



Fr John O'Holohan, S.J.
(1923-2018. In Zambia/Malawi 1965-1987)

19 April 2018

John O'Holohan was born on 13th March 1923, entered the Society on 6th September 1941, was ordained priest on 27th July 1955 and made his final vows on 2nd February 1959. He arrived in Zambia in 1965, spending a year at Chivuna learning chiTonga. From 1966 to 1978, he taught at Canisius where he was also the pastoral director. In 1978 he moved to Mazabuka serving as teacher and chaplain at St Edmund's Secondary School for the

next three years. In 1981, he took a sabbatical break. When he returned to the Province in 1982, he was missioned to St Peter's Seminary in Zomba, Malawi, as lecturer in moral theology and director of the pastoral ministry program. For some time he also served as Acting Rector of the seminary. In 1986 he moved back to Zambia, to Luwisha House in Lusaka, where he taught in the Juniorate, was the national secretary for the Apostleship of Prayer and editor of the Province News.

He left Zambia permanently in 1987 and went to the United States, spending the following years in parish ministry there. In 2009 he returned to Ireland and worked in Gardiner Street parish in Dublin and at the People's Church in Clongowes. Because of failing health he went to Cherryfield Lodge, Dublin, in 2014 and there he died peacefully on 19th April 2018.

For almost 63 of the 95 years of his long life, John was a priest. Geographically, he spent 19 of these years in Ireland, 22 in Zambia and Malawi, and 22 in the United States. This means that he spent slightly more than one-third of his years as a priest in the Zambia-Malawi Province, slightly more than one-third in the United States and the remainder in Ireland. Apostolically, he spent more than a third of his life as a priest in pastoral work in parishes in the United States, mostly in Florida and South Carolina (1987-2007), and at Gardiner Street in Dublin (2007-2018). He also spent more than a third, teaching in Jesuit schools: seven years in Mungret and Belvedere in Ireland, twelve years in Canisius, and three years in St Edmund's, the Christian Brothers secondary school in Mazabuka. In addition, during his four years in Malawi, he had teaching responsibilities at another level as lecturer in moral theology at the major seminary in Zomba.

Clearly then, pastoral work and teaching were what occupied John through most of his Jesuit life as a priest. Not only did they occupy him, they also gave him great satisfaction. His ways of behaving, the things he talked about, the energy he expended and the zest with which he threw himself into his pastoral and classroom responsibilities showed how much he felt that by being a pastor and teacher he was giving real expression to his identity as a priest.

A crucial dimension of John's work was his role as spiritual Father. His overriding concern was always for the spiritual life of the students – with daily Mass, altar servers well trained, availability of Confession and promotion of sodalities. He imparted to the youth a strong devotion to the Sacred Heart and to Our Lady. His office was always full, especially with the younger students, for whom he provided comics and other occupational material. His student's prayer book that fitted into a shirt pocket, was most popular and by its 6th edition in 1986 had seen 50,000 copies printed.

As a person, John was very gracious and generous. He related easily with those in his community, though he does not seem to have been very close to any one of them. At times he could be somewhat reserved and quite critical. Nevertheless, he loved a good joke and enjoyed many a laugh. His colleagues always appreciated having him with them. They were glad of his companionship. They respected his commitment and dedication and knew him as a holy and saintly man.