



**Fr Raymond Lawler, S.J.**  
**(1921-2001. In Zambia 1982-1984)**

**14 April 2001**

Fr Raymond Lawler was born in Co Wexford, Ireland on 28 May 1921. Fr Raymond (Ray) came to Clongowes Wood College, a Jesuit boarding school, as a small boy of eleven years. Little did he realize that he would spend almost half of his life there in the same college as teacher, prefect of studies, higher line prefect, and finally as third line Spiritual Father which he was when he died at the age of 80. Clongowes Woods College (CWC) was the love of his life (apart from golf) and it was a mutual relationship between him and the successive generations of boys – always a difficult and critical body, who held him in high esteem. After the funeral Mass, members of his family and students of the school carried his coffin along the Third Line gallery where he had passed so often in the final six years of his ministry. A guard of honor was formed by present and past pupils in a moving tribute to someone who had come to mean so much to so many young people over so many years.

Ray followed the normal formation of the Society: humanities (BA honors in Latin and French), philosophy, regency in Crescent, Limerick and Clongowes Wood College, and theology in Milltown Park where he was ordained on the feast of St Ignatius in 1952. After tertianship, he was posted to CWC as teacher and then prefect of studies for eight years. An official visitor from Rome to the Province did some shuffling of personnel and Ray found himself changed to Belvedere College for two years. He returned quietly to CWC in 1964 again as higher line prefect (1964 - 1968) and teacher from 1968 to 1981.

Now at the age of sixty, Ray had a sabbatical in Toronto. Then came a big change in his life when he opted to come to Zambia, Africa where he spent two years teaching French and Scripture to the novices in Lusaka. Fr Bob Kelly went on sabbatical for a year and left his gleaming new car in charge of Ray whose talents did not extend to motor maintenance! But this was ideal for Ray to ferry himself and his clubs to the nearby golf course. He had a passion for birds and was appreciative of anyone who helped him add to his beautiful collection of Zambian bird stamps.

When he returned to Ireland he worked in Tullabeg as Director of the Spiritual Exercises for a year followed by ten years at Gardiner Street Church as parish chaplain. Ray looked south to his beloved Clongowes and at the age 74 moved there to be third line spiritual Father.

He enjoyed good health to the end. He preached on Holy Thursday to the past pupils who were on retreat in CWC. He died in his room on Holy Saturday, following a massive heart attack, on the 14 April 2001 at the age of 80.

Ray was a man who found God in all things whether playing cards, scrabble, chess, whether on the golf course, whether teaching, whatever he was doing he was never far from God. Before he left for Zambia, the school made him a presentation of a set of golf clubs. The school secretary said in his speech, 'If there were a university degree for gentleness, I think that Father Lawler would have a PhD'. His character was summed up as 'a lovable and loving person'.