



**Fr William Lee S.J.**  
**(1915-1992. In Zambia 1950-1957)**

**4 June 1992**

Fr Bill went through the usual studies of the Jesuits, was ordained in 1947 and after tertianship was posted to Limerick. Plans were then afoot to send Irish Jesuits to what was then Northern Rhodesia (Zambia). Bill conceived a keen desire NOT to go there. He was just settling down in the Crescent when he received a letter telling him to get a medical check-up with a view of going to Northern Rhodesia. The Irish Jesuits had been asked to help out their Polish colleagues there. So in 1950, nine Irish Jesuits sailed from Ireland, including Fr Bill!

For many years, Fr Zabdyr with Chikuni as his base, set up elementary schools in various places. In 1951, two of these places became new mission stations, Kasiya and Chivuna. Kasiya was set up by Fr. Bill Lee in 1951, the year after he arrived in the country. Later in December, he was joined by Fr J Gill.

When Fr Gill arrived and a 250 cc motorbike was available, Fr Gill looked after the station and set out to visit the centers of Christianity within a radius of 4 to 30 miles. Bill was then transferred to Fumbo and later to Chikuni where he taught and was Spiritual Father to the Handmaid Sisters. He was also for a time secretary to the Bishop of Lusaka.

Having spent seven years in Zambia, he returned to Ireland to Gonzaga College for 30 years teaching physics etc. up to 1987. The remaining five years of his life he spent at University Hall and at 35 Lower Leeson Street. He died in St Vincent's Hospital on 4th June 1992.

Bill came from a large Waterford family and was distinctive among them, 'he alone of the 10 children greeted orders with "Why" and all information with "How do you know"? And he always enjoyed a good argument as much as other children enjoyed a party. He endearingly retained these characteristics to the end'. He loved discussion and debate but his kindness, good humor and generosity were no less noticed and appreciated. He was a good teacher and had a marvelous *rapport* with his students by whom he was much loved. He was a colorful member of community life enjoying and contributing much to it. He always had a sense of wonder and as he watched a fellow Jesuit perform some simple 'magic' tricks, he would be enthralled and laugh.

In pastoral work he was most successful, if somewhat diffident. Indeed he was suspicious of those who trafficked in certainties. Nor was he one for laying down an inflexible code of behavior. He accepted people as he found them and in whatever circumstances they were in. He was keen to help them to make sense of their lives in their own way and to give their own meaning to their lives. He was especially good with those whose faith was fragile, whose link with the Church was tenuous or whose practice was spasmodic. He himself lived happily with questions unanswered and problems unsolved but with the absolute certainty that the day would come when he would get his answers and solutions.

Pulmonary fibrosis was what took him in the end. Actually he had planned to visit Zambia with his sister in the autumn of the year he died but the Lord had other plans for him.