



Mgr Edward Parry, S.J.
(1861-1922. In Zambia April-May 1922)

21 May 1922

He was born at Islington, London on 19 March 1861. His father Edward was a gentleman of independent means and his mother Harriet nee Byrne were both Catholics of more than ordinary piety. After five girls they had two sons, both of whom entered the Society. He was educated at Mount St Mary's and entered the novitiate at Roehampton in 1878. After his juniorate we find him at the Seminary preparing for a London degree but he never finished it as he was called upon in an emergency to do some teaching at the Mount. He finished philosophy in 1889 and did regency at the Mount before going to St Beuno's for theology completing his course at Mold (North Wales). And here is revealed that unselfish note in his character which so eminently distinguished him throughout his career. For he heard that his brother had been assigned to a particular work, and feeling sure that this would not be agreeable to him, offered to go in his place - and the Provincial accepted the change. Needless to say, he made no mention of his intention to his brother. Without any thought of himself he was already ready to take upon himself any work he thought would be unpleasant to another, though he would never allow the same to be done to him!

He went to St Beuno's for ordination in 1894 and then returned to the Mount as minister for two years and then went to the parish at Wardour in 1896. He did his tertianship in Tronchiennes and then worked in the parish at Clitheroe until 1900 where he took his vows as spiritual coadjutor in 1899. He taught at Preston, Wigam and at Beaumont where he was minister for three years and then at Garnethill for four.

He was selected for the Zambesi Mission and set out for Salisbury in 1911 at the age of 50. He was made superior of the Church at Salisbury which meant that he never had an opportunity of learning a local language but this would seem to have been no barrier either to his interest in the local people themselves or to the many plans he organized for their greater welfare. At the death of Fr Sykes he took his place as Prefect Apostolic and was installed in 1919, making Salisbury his headquarters instead of Bulawayo. His ever active mind began to formulate plans for the further progress and development of this comparatively young but rapidly growing Mission. Thus at the end of June he summoned all the missionaries for a week's conference and sharing. The topics dealt with give the pastoral issues they were encountering: local marriages, Christian villages, beer drinking, training of teachers and production of books in local languages. This program was so successful that it became an annual event. The school for teachers opened at Driefontein the following March. Later he divided the Mission into deaneries and appointed a Council of the Prefecture.

He never spared himself and, although active before, he redoubled his efforts now that he had had the care of the whole mission. A Father writes: 'On more than one occasion I have seen him burning with indignation when it had been my duty to appeal to him to use his influence to obtain redress regarding some act of injustice done to the local people. In

such circumstances he never failed me. I could always count on his help when others would have counseled inactivity in the name of prudence'.

It was but natural with a man of his great mental activity, who had such longing desires for the betterment of the conditions under which the Fathers worked, that the long-projected journey to the lonely stations of Northern Rhodesia should come into his mind. There were only eight of them manning four widely separated stations: Katondwe, Kapoche, Chingombe, Kasisi. Ten years had passed since the Galician Province had been assigned the area. The superior Fr Czarlinski had died the previous August whilst on a journey from Katondwe to Kasisi. The deaths of some of the early missionaries worried the General in Rome who requested Mgr Parry to inspect the situation and make recommendations. The itinerary was straightforward: He would proceed to Kasisi by rail via Bulawayo and the Victoria Falls; there he would meet Fr Spendel, the present superior, and then travel onwards by rail to Broken Hill (Kabwe). Here he would leave the railway to travel on foot across country several hundreds of miles to Chingombe and thence southwards to Katondwe and Kapoche. From this last station he would cross the Luangwa River and face the tedious journey on foot or bicycle to the railhead at Sinoia and thence by train to Salisbury.

He was fully aware of the danger. He was over sixty years of age, and had lived in great austerity and, moreover, he had been weakened by an attack of influenza. He would not accept a substitute. The editor of the Zambesi Mission Record writes: "He broke down when he tried to say good-bye to the Fathers in Salisbury and begged them not to go to the railway-station to see him off, as he felt unequal to bidding what he felt might be a last farewell in public".

All went according to plan, he met Fr Spendel and went to Kasisi on foot and then he continued the train journey to Broken Hill. From there he began the long walk over the mountains to Chingombe. On the journey from there to Katondwe he fell ill but struggled to get there. He arrived very tired and sick. He was treated for malaria but it was a wrong diagnosis and by the time they realized that it was chiufo, a fungal infection of the intestine that local people had a cure for, it was too late. He died within seven days of arriving at Katondwe and is buried there.

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Born in Islington, London, Edward Parry was educated at the Mount, joined the Jesuits in 1878 and was ordained in 1894. He taught at Preston, and was minister at Beaumont and Garnethill, Glasgow. He was noted for his ‘unobtrusive and painstaking ways’. He came to Rhodesia in 1911 and worked at the Cathedral in Salisbury until 1919 when he became Superior of the Mission and, in 1920, Prefect Apostolic.

Searching for a way forward for the Mission, he called a Missionary Conference which was so appreciated the participants wanted to make it an annual event. The five days of the meeting treated five themes uppermost at the time;

1. Marriage (in a paper presented by Fr Bick)
2. Christian villages (Fr Loubière)
3. Beer drinking
4. Training school for teachers (Fr Withnell)
5. Publications in local languages.

They also considered the effect of the many churches and sects in the country and how confusing it was for the local people.

Parry went round his prefecture visiting the priests, confirming and encouraging. When at Empanjeni, for example, he would cycle to the outstations to do this. He ‘burned with indignation’ when he came across cases of injustice done to people and they came to know him as a staunch friend. When he died ‘they mourned him as no other’.

Aware of the numbers dying from fever north of the Zambezi and acting on a suggestion of Fr General, he set out to visit Northern Rhodesia. Hardly able to hold back his emotions on leaving Salisbury – like Paul at Miletus, it was later reflected - he made the great loop by train - to Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, Lusaka and Kabwe – and then proceed SE by bicycle or on foot to Chingombe, Kapoche and Katondwe where exhausted, and himself a victim of fever, he died. After the sad news became known, there were many who felt it was unwise and imprudent of him, in his sixties, to take on such a journey. But he felt it was right for him to do.