



**Br Martin Murphy, S.J.**

**(1934-2015. In Zambia/Malawi 1969-1975; 1984-1991)**

**12 March 2015**

Brother Martin Murphy, who was born in Ringsend, Dublin on 7 August 1934. He learned his building skills and gained his qualifications – including a diploma from the Catholic Workers College, before he entered the Jesuits at the age of 32. Over the next 50-odd years he practiced or taught motor mechanics, building maintenance, construction, irrigation and pastoral care of refugees.

He worked in Zambia on two different occasions: from 1969 to 1975 and from 1984 to 1991. When he left Zambia permanently in 1991, the Provincial at the time wrote: “I am grateful to you for the work you have done here, especially in and for our communities. Much of the effort and dedication you put in was done inconspicuously and not noticed by many of the Province.”

The hidden nature of the work is often the case for the Jesuit Brother and was for Martin also. The catalogue states that he was a builder at Chikuni Mission from 1969 to 1975, but it does not say what he built. One has to ask those who might remember and the list is impressive. Although Martin and his team did the actual building of the new church in Chikuni Mission in the 1970s, it was the parish priest who received the credit for it! He also strengthened the tower of the old church, which is a national monument today. When he tore down the old church, which was considered unsafe, he constructed the hall at the parish with the bricks and roofing. Also the section of Chikuni Hospital that faces the road was built by Martin and his team. He built a carpentry workshop behind the community house in Chikuni; there he made the tables and chairs for the community dining room.

From 1984 to 1986 he was the minister at Luwisha House in Lusaka. Apart from his work of serving the community, he also built the serving tables in the dining room. In 1987 he moved to Mazabuka where he worked in the ‘Youth Employment Project’ at the Christian Brothers’ school and undertook building projects at the school. He lived at the parish in Nakambala during this time. He left the Brothers’ project in 1989 and the following year started a development project where he offered a training programme in carpentry, gardening, block making and painting for young people. However, in 1991 he was forced to return to Ireland because of the beginnings of poor health.

Martin spent two other periods in Africa, though not in Zambia. From 1978 to 1983, he worked for ‘Concern’ in Babati, Tanzania and from 1993 until 1995 his health was good enough that he was able to work for JRS out of the Limbe, Malawi for projects in Mozambique. At the end of that spell, he had to return to Ireland permanently.

Even when Martin was away from Zambia, however, he always kept in contact and was interested in the Jesuits and their works here. Although he was deeply involved in his work no matter where he was, he always had a love for his ‘first mission.’

In his early days in Zambia, Martin, along with Gabriel McKinney, played a lot of football with the local teams in Chikuni. Because of his fearlessness, he was given the name, Kalanga Mulilo (the one who sees fire). We thank God for the gift of this fearless, and sometimes fiery, Jesuit Brother, for the years of hard work he gave to the Jesuits and people of Zambia, for his zeal for justice and development, for his willingness to take on new missions and for his undaunted spirit in the face of poor health.

Martin had his own unique relationship with God – his secret scripture. He prayed. He lived simply. But like the rest of us, he had his own fixed attitudes, his weaker points,

his awkwardnesses. A mature man by the time he joined the Jesuits, he had, not surprisingly, something of a Trade Union perspective on things. His included a keen sense of what he perceived as injustice, foot-dragging, and so on. The Jesuit way of proceeding, he felt, was not always the most efficient. With his critical mind, he found it hard to be asked to do things by people who, he felt, didn't know what they were talking about. He would tell it like he thought it was, and his craggy style disconcerted more than a few, and left people feeling uncomfortable. He was, one might say, of the warrior class. Critical of many in authority and at the same time he was a great defender of the small and the poor.

By 1995 the outer job was done: he had to retire because for the remaining twenty years of his life, ill health dogged him – glaucoma, diabetes, arthritis and lung problems. Martin died on 12 March 2015 in Dublin.

12 March

7 August 1934 – 12 March 2015

**Br. Martin MURPHY** – Irish, born on August 7, 1934 and entered the Society of Jesus on August 10, 1966. He made his last vows on August 14, 1985. He was in Mozambique in 1994/95, sent by JRS, to guide the construction of the Lifidzi School of Arts and Crafts. He passed away on March 12, 2015.