Fr JOSEPH OTTO 26 September 1867 – 16 August 1969

Born in Eichsfeld, Germany, Joseph Otto (second from the right), Fr Joseph Friedrich tells us, was a soldier in the World War. After the war he qualified as a teacher, joined the Society in 1922 and was ordained eight years later. He taught at Canisius in Berlin, until the College was condemned by the Nazis. He turned his attention to Africa and arrived in Mutoko in 1939 to learn Shona – and English. He was soon posted to St Benedict's where he built up a mission that was on the point of collapse. After 14 years he went to Mhondoro where he built the large beautiful church and developed the school that Fr Cogger had started.

He went on leave in 1957 and both Archbishop Markall and Edward Enright, the Jesuit Superior, asked him to ask his provincial to revive the pre-war plan to start a German mission in Rhodesia. Fr Otto seems to have been pushing on an open door as the plan was quickly acted on and he became the first superior of the fledgling Sinoia (Chinhoyi) mission in 1959. (The photo shows most of the German Jesuits on the mission in the 1960s).

He wrote in *Sambezi* about the difficulty of making people in Germany understand the hardships of the mission, the lack of money, the need to build schools and put down water pipes. And all the time they were saying Mass in

grass huts. But he encouraged the growth of the mission with Fr Kotzki going to Sipolilo and beyond, Mushalek developing Marymount and others opening missions on the way to Chirundu. 'Schools are deeply desired,' he wrote.

When his term was over, he became superior of St Albert's until his health began to falter and he moved to Martindale as chaplain. He spent his last year at Canisius House where he died.

When Fr Otto came out Africa, he had to leave his music behind. He was a good organist and composed some works, notably an oratorio for the North American Martyrs at the time of their canonisation. But Fr Friedrich says, 'he had no regrets' and was happy to give everything to the mission.