

8 August

## **Abp FRANCIS MARKALL** 24 September 1905 – 8 August 1992



Francis Markall went to school at St Ignatius, Stamford Hill. He was interested in scouting but his mother discouraged him as ‘scouts tend to go to the colonies’ and she disapproved of colonies. He entered the Society in 1924, was ordained a priest in 1937 and a bishop in 1956. Bishop Chichester ‘interviewed’ him before he came to Africa: Did he know about building? Cattle? Medicine? He had to reply ‘No’ to all these questions though he did have an interest in medicine and ran a clinic at Kutama and would diagnose and sometime inject. He said

he saved a number of lives. Chick also asked: Did he have a sense of humour?

Markall started his work in Africa at St Barbara’s (now in Mutare diocese) and left an account of his time there. He was the manager of the outschools and would walk to them arriving in the evening. ‘Next day, there would be Mass and then an inspection of the school registers, gardens and facilities. He would observe the teachers teaching. In the afternoon there would be confessions and interviews with people about their requests. Next day all the outlying people would come for Mass and in the afternoon, he would set out, on foot, for the next place.’

Asked about his pastoral methods, he replied that they learnt everything from those who went before them, in his case, Frs Johanny, Burbridge and Quinn. There were no African priests to consult on issues and we ‘had to test every inch of the ground as we went along.’ The old missionaries did not feel able to adapt the faith to the people but as time went by it was clear that if no effort were made ‘Christianity will just be a veneer’. Asked about the emphasis on education, he replied the missionaries were doing what the Benedictine monks did in the Middle Ages: bring education to people.

In 1956, Markall was shocked to hear he had been appointed bishop with right of succession to Chichester. Two events dominated his time: the Vatican Council and the Liberation War. The former he welcomed as a way of up-dating the Church. The latter he also welcomed but President Mugabe recalled at Markall’s funeral that he had said to him: ‘Robert, remember, no violence!’ Mugabe also remembered at that time Markall’s closeness to his family in

Kutama when his mother was left destitute by his father who went to Bulawayo to marry another woman. Markall used to supply Mugabe's mother with basics like soap. He told him, 'Robert, your mother is a saint. If you do what she says you will be alright.' Mugabe also mentioned the archbishop used to send him messages through Fr Swift when he was in prison.

Markall set about separating the Archdiocese from the Jesuit mission through establishing a Senate of priests, deaneries and the like. He felt his strength was in administration and mention is often made of the role of Mary Stonier who was a pillar of strength in the diocesan offices.

Markall contracted bilharzia in his 'bush' days and endured surgery in 1966, '67 and '68. He retired in 1976 and welcomed Patrick Chakaipa as his successor. He became chaplain to Hartmann House and later to the House of Adoration until he retired to Nazareth House for his last days.