



Fr Charles Muchinshi Chilinda, S.J.

(1965-2021)

21 January 2021

Charles Muchinshi Chilinda was born on 29 October 1965 at Santa Maria, on Chilubi Island to Severino Chilinda and Daria Chisukulu. He went to Lubushi Minor Seminary for his secondary education (1980-1984) and shortly afterwards in 1985, he entered the Society of Jesus.

His interest in communications arose early on for he did a BA in Mass Communications at UNZA (1987-1991). He was sent to Pune (India) for his philosophy; he did his regency in the Jesuit Refugee Service in Malawi (1992-1993) and went to Hekima College (Nairobi) for his theology (1996-1999). He was ordained in 2001. He then went to the States for his final year of theology at the Jesuit School in Berkeley and afterwards went to Loyola Marymount for a masters in films & TV (2001-2004).

He was a man who loved the world of media and on returning to Zambia in 2001 and he founded Loyola Productions. Starting from scratch with just a single camera, a Sony PD150, in a small room at Kalemba Hall, St Ignatius Parish, he worked diligently to establish a state-of-the-art media house now located in Kabulonga. But the only personal media gadgets he had were two or three cellphones. The rest of the media equipment he bought was for Loyola Productions. As Charles himself said, "All material things pass. If you are without love, you are nothing." Indeed, Charles loved without measure and in turn, he was loved by many.

Charles was helpful man who was missed by many. Most Congregations of Sisters missed him: notably the Poor Clares, the Baptistine Sisters, the Franciscan Sisters, the Handmaid Sisters and so on. The best of Charles showed when he was helping others, When Joe Keaney saw Charles and John Mwelwa taking such care of the late Bob Kelly in his illness, Joe decided that in his old age of illness, he would remain in St Ignatius. Charles cared for Emmanuel Mumba for sixteen months non-stop till he died. Until his own death, he was caring for Joe Keaney.

He loved to court trouble and to live on the edge, testing the limits of superiors and his friends alike. He was made to do different probations and while he understood the importance of probation in the Society of Jesus, he believed, rightly or wrongly, that some of these probations did not arise from the best intentions of his superiors. Charles was loved by many but certainly not by all – none of us are anyway.

He lived all his pastoral life at St Ignatius and while working fulltime at Loyola Productions, he also took on community responsibilities: he was minister of the house from 2004-2009 and superior (2009-2016). He was for 6 years the Provincial's delegate for the young men in training (2006-2012), a sign of the trust and respect that the Province had for one who often had a troubled relationship with authority.

Invariably he was the one people sought out in their times of difficulty. He wanted to be part of the trouble and part the solution. His close friends referred to him as the 'Crisis Manager', a title he merited and enjoyed. He loved solving people's problems. Violet Mengo in her *Ode to peacemaker Father Charles Chilinda* (Zambia Daily Mail, 25 January 2021) gives examples of his efforts at reconciling opponents:

- Helping Bishop Joshua Banda (Pentecostal Assemblies) in reconciling differences between Edgar Lungu and Guy Scott in the PF party.
- Again at the first memorial service of the late President Sata, he got President Lungu and UPND President Hakainde Hichilema to shake hands.
- At the fifth memorial service, he tried to broker peace between President Lungu and Chishimba Kambwile, his former minister of information.

Charles contacted Covid during the pandemic and because of his underlying diabetes and high blood pressure, he died unexpectedly on 21 January 2021. One of his final messages from hospital was to his media team: "God willing I see it through. If things don't work out, know that I am very proud of you all and the strides you have made."

Charles was totally dedicated to what he saw should be said and done, and the numerous blogs at his IT funeral service show that people appreciated the hand of God at work in his life. The Marian shrine at the door of St Ignatius Church had dozens of bouquets of flowers around a large photo of the smiling and ebullient priest with one of his favourite sound bites: "The only measure of love is to love without measure."