



Fr Julius Torrend S.J.
(1861-1936. In Zambia 1905-1936)

11 March 1936

Jules Torrend was born at St Privat de l'Allier, near Le Puy, Haute Loire in France on 4 October 1861. 'He was a typical Frenchman to the end of his life. He showed very early on a more than ordinary intelligence. All his life he was a very hard worker. The word 'holiday' had no meaning for him; rest he abhorred, it reminded him of death. He used to say 'Life is work and. work is life'. He became an outstanding linguist of Bantu languages.

After entering the Jesuits in 1879, he was sent to South Africa to teach at St Aidans, Grahamstown. He studied philosophy at Dunbrody and helped establish a mission station at Kielands. During this time he studied many Bantu languages and when he returned to Europe to study theology, he also produced an outstanding study - *A comparative Grammar of the Bantu Languages* in 1889.

After his ordination to the priesthood in 1892, he was appointed to Portuguese East Africa where he went in 1893. He worked in Mozambique for a number of years in places like Quelimane, Chupanga, Boroma and Miruru. He applied to join the English Jesuit Province to work in the Upper Zambezi Mission. When Fr Moreau was moving north into Northern Rhodesia with the four young men to found Chikuni Mission in 1905, he was joined by Fr Torrend and Francis (a boy from Miruru). That same year, Fr Torrend traveled north to found what is now known as Kasisi, just outside Lusaka. Here he remained for 20 years building up Kasisi with all the problems and heartaches in establishing something out of nothing. At the same time, the study of the languages engrossed him more and more. New names, songs, riddles and stories were collected from the people he ministered to.

For a year he went to Dunbrody, Port Elisabeth, on sick leave. Returning to Northern Rhodesia he was posted to Chikuni in 1925. He used to say that his transfer was due to his disagreement with Fr Bert over baptizing children of pagan parents. When accosted by Bert he simply said "But the parents are under instruction." For the rest of his life he stayed in Chikuni. These last ten years spent at Chikuni were the most fruitful of his life, both as a missionary and a Bantu scholar. Four years of intensive labor brought forth a masterpiece of erudition – *Bantu Botatwe Dictionary* (1931). His philosophy in life was 'to know the African languages in order to know the people and get to their hearts and make good Christians of them'.

He acquired a small second hand printing press in 1931 described by a colleague as 'an old ramshackle affair of a press'. He produced a Tonga reader, a small Tonga grammar, St Matthew's Gospel, and *Joni Milimo* – lessons in agriculture written by Fr Moreau.

As a missionary he was most zealous and never too tired to give instruction, to baptize or to hear confessions. Sundays were very long days for him. His poverty was remarkable both in the room he lived in and in his dress, his 'one suit at a time' principle, for that was all he would accept. He really had nothing of his own. He received plenty of rebuffs and even hard treatment from people who did not understand him but he had absolutely no memory of these injuries. He was a very large hearted man and a man of prayer.

A few days before he died, which was on the 11 March 1936, he was correcting the typesetting of *Joni Milimo* and the boys printed the last page of the book on the day he died, which would have pleased him.

11 March

4 October 1861 – 11 March 1936

Fr. Júlio TORREND

He was born in St. Privat D'Allier, Upper Loire, France, on October 4, 1861, and entered the Society of Jesus on January 13, 1879, in the Belgian Novitiate of Arlon. Afterwards, he was moved to the Novitiate of Tronchiennes, also in Belgium. By then, he had already been assigned to the Zambezi Mission. He worked in Grahamstown (1882 - 1884), in the English Cape Colony, at St. Aidan's College, as a teacher. He studied philosophy (1884 - 1886) in Dunbrody, South Africa. He also studied theology (1889 - 1892) in Jersey, English Channel Island. He was ordained priest on September 8, 1891, in Jersey. He did his tertianship in Setúbal and went to Mozambique in 1893. He took his final vows on October 10, 1896, in Chupanga. He worked in the mission of Coalane and founded the mission of Chupanga in 1896. He also worked in Boroma and then, he went to the mission of Miruro, in Zumbo. From Miruro, in 1905, he went to the Upper Zambezia (English). He died on March 11, 1936, in Broken Hill, Chikuni. He wrote the following books: *An outline of a Xosa-Kafir Grammar with a few dialogues and a kafirtale*, Grahamstown, 1887; *A Comparative Grammar of the South-Africa Bantu Languages*, London, 1890; *Catecismo Sena-Português*, Chupanga, 1898; *Gramática do Chi-Sene. A Grammar of the language of the Lower Zambezi*, Chupanga, 1900; *De Boroma a Miruro (un coin du Zambèze)*, 1902, mns, kept at the Parish in Tete; *Contes en Chuabo ou langue de Quelimane*, I (1895) e II (1896); *Esopo na Zambézia*, 04 cadernos mns, kept in the archives of Chikuni Mission in Zambia; *Na English-Tonga Phrase-Book for Rhodesia*, Mariannhill, 1930; *An English-Vernacular Dictionary of the Bantu-Botatwe Dialectics of Northern Rhodesia*, Londres, 1931.

(Catalogus Defunctorum in renata Societate Iesu ab a. 1814 ad a. 1970; Diccionario de la Compañía de Jesús, IV, p. 3816 – 3817; Grande Enciclopédia Portuguesa e Brasileira, 32, p. 234 – 235)