

June 28

Fr DIETER THIEL

17 March 1932 – 28 June 2016



Born in Launenburg, Pommerania, in the east of Germany, Dieter's family fled west after the war settling in Lübeck, near Hamburg. Dieter knew there were Jesuits, like Alfred Delp, who were opposing Hitler and he was drawn to them. As a teenager he knew a great preacher in his parish and he used to accompany him. Gradually his vocation took shape and he entered the Jesuits in 1952.

He developed an interest in working for the unity of the Church but for this he would need to study Lutheran theology and it seems this was beyond him. He was more pastorally drawn and worked with Fr Leppich for some time. After his ordination in 1962, he volunteered for the Sinoia mission and came to Rhodesia in 1965. He started in Karoi and was tasked to reach out the white farmers as well as the black people living in what were then called the Tribal Trust Lands.

Gradually he built a centre in Hurungwe which he named after St Boniface. He trained catechists for the outstations and built the church at the mission with a mission helper. He was there for seven years before moving to Kangaire. It was war time and the mission was attacked twice.

He moved to the city in 1992, to Mabelreign and in 2001 to Braeside. He was always keen on training parish leaders and introduced bible studies but he did not always get on well with parishioners; there was something a bit rigid about him. He was a man of enthusiasms and took to the charismatic movement and the new evangelisation. He would like to have seen a diocesan synod but it did not happen then. By 2015 his health was failing and he retired to Richartz House where he died.