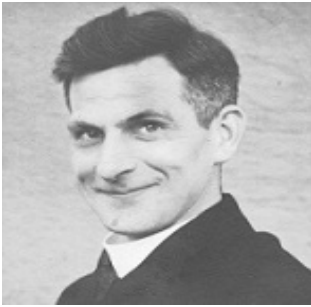


Fr Patrick Kelly, S.J.

(1920 – 2012. In Zambia 1952-1962)



4 May 2012

Fr Patrick (Paddy) Kelly was born in Limerick, Ireland on 21 February 1920. He entered the Society of Jesus in 1937 and was ordained in 1950. While in Tertianship in 1951-1952, Paddy was assigned to the Chikuni Mission. At that time, the work of the Mission was still in its infancy and faced the enormous challenge of a shortage of human resources, not just for strictly evangelical work, but for all those other aspects that constitute life in virtually virgin mission territory. It's no surprise, then, that the records show that on 6th August, less than a week after his arrival, Paddy spent the whole of his first Saturday in Africa loading a lorry with bundles of thatching grass, or that a few weeks later he and Norman MacDonald spent some days building a teacher's house in one of the out-stations. This kind of active involvement with what had to be done on the ground was characteristic of Paddy, who seemed happiest when doing things, developing things, getting his hands dirty, and talking all about it afterwards. Again and again, the records speak of things that Paddy did – shooting a hawk, getting a reluctant grinding mill to work again, celebrating the day of his final vows (2 February 1953) by being a member of the community football team that scored a 2-1 victory over the boys at Canisius College.

After learning chiTonga he was appointed in August 1953 as Assistant Parish Priest at Kasiya, to work alongside Fr Maurice Dowling.

On completion of two years of fruitful parochial work, Paddy was transferred to Canisius College which at that time comprised both the full range of secondary schooling and a two year teacher training programme. Paddy's work was principally in the latter. Being a teacher educator, he was one of those who accompanied John Counihan, John Fitzgerald, Charlie O'Connor and others who moved from Canisius College to the newly established Charles Lwanga Teachers' College in 1959.

But just a year later, he was made Manager of Schools for all the Catholic primary schools that fell under Chikuni Mission. Given his nature it was a job in which he reveled. He showed a child-like delight in facing the challenges of long journeys over difficult terrain, of getting building and other supplies to locations where there were no roads or bridges, of being firm but courteous with local headmen about the importance of having their own school, of mobilizing community support in making bricks, drawing sand, and maintaining buildings, and of making sure that the appointed teachers actually turned up for duty and did teach.

Throughout the decade in which he so generously served the people within the area of the Chikuni Mission, Paddy remained very true to himself – always good humored and good natured, generous in responding to requests, forthright in manner, sometimes very blunt in approach and expression, and yet always very private about himself as a person and what motivated him. He served Zambia's people well. He returned to Ireland in 1962 and began there almost a quarter century of teaching ministry in Mungret (1962-1969) and Crescent (1969-1985) Colleges.

In 1985 at 65 years of age, Paddy retired from teaching at Crescent and left Limerick to work for a few years in the Prison Service in New York as a Chaplain, and then in a parish in Los Angeles, before returning to Gardiner Street Church in Dublin and the Sacred Heart Church in Limerick and finally to the Community in Milltown Park where he lived happily for ten years. He died peacefully in Cherryfield Lodge, Dublin on 4 May 2012