



Fr Frederick Kabwe, S.J.

(1958-2014)

3 March 2014

Fred Kabwe was born in Chingola on 12 December 1958. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1984 in Lusaka as a Brother, having already completed his primary teacher training in Kasama. After his novitiate and juniorate, part of which took place in DRC, he began teaching at Angelina Tembo primary school in Kabwe. In 1990, he moved to Nairobi to study Religious Education at the Marist International Institute. He received a degree in education in 1993, returned to Zambia and began lecturing in RE at Charles Lwanga College in Chikuni.

In 1997 he asked permission of his superiors for a change of grades, since a desire to become a priest had been growing in him. He was given permission to undertake priestly studies. He spent three years in Harare at Arrupe College studying philosophy, then proceeded to the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California for his theological study. This he completed in 2003, but stayed on in the United States for another year to do a Master's Degree in Education at the University of San Francisco.

He returned to Zambia in 2004 where he was ordained by Cardinal Mazombwe. After his ordination, he was assigned again to Charles Lwanga, becoming the Vice Principal in early 2005. In 2008 he became the Principal. He died at his own hand on 3 March 2014 a few weeks before he was due to retire from this position and to begin a sabbatical.

Fred was an educationist who gave all his life—mind, heart and soul—to education. He lived for education, and perhaps, he was taken away from us so unexpectedly because of the same passion for education. He was convinced that this was the way God had called him to make a difference to humanity, to transform society by training and forming good and competent primary school teachers at Charles Lwanga College of Education. For Fred education was a mission, a calling from God, and not simply a profession.

Fred was a man of the *magis* who thought and planned ahead, in a way that always sought to improve things. This was clear through his efforts to upgrade the College from a certificate to a diploma-offering institution; it was clear through his effort to encourage his staff to upgrade their qualifications through an online MA programme in conjunction with Gonzaga University. And he had great hopes to see Charles Lwanga grow from a College to a University.

But he was also a perfectionist who did not entertain mediocrity or lame excuses in his approach to life. He always gave his best and expected the best in return from others. And like many perfectionists, sometimes he tended to be too critical and demanding—of himself and of others. He had a big heart, but one also needed a big heart to work with him.

Like many perfectionists, he sometimes found it hard to forgive himself whenever he experienced failure or shortcomings in his work and life in general. It was not easy for him at times to accept the finite nature of his humanity, to accept that he was limited and needed more than simply himself, his ways, his thoughts—that there was always something greater, beyond successes and failures.

Fred's passing-on, and the manner in which he departed, left more questions

than answers. What really happened? What was the crux of the matter? How come no one saw it coming? What could have been done? Did people listen enough to him? Did they support him enough? But there were no answers, leaving hearts heavy, shocked and desolate.

But Fred believed in the Love, Mercy and Compassion of God; he was baptized into Christ. With Christ he will be raised again in the fullness of life in this God of Love.