



Fr William Lane, S.J.
(1931-1998. In Zambia 1958-1998)

9 January 1998

Not long before Fr Bill Lane died, he was chatting with Fr Bob Kelly at St Ignatius, Lusaka. A young lady whom they both knew had died in a very sudden manner at U.T.H. Fr Bill remarked, 'You know, Bob, that's the way I'd like to go, quickly and without fuss'. And that is the way it happened. On Friday, 9 January 1998, Bill was on his way to Chilalantambo with Fr Jim Carroll to give some Scripture talks to the parishioners. As they drove on that bumpy road, Bill suddenly stopped talking. Fr Jim was shocked to find that Bill was dead beside him. There seems to have been no intervening period of sickness or pain. His departure was, as he had wished, 'quickly and without fuss'.

Bill was born in Tullamore, Co Offaly, Ireland in 1931. After school with the Christian Brothers, he went to Dublin University to study engineering for a year. At the end of that year he joined the Society in 1950. For his regency he was sent to Zambia and taught at Canisius for a year as well as learning chiTonga. After the usual course of studies, he was ordained priest in 1964 at Milltown Park, Dublin.

Returning to Zambia he worked in Kasiya parish, then Mukasa Minor Seminary at Choma. From 1969 to 1973, he was education secretary in the diocese of Monze, responsible for a network of 80 primary schools. His organizing and administrative talents were recognized at this time. He was the last expatriate Education Secretary in the Monze diocese as the primary schools were handed back to Government.

Bill was moved to the Archdiocese of Lusaka. The late Fr Dominic Nchete asked, 'Why are they moving our best men away from the diocese?' Fr Lane knows how to work with our people'. He was asked to become secretary for communications (1978-1985). He combined the job with the office of province bursar (1982-1988). From 1990 until his untimely death, Bill worked for the Zambia Episcopal Conference, first as secretary for catechetics and then as coordinator of the Bible apostolate.

Publishing was big in his life during all these years, to help people come to grips with Sacred Scripture, with prayer and with the history of the Church in Zambia. His writing was clear and concise and very practical in the many booklets he produced. All Bill's activities were carried out with wit and good humor which made him a popular member of any group he was in. He could also be a devastating critic when aroused by what he considered hypocrisy. Bill considered himself to be politically incorrect in that he expressed his views honestly, rather than resort to making the right noises in the right places and he was aware that this did not enhance his chances for advancement through the hierarchy of the Society. In fact he never was a superior.

The number of people whose lives he touched was great indeed. He had a rare gift for reaching out to those whom others might have considered black sheep. His sensitivity to those who were ill at one time or another was another remarkable facet of his life. Bill was a gifted person who gave generously of his time and talents to the

Church and people of Zambia for the forty years he worked in the country.

Throughout his years in Zambia, he preached and directed numerous retreats as well as helping at Kalundu Study Centre and in the Major Seminary. In his busy career he was always willing to help out in the parish by way of taking a share in the public Masses and other church services whenever he was needed. He was a good confessor and a no nonsense preacher.