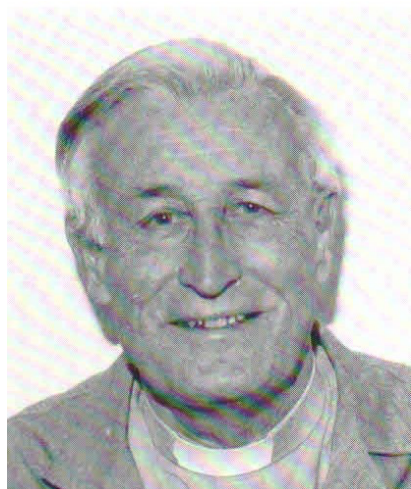


27 August

Fr GEOFFREY COCKROFT 28 January 1921 – 27 August 1993



Geof Cockroft was born in Barrow-in-Furness, a centre of ship-building. He did well in the local Grammar school but they did not teach Latin and Geof wanted to be a priest. It was arranged he go to Champion House, Osterley, where Fr Clem Tiger topped up the education of those who wanted to be priests but whose basic education was wanting. He chose the Society and entered in 1938 and found himself adrift in a large group of youngsters from very different backgrounds to his. When war broke out, they moved to St Beuno's in North Wales and

Geof was among those who made his first vows in the little chapel overlooking the Clwyd valley. He returned to London for philosophy but Hitler's bombs killed one of his companions on fire drill and they dispersed again, this time to Heythrop. It was there that Geof developed his interest in scouting and formed a group for physically handicapped youngsters.

He did a four-year teaching regency in Leeds and, after ordination in 1951, five years at Liverpool. It was noted how he always defended the weak – even against superiors! In one group he was talking about the importance of the missions. One of the boys spoke up, 'Father, if they are so important, why don't you go there?' When provincial John Coventry asked for volunteers, Geoff responded and went.

He arrived in 1960 and went to St George's. In 1962 he moved to Champion House and then St Peter's Mbare where he oversaw the building of the new church, an ambitious project for the time. He seems to have divided his time between teaching – St George's (twice), Musami, St Ignatius – and pastoral work - St Peter's, Champion House, Mvurwi, Rhodesville where he challenged the white parishioners at a time of racial tension, Kariba until the heat proved to much and he moved first to Kutama and finally to Macheke, where he built the administration block at Monte Cassino. He was deeply appreciated as a teacher and seems to have been equally esteemed as a pastor. Mark Hackett adds, 'He was very organised and could be somewhat dismissive of others' efforts. At Musami, where he was headmaster, to our wicked amusement, he had already prepared the time table for the first term of the next year during the third term of the previous year. Inevitably, both religious and lay staff were changed and to his great annoyance he had to do the task again.'