



Fr Daniel Louis Meagher, S.J.
(1911-1980. In Zambia 1950-1980)

14 April 1980

'Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some have greatness thrust upon them' (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*). These words in some way could be applied to Fr Louis (nobody called him 'Daniel'). In human qualities Fr Louis was very ordinary. He saw himself as a great 'chancer' (his own word), meaning that he was willing to try his hand at anything, though not highly gifted for anything in particular. In fact, he found the studies in the Society extremely difficult but he realized that they were a preparation for the works of the Society like preaching and retreat giving. His tremendous determination and great sense of mission carried him through these difficulties so that at the end of his training he was better equipped to carry on apostolic works than many others more talented than he. He had 'greatness thrust upon him' as he was appointed superior of the Irish Jesuits in Zambia a few years after arriving there.

He had come to Zambia in 1950, one of the original nine Irish Jesuits appointed to come to Chikuni Mission. The appointment came as a shock to Louis but he faced up to the situation, as he had faced up to all the difficulties in his life. He was also appointed Vicar General of the Monze diocese where he was appreciated by all.

After school at St Finians and Belvedere, he entered the Society at Emo in 1931. For regency he taught at Clongowes Wood College and then proceeded to Milltown Park where he was ordained in 1944. Afterwards he went to the Crescent, Limerick, to teach there until he came to Zambia in 1950.

In the early 1960s, he began to suffer from rheumatoid arthritis which crippled him increasingly until his death. It was in this that Louis 'achieved greatness' in the way he bore his illness for nearly 20 years. He could laugh and talk as if he had not a care in the world. He was an 'Easter person' who by word and deed reflected the good news of the victory of the Cross and of the joyfulness of the Resurrection. It is possible to resign oneself to suffering but it is a very different thing to bring sunshine into the lives of others at the same time. This calls for great faith, hope and charity. Louis retained a warm and appreciated interest in everyone to such a degree that all considered themselves to hold a special place in his heart.

He had a happy interest in the life of the secondary school at Chivuna and helped the community there through his visiting, his counseling, his concern for each one's welfare, for their academic achievements as well as their prowess in sports.

Finally when arthritis made him almost unable to walk, he made the journey to Nairobi in Kenya to see if anything could be done for his feet. While there in hospital, he was anxious to get back to Chivuna for the opening of the school term. Cardio-respiratory failure was the final cause of his death at the age of 68.

His remains were flown to Zambia and he was buried at Chikuni on 14 April 1980. The most noticeable thing about Louis' funeral was the manner in which the ordinary Tonga people seemed very clearly to take over the burying of their priest. It would have been unthinkable to bury Louis elsewhere, he who had lived and worked among them for 30 years