



Br Michael J. Bennett, S.J.
(1931-2023. In Zambia 1969-1982; 1991-1994)
10 March 2023

Br Michael Bennett was born 6 April 1934 in Great Falls, Montana, to Carroll R. and Josephine (McNaught) Bennett. The parents had five children, two boys and three girls. Mike entered the Oregon Province of the Jesuits in 1957 in Florissant, Missouri. He served as infirmarian at the Novitiate of St Francis Xavier in Sheridan, Oregon from 1961 to 1967 and as minister at Gonzaga Preparatory School in Spokane, Washington from 1967 to 1969. He was then sent to the Oregon Province mission in Zambia in 1969. The Province of Zambia was created shortly after his arrival and Mike became a member of the Province. From his arrival until 1973, he was the minister at the novitiate; in 1973, while continuing to live at the novitiate, he became the treasurer of the Province. After a break studying pastoral theology in Berkeley, California, he moved to the newly opened Luwisha House and served as treasurer for the Zambia Bishops Conference from 1976 to 1982. At that time, because of tight currency controls that were unrealistic to the actual value of the Kwacha, Mike had dealings in the black market to get needed funds for the Province and the Conference. In 1982 he felt it was too dangerous for him to remain in Zambia.

He returned to the U.S. and served as minister at the novitiate, which had relocated to Portland, Oregon. In 1985, he took a position as the financial manager of the East Asian Pastoral Institute, a Jesuit-run renewal and pastoral leadership program on the campus of the Ateneo de Manila in the Philippines. In March 1989, he returned to Africa, working with the Jesuit Refugee Service in Nairobi, Kenya. In 1991, when the Kaunda government was no longer in power, he was missioned to Lusaka as Minister at Luwisha House until 1994.

Br Bennett continued his ministry back in the Pacific Northwest at Gonzaga University's Jesuit community as sub-minister (1995-1998) and the Jesuit residence in Fairbanks, Alaska as minister (1999-2000). His work was always centred on the day-to-day and financial administration of Jesuit works, for which he was gifted at and enjoyed. In 2001 he was transcribed officially back to the Oregon Province. His last years of active ministry were spent as a pastoral minister to Native peoples on the Spokane Reservation in Wellpinit, Washington and on the Blackfeet Reservation in Heart Butte, Montana. He retired to a ministry of prayer, first in Bea House, Spokane (2011-2015) and then at the Province Infirmary in Los Gatos, California.

Mike had a wonderful sense of humour, frequently seeing the funny side of a situation. Although he seldom ate at the same time as the community, as minister he provided the essentials at the novitiate and Luwisha House, but not much extra. He felt those in formation should have the basics only. One scholastic at the time quipped, 'In him we live and move and have our beans!' Mike smoked all of his life: yet while in Lusaka in the 1990s, he was a member of the Lusaka Harriers running group that met every Saturday for a good run and a beer afterwards. At Los Gatos, he could be seen frequently out in the patio puffing away! As seen by the multiple positions he held, he was available for any mission, anywhere especially if he could be of service in financial or practical matters. Mike died in Los Gatos 20 March 2023.