



Br Francis Pacek, S.J.
(1868-1945. In Zambia 1914-1945)

17 May 1945

Francis Pacek was born in Brankowce-Wadowice, south of Cracow not far from the Slovak border, on 19 October 1868. When he entered the Society in 1898, he was a cobbler and already a mature 30 years of age. His early years in the Society were spent in different communities doing house duties e.g. porter, refectorian and even infirmarian.

When he was sent to Northern Rhodesia he was quite old (46 years), especially when one considers that it was a completely new mission in virgin territory. The first missionaries had worked not too far away in Miruru and Boroma, but that was on the far side of the Luangwa River and in a different country, Mozambique.

Br Pacek travelled out with the dynamic Fr Czarlinski and the faithful Fr Hankiewicz. All three of them would be the founders of the Chingombe Mission and would stay together for a good decade. They must have got on well together for, in the early years, there was a constant shifting of personnel elsewhere to cope with the changing situation.

The trio were the second group to come directly from Poland and when they arrived in 1914, they were the witnesses at Kasisi of the official taking over the responsibility of the station under the capable leadership of the new superior, Fr Kraupa, who had only arrived the year before. Initially Fr Kraupa had to settle certain affairs in Kasisi for Fr Torrend was unable to make ends meet.

The pioneers headed out from Kabwe to Chingombe to open the new mission on the farm that Kraupa had bought from Mr Harrison Clark. They left Fr Hankiewicz behind in Kabwe as he was recovering from pneumonia. He spent part of his convalescence on a farm - well on the way into the valley. The owner graciously suggested that they should accept a gift of a small plot which could act as a stay-over whenever they came out of the valley, but unfortunately the matter was never followed up.

Br Pacek spent the next 31 years in Chingombe looking after the house, the church and the garden. He rarely left the place and probably set up a record on the mission for his dedicated stability. He was the only cobbler among the missionaries and rendered valuable service as often much of the travelling was on foot. He sometimes made some handy cash by offering his services to the European farmers like Harrison Clark and the personnel in the Administration. He related well with the local people and often helped them in time of need from his kitchen and garden. They called him 'amai' (mother).

Archbishop Kozlowiecki wrote in the Mission Magazine of 1954, that 'excessive work broke the health of many missionaries'. He mentioned nine men in particular, four of whom passed away before they got to 50. Br Pacek was listed too, so it is obvious that he was a hard and dedicated worker. However in his case, it is hard to see that with all his labor that it ever broke his health for he was one of the oldest of the early men, passing on to a well earned reward at the ripe age of 77! On 17 May 1945 he died where he lived and worked for so long, at Chingombe.