



Fr Julian Plawecki, S.J.
(1911-1969. In Zambia 1949-1969)

28 February 1969

Fr Julian was born on 29 June 1911 in Wojakowa, a small locality about 35 km east of Krakow in south Poland. Seventeen years later he entered the Jesuit novitiate at Stara Wies. He followed the normal Jesuit formation of humanities, philosophy and two years' regency as prefect and teacher in the Jesuit secondary school of Chyrow.

In 1939 he had started his theology in Lublin. The Germans had invaded western Poland and the Russian Communists invaded the eastern part, which completed the defeat of all Poland. The Gestapo (the State Secret Police) invaded the premises at Lublin where the Jesuits, including Fr Julian, were stationed and they arrested all the Jesuits and sent them first to prison in Lublin. In the middle of June 1940, they were transported to the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen near Berlin and finally to Dachau concentration camp. Here in Dachau, the Gestapo had collected all priests and religious arrested in Germany and the occupied countries. These numbered 2500, over 1800 of whom were Polish. For five years Fr Julian remained there until the end of World War II in 1945. He was subjected, as were some others, to malaria experiments by being injected with malaria and then treated or not treated. Many died but God spared Fr Julian for other apostolates.

After liberation, he finished his theology and was ordained priest in Belgium on 24 August 1946. Further studies and tertianship in Wales brought him to 1949 when he arrived in Lusaka, having volunteered to come out to help the tired personnel of the Polish Jesuits. He began to learn chiBemba and was posted to Kabwe.

His first assignment was to be manager of schools and to do pastoral work in Kabwe and the rural areas around it. He became superior in 1951 and in 1955 he moved to Lusaka as superior of the northern part of the mission, called the Lusaka Mission, run by the Polish Jesuits, as distinct from the Chikuni Mission run by the Irish Jesuits. In 1969, these two parts were amalgamated to become the Vice-Province of Zambia. Fr Julian remained as superior until 1964. During this time he was also vicar general of the Archdiocese of Lusaka. At the end of 1964 he was sent to the rather remote Katondwe mission in the Luangwa Valley with its hot climate, seventeen outstations, a new hospital and two primary schools. It demanded every bit of his time and energy.

These traits of character appeared in his administration, whether as the local or as the major superior, or even as a simple missionary: – total dedication and determination, kindness yet exactness in execution. He governed gently and by his own example. He required the same traits from those under him, and expected the same from those above him.

On 27 February 1969 he came up to Lusaka, as he often did. While passing over the railway crossing near St Francis, which then had no lights or overhead bridge, he was hit by an oncoming train and was killed.