



**Fr David Gaffney, S.J.**  
**(1941-2020. In Zambia 1975-1978)**  
**6 May 2020**

David Gaffney was born on 23 April 1941 in Thomastown, Kilkenny, Ireland. He entered the Society of Jesus on 6 September 1958, was ordained on 20 June 1971.

In the decades after he joined the Jesuits, David gained a great deal of intellectual and pastoral experience in many parts of the world. After an Arts degree in UCD, he went to Germany to study philosophy, returned to Ireland to study theology, then did further Jesuit formation in Canada.

From 1975 to 1978, he lived and worked at Matero parish in Lusaka, serving as assistant parish priest. During his time at Matero he took his final vows on 2 February 1977. David learned chiNyanja well enough to preside at Mass, preach and visit parishioners. He was remembered especially for his parish visitations which he did in a systematic way on foot. Years later some parishioners recalled with gratitude his visits saying that it was the only time a priest had ever visited their homes. Although he had a chance in 1978 to act as parish priest while the incumbent was on leave, he was nervous about the situation in the Archdiocese with Archbishop Milingo and declined, continuing as assistant. The tension in the Archdiocese at this time over the Archbishop probably was the reason he did not extend his stay in Zambia.

He left Zambia in 1978 and worked in the United States in marriage counselling for four years, before his definitive return to Ireland in 1982. In the years following he worked in marriage and family apostolates and as an editor of various publications including *Interfuse*, an internal Irish Jesuit Province magazine. He was a regular columnist at the *Kilkenny People* and later with *The Avondhu* for a number of years, writing reflective opinion pieces regularly. In theology he was a columnist at the *Irish Independent*, a national paper.

In Dublin at Cherry Orchard Marino and Milltown Parish, he continued in all types of weather his apostolate of visiting the parishioners in their homes. Many appreciated his dedication and his sincerity with his unassuming and unimposing manner.

In his communities he portrayed these same qualities. At Matero, he and Steve Hirjak got along well together. He enjoyed Stephen's eccentricity and appreciated his unparalleled familiarity with the poor, their language, ways of thinking and acting. Steve was at ease with David's simplicity and his integrity. In general, David was always personable and encouraging, able to meet you in a way you knew afterwards you had been seen, had been regarded, esteemed, and valued. You felt bigger, never smaller. He did not crush the bruised reed, not extinguish the flickering flame. David passed away on 6 May 2020.