



Br Francis Roe, S.J.
(1917-2003. In Zambia 1977-1979)

13 March 2003

After his novitiate, Br Frankie Roe was posted to Belvedere College to take charge of the Boys Tuck Shop. A fellow Jesuit, then a boy at the school, remembers: 'It was there that I first met him when I was a small boy of 8. He was in charge of the Tuck Shop and was to us a person of significance. But my main memory is of his kindness to the youngest boys and how he protected us from what seemed to us to be giant marauding 11 year olds. Never would he allow the older ones to push us youngsters out of the queue. He consoled us when we were in trouble and encouraged us at all times'.

Br Roe, born in Dublin on 9 December in 1917, was the seventh of eight children, all of whom predeceased him. Among his brothers were two All Ireland Handball champions and he himself was no mean performer in the sport. He was educated by the Christian Brothers and after schooling worked with Independent Newspapers.

He entered the Society at Emo in 1939. For 64 years he served the Lord in the Society in many places in Ireland and Africa and in a variety of roles. He was refectorian in a number of houses, – Clongowes, Milltown Park, Loyola House, Tullabeg – twenty eight years in all. Add to that, he was also sacristan in the houses as well.

He decided to offer himself to the missions in Zambia. He came out for two years, 1977 to 1979, at the age of sixty. He worked at in Choma at Mukasa Minor Seminary School as minister and library assistant and then moved on to Kizito Pastoral Centre, Monze, as general factotum.

In everything he did he was a perfectionist – highly competent, diligent, and meticulous in the attention that he gave to his tasks, precise in word, deed and in every detail of his manner. He went on to many tasks, all of which he carried out effectively and industriously but almost always with a touch of the frustration that is the lot of the perfectionist. He had great difficulty reconciling himself to be among the 'imperfectionists' who populate our world.

He returned to Ireland and found the ideal position and with it something approaching happiness. In 1981 he became bookbinder of the Milltown Library. It demanded the skills that he had in abundance and afforded an environment that suited his temperament perfectly. He applied his skill assiduously and took immense pride in his work that he carried out flawlessly and generously. He did all the work himself and no longer was he at the mercy of the shortcomings of others. He was truly master of all he surveyed in the bindery. In these years, his relationships with others blossomed. He greatly appreciated the librarians and they, in their turn, positively treasured him. Within the library staff the feminine balance seemed to have pleased him significantly. His departure from the library left a gap that will not be filled.

For two and a half years he battled with cancer uncomplainingly. In Cherryfield Lodge, the Jesuit Nursing Home, he found something approaching perfection, particularly in the staff, who were devoted to him, whom he so deeply appreciated and of whom he was so extraordinarily undemanding. He died on 13 March 2003 in St Vincent's Hospital, Dublin.