



**Br Adalbert Paczka, S.J.**  
**(1875-1955. In Zambia 1913-1955)**

**19 January 1955**

Adalbert Paczka was born on 13 April 1875 at Siedlecze-Kanczugi. After military service and a secretarial course for local government, he entered the Society in 1905 at thirty. He had been a small scale farmer and after his vows he worked in the garden for a number of years. He headed for Northern Rhodesia in 1913, together with Fr Kraupa, the first superior, and Br Kodrzynski, the renowned builder. By now he was already 38 years of age and so quite courageous to set off on a completely new venture in his life. He carried with him a variety of seeds which he successfully planted and so helped to care for our men.

He was an unusual character, a dedicated farmer with an ability to teach people in his own florid fashion. At times his superiors thought him a bit of a clown, but perhaps due to his secretarial training, he was the only brother to take up catechetical instruction besides his normal farming. Despite his fairy stories and exaggerated tales, or perhaps because of them, he proved an effective communicator.

It was so like him to rush down to the new farm just acquired from Harrison Clark at Chingombe and have a small pole and grass house up and ready for the first group of pioneers – Frs Czarlinski, Hankiewicz and Br Pacek. He would spend quite a number of years there himself before he moved to Katondwe in 1920. The year after the Chingombe community arrived, the First World War broke out and the six Polish missionaries were classified by the British Administration as aliens since they came from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Initially there were a few incidents, before a reasonable calm ensued but Br Paczka, because of his military service, was taken to be an Austrian reservist and actually spent a week in jail in Livingstone, before the Superior Fr Sykes in Salisbury sorted things out.

He worked for a number of years at Katondwe, always combining his farming with his catechizing. Initially he needed some time to recover his health which could be precarious at times, despite the fact that he lived to a ripe old age.

In the early twenties there was a lot of trouble in the area with the Watch Tower or Jehovah Witnesses. Under a charismatic leader, Toma or Mwanalesa, they swept through the mission, re-baptizing many of the Christians from all the Churches. At one stage the missionaries closed 28 small school centers but they were re-opened some months later. In desperation Br Paczka was sent by Fr Drweiga in 1925 on his own to Mpanshya to explain the true faith to the people, which strictly speaking was outside the area of Katondwe Mission and was in fact in a Wesleyan domain. He was immensely successful, for his outgoing and imaginative style caught on and many of the newly baptized Christians were brought to their senses. He had a good interview with the local chief who was so impressed that he made a request for a Catholic mission to be set up and promised 200 acres of land. In 1928 a mission station was opened at Mpanshya

with Br Paczka doing the initial building of a community house and a school – not forgetting his usual garden of vegetables and fruit trees.

In 1936 he went to Mpima to the catechical center outside Broken Hill (Kabwe) where he worked for about 10 years. He was a great supporter of the Mpima farm which later began to take on a new lease of life as a training center for primary teachers/catechists and later as a minor seminary. In 1946 he was transferred to Kasisi and spent his last years there. He continued working right up to his last year both in the garden and the classroom. His fluency in the language and his homely and colorful style endeared him to the people. He often accompanied Fr Zabdyr on his missionary tours. He passed away at Kasisi on 19 January 1955 after 42 years of dedicated service. At 80 years of age he was one of the oldest of the early missionaries.

Fr Zabdyr was so upset at his passing that he could not officiate at his funeral but in the house journal as superior, he recorded a wonderful tribute to his faithful companion. "A cheery, candid soul, very pious, edifying, united to God, living more in heaven than on earth. Almighty God gave him a character that had its weak points – quick temper, irascibility – which kept him in humility. He must have made many acts of controlling himself in his life; in case of an outburst of temper he soon was sorry for it and felt humiliated. He liked people, was nice to everybody, gentle, generous. When he got gifts from others he usually distributed them, especially to the children; they were always hanging around, knocking at his door. He sometimes asked permission to say some words to the people, or was invited to do so, as he was a good talker and preacher, a deep-thinking man with a delicate sensitiveness; he was favored by God with a knowledge of heavenly things".