



Fr Stanislaus 'Chimukoshi' Nowicki, S.J.

(1911-1984. In Zambia 1951-1984)

21 May 1984

Stanislaus Nowicki was born on 15 September 1911 in Minsk Mazowiecki, 30 km east of Warsaw, Poland. He grew up in a rural family and retained the peasant-like determination which was reinforced by his Jesuit training and expressed in a total dedication to the Church. After his secondary school, he joined the Jesuits in 1928. He was a good scholar with a clear mind and a deep fidelity to the Church. After graduating in philosophy in 1937 he was assigned to teach philosophy in the Pontifical Seminary for the Oriental Rite in Dubna. When the war broke out he was studying theology in Lublin but was soon arrested by the Nazis on 2nd February 1940 and spent over five years in concentration camps until the liberation of Dachau on 29 April 1945. After the war he finished his theology in Belgium and was ordained in 1946. He worked in England for five years before coming to Zambia.

True to his character, even within the camp he was always active, ever trying to survive and helping others to survive as well. The story is told that while doing a little barter with one of the German officers who was carrying the list of those to be executed the following day, he noticed his own name on the paper. However the list was written only in pencil and it had to be typed properly. He did the fastest bartering in his life and when the list was posted his name was not on it. One day in Bwacha a group of his fellow Jesuits were pulling his leg about this episode, saying 'so someone else died in your place. You should have been like Maximilian Kolbe who took someone else's place'. With a twinkle in his eye he had all laughing when he answered 'I am alive and Kolbe is dead'!

He was assigned to the Sacred Heart parish in Kabwe and thus began his life's commitment to the town. His nickname 'Chimukoshi' (neck) came apparently because his head was always slightly bent to the right. Eventually everyone knew him by that name. His work from the start was at Bwacha and the whole rural district of Kabwe. He was of strong physical build and five and a half years of prison in the Nazi concentration camps did not break it. During his first ten years he had no other transport but a bicycle. He made frequent journeys to Lukanga Swamps, to Ngabve, Mukubwe areas (about 50 km north east of Lukanga Swamps), to Malambanyama, to Chisamba area. In each trip he would cover about 200 km. Later as he handed over various areas to others and concentrated his efforts on Bwacha, he still retained a pastoral presence in Mukobeko prison and would always be prepared to accompany those condemned to death.

He worked for 28 years in Kabwe until 1979 when he went on leave and then was assigned to Kasisi and later Matero. There must have been an enormous number of Catholics who were baptized and married by him down the years. He had friends everywhere and he knew how to use their friendship for building up the material and the spiritual Church of God. From the time of independence until shortly before his departure, he was the quasi-permanent chaplain to the Mayor of Kabwe.

His constructions were numerous e.g. at Malambanyama 35 km west of Landless Corner and at Kapiri Mposhi. His major work was the beautiful Church at Bwacha itself and finally the large Church at Chowa. He knew how to buy cheaply but he also would put his hands to the job himself, helping in the loading and unloading of material from trucks. He had a compensatory pension from the German Government for the way his body was used for experiments on malaria in the concentration camps. A story is told by Fr Hirjak who accompanied him for an official medical examination requested by the German Embassy. They wanted to know how he was still active after 30 years despite being listed as largely incapacitated. He duly left with Fr Hirjak giving him a helping hand, and with much shaking

and trembling, so he could be certified as still largely incapacitated. Then he was off again to build another Church.

Without any financial help from the Society or the Diocese, he firmly planted the Church in Kabwe for future generations to build on. Even in his lifetime he was referred to as 'the Father of Kabwe'.

Pulling out of Kabwe must have been difficult but while in Kasisi and later Matero he continued working, even physically, right up to the end, when after a final operation his heart gave out and he was taken to the Lord on 21 May 1984.