

6 November

Br MICHAEL ANDRIEJAUSKAS

17 January 1914 – 6 November 1996



Andrew, as he came to be known as no one could manage his family name and we were not into first names in those days, came to this country in 1938. Born in Vaitelia, Lithuania, into farming community, he joined the Jesuits in 1933 and, as in those days his province was closely linked to the East German province, it was normal that he and another Lithuanian brother, should come out with the German missionaries who were planning to start their own mission. He first went to Triashill, the *de facto* HQ of the German missionaries, before moving to Monte Cassino where Sr Pia CPS, noted his great contribution. ‘He was our regular driver ... always cheerful and ready to be of service ... He planted gum trees with the help of the primary school children providing a source of poles over the years. ... He constructed a weir and water tanks on the mountain side ... He worked with Br Hayward on the farm and McGuigan in the carpentry. How we would now appreciate the work of those dedicated brothers!’

Andrew moved to Mhondoro in 1964 and this writer first met him there in 1966 when he was maintaining the engines on the mission. Fr Martin Thomas, the superior at the time, told him that Andrew learnt his skills through trial and error – not through courses and certificates – but the ‘errors’ could be expensive at times! Fr Thomas Mhuriro, as a small boy in the 1970s, remembered the ‘lifetime experience of arriving from an out school to find Br Andrew with his apprentices. ... We noted with sadness his untimely departure (when he had to be moved because of the war). We had come to identify him with the mission in an inseparable and indispensable way.’ He was responsible for the plumbing, all the engines, motor mechanics, fencing (4 kms) of the mission. Fr Kolvenbach wrote to him for his jubilee, ‘Those who know you deeply appreciate your gentleness, kindness and presence among them.’

In his jubilee year (1983) another effort was made to enable him to visit his own country which he had left 45 years earlier. But what could go wrong did go wrong: planes late, visa discrepancies, lost luggage. He was only allowed to stay five days of his allotted three weeks. But he did meet ten of his relatives

who travelled 300 miles to Vilnius to see him. He was unable to visit his home town or his mother's grave.

Andrew first came to Makumbe in 1981. He was to stay there until he moved to Silveira House in 1990. At Makumbe, Mark Hackett found him the 'perfect example of the *ad omnia* brother. You had only to ask his opinion on something and it was done. But his health was weakening and Sr Diana brought him back to life by feeding him with a spoon like a baby. When he recovered, he was so happy he went with her to Victoria Falls.

At his funeral, John Urayai, administrator of Silveira Hoaué, said, 'Br Andrew was kept alive by his love of his work and his desire to be of service to others; boreholes, water pumps, water pipes, electricity. Roland von Nidda was superior at the time and said after Andrew's death 'they were able to clear up his things in 15 minutes'. Andrew had an intense loyalty to his native country, to his adopted one, to the Church, to the Society and to his friends. It was strong love, deep and intense. He was 'stateless' when his country was taken over by the Russians and stateless when Smith declared UDI. Yet it is hard to think of a more rooted person. Perhaps it came from his years close to the soil in Vaitelia.