, Paddy felt.

In the early 1980s Paddy joined Nigel at Musami where he fitted well with the youth who regarded him as a fond *sekuru* and he loved being with them. Nigel was now living close to Paddy and learnt that for Paddy there were two types of people; ‘Lovely, lovely people’ and ‘absolute bastards.’ Nigel felt he himself drifted from one to the other category as occasions arose.

At 72, Paddy went to Prestage House where he continued as a *sekuru* this time to the university students but also writing periodic theological reflections founded on the early history of the Church. These were packed with a life time of reflection on his part and were highly appreciated at the time. In his last years he was a great support to Canisius Chishiri and they would do their examen together every evening .