



Fr Marian Folta, S.J.

(1907-1989. In Zambia 1936-1989)

26 May 1989

Fr Marian Folta, son of John and Tekla née Gacek, was born in Dukla, southern Poland on the 25 March 1907, the feast of the Annunciation – hence his name Marian. He entered the novitiate in the nearby Stara Wies in 1923 and then went to Pinsk for his juniorate from 1925 to 1929. He did his philosophy at Cracow after which he went to Dublin, Ireland for his theology where he was ordained in 1934. He said he was sent to Ireland for two purposes – to master English and to learn how to ride a bicycle! He completed his tertianship in St Andrea in Klagenfurt, Austria. He then left for Zambia together with Fr Stefaniszyn and two Sisters, arriving in Broken Hill by train from Cape Town on the feast of the Assumption 1936, a day he always liked to remember.

For seven years he served as pastor and local superior in Broken Hill (Kabwe). He worked mostly among the local population and acquired a good knowledge of chiBemba to which he later added equally good chiNyanja. Among the older bearded missionaries he looked very young and some of them wondered if he was already a priest – he was only 29 at the time!

In 1943 he was sent to Chikuni to be the minister of the house and manager of schools. He spent the next ten years in these positions in Chikuni, Katondwe and Kasisi. In 1953 he left for Mpima to be superior and spiritual father. He was at the same time the Regular Superior of the Mission from 1950 to 1956.

In 1957 he began a new phase in his activities when he went to Mpanshya as parish priest. He remained there for 13 years despite all the difficulties, not the least among them was due to the activities of the Jehovah Witnesses. In his kindness he would think of them all as 'good well-meaning people'.

In 1970 he was persuaded to visit Poland and on his return he was sent as parish priest to St Francis in Lusaka. He stayed there for the rest of his earthly days except for a brief period in Mpanshya to replace Fr Hirjak (1973-1974). In spite of his advancing years he continued to run the parish and, later on, to be an assistant. He regularly taught catechism to the children and in the hard economic times of the late eighties, he spent long hours standing in queues to buy the needed food for the community. He died there on 26 May 1989 having completed almost 53 years service in the country which was recognized by President Kaunda when he received the decoration of the Order of Distinguished Service, 2nd Division in 1985.