



Br George Feeney S.J.
(1933-89. In Zambia 1960-1989)

9 February 1989

Br George Feeney was born in Dublin, Ireland, on the 12 July 1933. He attended school in that same city at St Canice's and O'Connells Secondary School, and also attended Bolton Street Technical School.

At the age of 22, he entered the novitiate at Emo Park in March of 1955. A couple of years after taking vows, he was sent to Northern Rhodesia. This was in June 1960 and his first posting was at Charles Lwanga TTC where he stayed for two years looking after the water supply and things mechanical. In 1962 he was transferred to Chikuni across the river, where he lived the rest of his life, except for the year's tertianship at Tullabeg (Ireland), where he took his final vows in August 1966. Later he lived for a short spell at Kasisi, outside Lusaka.

George was very versatile as he turned his hand to many different types of work: from gardening to farming when the need arose, from mechanics to being minister in the house, while continuing with the very essential job of keeping the mission supplied with water. When someone went on leave, George was there to fill the gap, until the return. He was a Jesuit for 34 years, 29 of which were spent in Africa, in Chikuni.

The very factual account of his life as given above, does not do justice to the man George. Apart from the various jobs he did so ably, an outstanding quality which he had was his ability to make friends. To the many schoolboys, who passed through Canisius, George was a good friend. It was not just the work that kept him going but just strolling down through the school in the evening for a bit of a chat. A not uncommon picture was to see him sitting on the low wall outside the house, chatting with schoolboys while at the same time he pulled no punches and was very straight in his speaking with them.

He was very generous with his time and talents when people came to him for help or advice or both. The number of people who turned up for his funeral is clear evidence of the esteem in which he was held. He was a sharp card player, as his friends knew well, and sometimes his solution to a problem could be quite radical when with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders, he would say, "scrap the whole thing, matey, and put up a new one".

He came to Luwisha House a week before he was due to go on leave and receive medical treatment. He was quite sick really and was eating nothing and developed what seemed to be a high fever on Monday, the 6th February. He was taken to UTH to be put on a drip for the night. Next day it was suspected that he had blackwater fever and anemia. But on Wednesday it was clear that it was more serious than that. The final diagnosis was leukemia at an advanced stage. He must have had it for some time and yet continued with his work. He received blood transfusions, from his fellow Jesuits. On Thursday he was in a comatose state not recognizing anyone. That evening there were five Jesuits and a number of Sisters who knew him well, praying at his bedside. At 2100 hours he was moved to the Intensive Care Unit and died fifty-five minutes later. The speed the leukemia acted was a shock to all.

The funeral was held in Chikuni. The evening before many people both religious and villagers assembled in the church for the vigil. On the 13th February George was buried. The Bishop of Monze was the main celebrant at the funeral Mass, aided by the Archbishop of Lusaka and many Jesuit and other priests.

His life was one of faith, a constant presence in Chikuni. He, as a Jesuit, was "prepared and very much ready for whatever is enjoined upon us in the Lord and at whatsoever time without asking for or expecting any reward in this present and transitory life, but hoping for that life which, in its entirety, is eternal through God's supreme mercy".