



**Br Joseph Boron, S.J.**  
**(1903-1994. In Zambia 1928-1994)**

**26 May 1994**

Joseph Boron was born in Stara Wies, south eastern Poland, on 14 November 1903. He died in Lusaka, in John Chula House on 26 May 1994. He spent nearly all of his adult life in Zambia, leaving the country only twice: in the early fifties when he went to Johannesburg and in 1973 when he went with Fr Smyda to Jerusalem and to Rome.

His parents Jan and Katarzyna lived not far from the Jesuit novitiate and the parish church attached to it. As a child he prayed in the Basilica and received the sacraments and catechetical instructions. As a nineteen-year old lad he was accepted into the Society. He was accepted and on 25 May 1925 he pronounced his vows. As was customary in those days, he was sent immediately to train for his future employment in the Society. He went first to Chyrow, a big college run by Ours, to learn horticulture. Then he was sent to Czechowice to continue the same. His love of gardening and flowers never left him to his dying day.

It was in Czechowice that he was informed of being selected for the Rhodesian Mission. In April 1928 he left for Cracow to prepare the necessary documents and other needs for his journey. He never mentioned going back to Stara Wies to say goodbye to his relatives.

The team left Poland on 30 April 1928 for the newly established Vicariate of Lusaka. The group consisted of four sisters: Pomana Will, Ursula Wiktor, Rutina Swirska and Fridoline Macior; two priests: Ladislaw Zabdyr and Stanislaus Wawrzekiewicz; and three brothers: Joseph Boron, Joseph Duda and Wojciech Bulak who arrived later in January 1929.

They reached Kasisi on 15 June 1928 – the feast of the Sacred Heart. With the exception of Br Bulak, they all stayed and worked on the mission for many years. Br Bulak was killed by a lion at Katondwe 15 years after he came. Boron was the youngest of them. After a short acclimatization period, he was sent to Mpima to help Br Longa in developing the newly acquired farm. The old missionary, with his experience from Australia and Mozambique, and the new arrival soon became close friends. Br Boron became an amateur historian, as he liked to say, and a great collector of historical material of the early Zambesi Mission.

After Mpima he spent some time in Chingombe and then Katondwe, where he made his final commitment to the Society on 15 February 1934. Then came his long stay in Chikuni followed by another long spell in Kasisi until his retirement in 1974. He kept fond memories of his farming days in Chikuni, and that, in spite of 'a Father who used to ruin his oxen by galloping them'. In Kasisi there were no ox-carts and he could look after his cattle like dearest pets. There were working hours for his workers, but not for him. So he continued there until his retirement, with a short break in 1966-67.

He was strong and well built but his health was not the best. From the early days on the mission he suffered from headaches and, in his late sixties his legs began to give him trouble. This made his constant tours of the farm rather painful. He even gave up smoking to keep himself in shape. In 1985, together with some other missionaries, he was awarded the Order of Distinguished Service by President Kaunda. But like his close friend and fellow recipient, Br Joseph Gajdos, he felt too weak to go to receive it. When he could no longer walk and had to be pushed around in a wheelchair, he regularly inspected his small flower garden at Kasisi and loved to go for a car ride to 'see the beasts'.

He was a farmer by training and predilection, but he had many other interests too. He loved music – the old Vienna waltzes and light operettas. In his younger days he played the fiddle. He very much liked cinema and those endless TV soap operas. But history, especially that of the early Zambesi Mission was his favorite. He was blessed with a remarkably good memory for details and dates.

He spent 69 years in the Society and he belonged to that school of spirituality which prefers clear orders to mere suggestions. In Kasisi he did not hesitate to tell the superior if his order did not make sense, yet when the latter insisted, 'old Boronio' did as he was told – only to be blamed later for the results! Even to his last days in the infirmary he did not omit his annual retreat. The beads and the worn out prayer books are witnesses that he was a man of prayer. Many of Ours used to make a side trip to the infirmary to see 'old Boronio'. It was amazing to see the old man always interested in what was going on in the province and also in the world. But I think he liked best the visits from the youngest, the novices. They looked after him well. I hope he is praying now for them that they too may give many years of service to the Lord.