

22 October

Fr KARL STEFFENS

1 January 1936 - 22 October 2020



Karl was born in Saarburg and was an outstanding middle-distance runner. He entered the Jesuits in 1955, following his older brother who died in 2000. Karl did his regency in Buren and was ordained in 1965. After studying Shona in Canisius House and St Rupert's he went to Chitsungo in 1967. From 1969 to '82 he was at Marymount, the oldest mission in the Chinhoyi Mission. It had its own hospital and twelve outstations. He developed the pastoral work there and built good relationships with the people. He was at Marymount on the terrible night when Fr Gerry Pieper was shot at Kangaire, the neighbouring mission. Karl was on the phone to Gerry not long before the killing and later preached a passionate sermon at Gerry's funeral in Chishawasha. The guerrillas were often on the mission and Karl was fearless in demanding they treat people fairly and with compassion. 'What would your mother think if she saw you now?' he said to one group who were torturing a man.

The time came when he had to leave the mission because of the war but he learnt to fly and would come in, using a small plane, by day to bring supplies and give the people a sense of not being cut off.

He later moved to Chitsungo (1982) and in 1987 he went to St Boniface Hurungwe where he remained until 2001. This was after the war and the emphasis was on rebuilding the missions as much physical as well as pastoral damage had been done. It was no longer necessary to fly – except on his powerful motor bike on which he drove 'like a mad horse'! (Jörg Dantscher) His last years were at Musami Mission and Banket Partish.

He was known for his strong views and his strong uncompromising faith. Enthusiasm was written in his face and in his heart. Despite all that he went through he retained a boyish joy and excitement which belied his advancing years. He was like St Exupery's *Little Prince* with his bright laugh. He was himself part of the Good News. It was only when he had his leg amputated that it came home to him he was no longer young. But he still managed to get up speed in his wheel chair in the Richartz Infirmary!

