



Fr Joseph M Gill, S.J.
(1915 – 2006. In Zambia 1948-1956)

22 June 2006

The peaceful death of Fr Joe Gill, SJ, took place in the afternoon of 22 June, 2006, in the Jesuit Nursing Home, Cherryfield, Dublin. His passing marked the end of an era, having served 72 years in the Society of Jesus.

Joseph Mary Gill was born to the late Dr Anthony and Mary (nee Mulloy) Gill of Westport on 3 February 1915. He got his early education in the Mercy Convent and the Christian Brothers' Schools in Westport and in Clongowes Wood College, Co Kildare.

At the age of 19, Joe entered the Jesuit noviceship at Emo Park in 1934 and took his first vows in 1936. During the following ten years (1936-1946) he completed his third-level studies in arts (at UCD, 1936-1939), in philosophy at Tullabeg (1939-1942) and in theology at Milltown Park, Dublin (1942-1946). He was ordained a priest at Milltown Park on 31 July, 1945.

After his tertianship (1946-1947) he taught for a year in the Crescent Secondary School for boys in Limerick. He took his final vows as a Jesuit on 2 February 1948.

In 1947, Fr Gill was chosen to become one of the 'founding fathers' of the Irish Jesuit Mission to Zambia in Africa (then Northern Rhodesia). During his eight years in Zambia he worked tirelessly as pastor, builder, teacher and administrator in St Ignatius Church, Lusaka, in Canisius College, Chikuni, and in the mission outstations of Kasiya, Chivuna and Fumbo.

On his return to Ireland in 1956 Fr Joe was made minister of the recently founded Catholic Workers' College in Ranelagh, later to be known as the National College of Industrial Relations.

It was in 1958 however, that Father Gill was given his major appointment for the pastoral, spiritual and administrative care of souls in St Francis Xavier's Church, Dublin. This was to be his spiritual vineyard for the next 48 years. For the first 44 years of his time in Gardiner Street, Father Joe achieved an extraordinary grace as pastor and spiritual counselor. He spent hours upon hours hearing confessions and trying to bring peace of mind to a wide variety of penitents from the ranks of clergy, religious and laity. He was always available as long as his health enabled him. In addition to the onerous tasks of the confessional and the parlor, Father Joe encouraged an extraordinary gathering of devout souls in the Sodality of Our Lady and Saint Patrick and the Association of Perpetual Adoration. He became spiritual director of both groups in 1989. Every year his dedicated friends would make a wonderfully colorful variety of vestments for Churches in Ireland and in the Mission fields. Father Joe was extremely proud of the creative work of his team.

Following an accidental fall in 2002 which resulted in a hip replacement, his health began to fail somewhat. This extraordinary pastor kept up his role as spiritual counselor in the Jesuit Nursing Home until all his energy had faded away. His passing, on 22 June 2008, marked the completion of a very full life as a priest and as a kind friend.