



**Fr David Murphy, S.J.**  
**(1944-1982. In Zambia 1969-1971)**

**21 May 1982**

'A tall, determined young man' is what first comes to mind when David's name is mentioned. He was born in Dublin on 15 May 1944 and attended Gonzaga College for his secondary schooling. He was one of the school's first vocations and entered the Society at Emo in 1962. At the Dublin University he took English and French for his degree. French culture had a special appeal for him, so he went to Chantilly, France, for his philosophy in 1967. For regency he came to Zambia in August 1969 and after six months at the chiTonga language, he moved into Canisius Secondary School as a teacher. 'A certain intolerance for what he saw as the merely conventional began to emerge. There was something a little wooden and naive in his own attitude but his indignation at another man's apparent failure in charity or common sense for the sake of conventional propriety never led to a lessening regard for those he disagreed with'. He took on a number of 'causes': prisoners' rights (Dublin, Copenhagen, Northern Ireland); opposition to apartheid in South Africa; Third World problems (which increased that intolerance); and a distaste for injustice of any kind.

He was ordained in Milltown Park on 21st June 1974 and went to America for a few months. It was while there that the brain tumor which finally killed him, came to light. That settled the question of whether he should return to Zambia where he had so enjoyed teaching. Still, though slowed down by his illness and treatment, he went to Paris for two years to study pastoral theology. After a year in Gardiner Street parish, he returned to Paris for another year 1977.

'In 1978 he undertook what was perhaps the most amazing adventure of all, he became prison chaplain in Copenhagen (Denmark) to those non-Danish prisoners who neither spoke or understood English or French. His sense of outrage at what he saw as the callous mistreatment of a fairly wretched group by a reputedly sophisticated society was quick to surface and he did not hesitate to communicate it to others'. The last two years of his life he spent in Dublin receiving treatment for his tumor. He did a little parish work and prison visiting at Mountjoy prison.

His final illness as he moved in and out of comas and became increasingly paralyzed and humiliatingly dependent, was a deeply harrowing time, above all for David himself but also for his community and brave family. He died on 21 May 1982 in his 38th year of life.

People who knew David found him to be gentle, humorous, kindly, while at the same time, determined and single minded. He was angered by humbug and pretence. On these occasions he could be rigidly uncompromising. His strong character showed a deep personal honesty and integrity. To the end, he was very appreciative of the dedicated help he received from those who were looking after him, both at St Luke's Cancer hospital and from his own religious community.