

**Fr Augustyn Wilhelm, S.J.**  
**(1866-1952. In Zambia 1919-1924)**

**30 January 1952**

Augustyn Wilhelm was born in 1866 in Wroclaw (Breslau) which is near the German border and once was under German sovereignty. He was ordained as a diocesan priest in Wroclaw in 1889 at the early age of 23. He entered the Society three years later (1892) at Stara Wies. He was intellectually gifted and taught metaphysics, logic and ethics in various religious institutions. In 1907 he was professed of the four vows which in those days were largely restricted to those who performed very well academically. Almost immediately afterwards in 1908 he volunteered for the Zambesi Mission.

His first eleven years was spent in Southern Rhodesia. His first assignment was in Chishawasha. It was the center of the Rhodesian Mission but not the first station which was Empandeni outside Bulawayo. However, he had problems with his superior, Fr Charles Bert, largely because of his rather unusual mode of living. He was a great believer in Kneipism (a system of water therapy that required frequent immersions, herbs, good diet, etc.)

Augustyn was moved the following year to Dreifontein (1909) where he remained till 1914 except for one year. He then was sent to Hama's (1913, 1915 to 1919). In both places he was active both in pastoral ministry and in the schools.

In 1920 he was transferred to Zambia, first to Kapoche (1921-22) and then to Katondwe (1922-24) where he did most of the pastoral work in the Church, while the superior Fr Seidel was more occupied with the many material concerns. He was in Kapoche when the old Austrian founder, Fr Moskopp, collapsed and died rather suddenly.

In 1924 he met his Waterloo, for who should come first as ecclesiastical visitor and then as temporary Mission Superior, but the man who was happy to see him leave Chishawasha years before – the Belgian Fr Charles Bert. This time Bert was quite upset at how Fr Wilhelm had developed over the previous decade and found his frequent state of undress, which was all basically for health reasons, quite unacceptable and reckoned it was also very confusing for the local people. Fr Wilhelm was sent back to his home province.

He continued to offer spiritual direction in many of our houses in Poland for many years to come. The proof of the value of his water therapy was that he lived to the ripe old age of 86, finally passing away on 30 January 1952. Among the 61 of our missionaries born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, only half a dozen achieved his age.