

1 August

Fr JOACHIM PETRAUSCH 3 October 1934 – 1 August 2019



Joachim then - and later, as we knew him. In a moment of humble and courageous self-knowledge, Joachim wrote to Chiedza Chimhanda, Provincial, in 2014 to ask him not to consider him as a successor to Tony Bex when Tony could no longer do the archives; 'My strength lies in mechanical work ... sorting out and



looking up things.'

Born in Breslau, Silesia, East Germany, his family had to endure much as the Russians advanced towards the end of the war. He once told Tony Bex:

In about 1944, when the Russian troops were only about two days away, his mother decided enough was enough and she and her daughter and three sons set out for the nearest railway station. It was winter and they carried their belongings by sledge. They reached the farm of one of their relatives. One day while there, they were strafed by enemy planes. They moved to another relative and then reached Erfurt which was also badly bombed and moved again and eventually found refuge with a helpful farmer. They stayed there two years.

The Americans advanced but the Nazi authorities were unwilling to raise the white flag (of surrender) and the Americans shelled the village. The people then took the law into their own hands and raised the flag. Then the Americans came in peace and gave the children chocolate. When the war was over, they were reunited with their father who had been a prisoner of war. He eventually settled down and worked in an office for many years 'like me'.

Joachim joined the Society in 1953 and was ordained in 1964 after his theology with Helmut Reckter in Dublin. He had already been out to Rhodesia for regency, at Marymount. After his return in 1966 he went to Chitsungo, St Albert's and Marymount – always as assistant pastor parish priest. In 1971 he was in Chinhoyi and two years later was diagnosed with Bilharzia. It affected him severely. He went to Germany for what turned out to be four years of treatment including a brain operation. His brother, Peter, who was a doctor, followed his treatment closely and reported on his condition to the provincial. 'He carries his cross with great patience and quiet humour and serenity. He sets an example for us all.'

Joachim admitted he was now only able to 'partly function as a Jesuit' but he came back to Zimbabwe and served as the bishop's secretary and accountant for thirty years. He and Hubert Simon were companions to one another in the bishop's house in Chinhoyi. Joachim asked to be relieved in 2004 as he feared a breakdown because he was beset by anxiety, but it was only in 2008 that he moved to Richartz House. He worked in the archives with Tony Bex and spent three years transferring data from the old Apple to the new. He also helped in re-organising the files in the provincial's office. In 2014 he was on anti-depressant drugs and in 2016 he was relieved of his work in the archives.