



**Fr Stanislaus Wawrzekiewicz, S.J.**  
**(1891-1974. In Zambia 1928-1974)**

**13 March 1974**

Stanislaus Wawrzekiewicz was born on 17 November 1891 in Lancut, a small town in southern Poland. He proved to be a very intelligent and bright young man. His father passed away when he was still a child, so his mother took care of his education. The family was rather poor and he experienced many hardships before he had finished his studies. Often he would later tell of his life at Lancut secondary school where he lived with other pupils in a commonly rented boarding house. The frugality of his early years made a lasting impression on him. He then joined the diocesan seminary in Przemysl and was duly ordained on 5th July 1914. Almost immediately he was posted as a chaplain in the armed forces as the First World War was in full swing.

After the war he was parish priest in a small village where his frugality and asceticism became a rule of his life, even to the disapproval of his parishioners. He preferred to have as little as possible to do with his material needs, so as to give himself to the spiritual ministry. He applied to enter the Jesuits and was accepted in 1923. His tertianship followed immediately and then he was assigned to various schools as a teacher and priest.

He accepted the assignment to work on the Northern Rhodesia Mission. At his golden jubilee in 1973, celebrated at the Novitiate, he began his speech by berating the modern novices for their many lacks – explicitly mentioning their poor obedience. A few minutes later he described his own missioning to Lusaka: 'I got a letter from the Provincial – but I did not go. I got a second letter from the Provincial – but I did not go. I got a telegram – I went!' He arrived in 1928 with Fr Zabdyr and Brs Boron and Duda and they were collected by ox-cart by Br Jędrzejczyk at Chikumbi, about 35 km north of what today is Lusaka.

He was sent to Mpima, Kabwe to learn chiBemba. He was good at languages and during his missionary life he mastered not only chiBemba but also chiNyanja, chiKaonde and chiLenje. Being a practical person he was soon involved in the building of the old Fathers' house at Mpima and then at St. Mary's Church. During his life he served at practically all of the early mission stations: Mpima, Chingombe, Katondwe, Kabwe, Kasisi, Kapoche and Lusaka. Probably the longest stretch was from 1937 to 1946 when he was superior at Kasisi.

Mgr Wolnik, the Prefect Apostolic, wanted to open a new mission in 'no man's land' at Mpiyamasse, west of Lusaka and so he sent Fr Wawrzekiewicz with Br Misiąg. They both lived in absolute abnegation which astonished the local people observing them. However the project was ahead of its time and had to be abandoned, much to his chagrin. Twenty years later when Karendia Mission was opened, he revisited Mpiyamasse and brought back with him the small metal form for baking altar breads which he had left there!

When Archbishop Kozłowiecki became administrator he called Fr Wawrzekiewicz to be his treasurer. Many still remember how faithfully he guarded the treasures of the Archdiocese. The Africans called him Kabotola (bottle) because he never walked along without picking up objects which might prove useful later on. His room contained a huge collection of bottles, nails, wire, string and brown paper etc. When he died it took days to clear out the heaps of material. His room was so full that visitors sometimes

wondered, not only how he manoeuvred around it, but where he actually slept, since there were numerous boxes piled up on the bed and there was no sign that they were ever moved! Yet he was fully confirmed in his collecting habit, when he could provide you with something from the hoard.

He was a very healthy person especially considering how little care he took of himself. He was worried about his cataracts which he feared would lead to blindness but an operation by Mr. Phillips brought him relief and he was able to read once more. He claimed that the secret of his health was a medical pocket encyclopedia he brought with him from Poland in 1927 which listed all possible ailments and prescribed practical remedies. He used this book for himself and even for others too, and sometimes he even preferred the verdict of his book to the advice of the hospital.

He always wanted to visit the Holy Land and often spoke about it. Finally he got his chance when Fr Folta accompanied him on his home leave to Poland in 1972 – the first in his forty five years as a missionary.

His last illness was very trying with all its tests, operations and medicines that went against his personal asceticism and carefully guarded independence. The Brothers in Chainama Hills hospital looked after him for a while and then he went to the Novitiate. He was still able to be somewhat self-sufficient right up to the end.